



SEPTEMBER 2015

THE DECLINE OF DÉTENTE

ELLIOT RICHARDSON, JAMES SCHLESINGER,
AND DONALD RUMSFELD
1973-1977



COLD WAR FOREIGN POLICY SERIES

SPECIAL STUDY 7

Walter S. Poole

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Cover Photo: Secretaries of Defense Elliot Richardson, James Schlesinger, and Donald Rumsfeld.

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Foreword

This is the seventh special study by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Historical Office on the secretary's role in the U.S. foreign policymaking process. It examines the role of three secretaries of defense during the administrations of Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford: Elliot Richardson, James Schlesinger, and Donald Rumsfeld. Richardson left after only a few months in office to become the attorney general, and Schlesinger's increasingly poor relations with the Ford White House led to his replacement by Rumsfeld in November 1975. Despite an overall thaw in U.S.-Soviet relations during Nixon's first term, tensions with the Soviet Union marked the tenures of these three secretaries. In particular, Schlesinger's management of U.S. military aid to Israel in October 1973 to counter Soviet aid to Arab states and Rumsfeld's efforts to undermine strategic arms limitation talks illustrated the limitations of détente.

The Historical Office views this series as part of an ongoing effort to highlight the secretary's myriad roles and accomplishments. The series had its origins in a draft manuscript by Dr. Steven Rearden, author of *The Formative Years, 1947–1950*, the first volume in the Secretaries of Defense Historical Series. We anticipate that future series will cover other defense topics as they relate to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

My thanks go to Dr. Ryan Peeks and Corbin Williamson of the OSD Historical Office for redrafting portions of the study and to our editors, Sandra Doyle and Allen Mikaelian. I continue to be indebted to Kathleen Jones in OSD Graphics for her expertise and design.

The series titles printed to date as well as other publications are available on the OSD Historical Office website. We invite you to peruse our selections at <http://history.defense.gov/>.

Erin R. Mahan
Chief Historian
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Executive Summary

By the beginning of Richard Nixon's second term, Henry Kissinger had become the public face of American foreign policy, serving as both national security adviser and secretary of state. As Nixon devoted more and more of his time to the Watergate scandal, Kissinger became increasingly responsible for articulating and conducting foreign policy, a role he maintained as President Gerald Ford's secretary of state. Against this background, the three secretaries of defense who served between 1973 and 1977—Elliot Richardson, James Schlesinger, and Donald Rumsfeld—achieved mixed success in their attempts to influence the nation's foreign policy.

Elliott Richardson came into office in January 1973 after serving as secretary of health, education, and welfare (1970–1973). He entered the Pentagon intending to increase DoD's capacity for geopolitical and geostrategic analysis by strengthening the Office of International Security Affairs (ISA). Within months, however, Nixon convinced Richardson to take up the position of attorney general.

Nixon then turned to Director of Central Intelligence James Schlesinger to replace Richardson. An economist, Schlesinger had a great deal of experience with foreign and defense policy and took a broad view of his foreign policy responsibilities. Like Richardson, Schlesinger attempted to boost the profile of ISA, increasing its capacity to evaluate the national security implications of global economic changes and creating a task force in ISA to deal with arms control negotiations. These efforts, however, were somewhat undermined by successful congressional pressure to cut staff in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Schlesinger's main foreign policy goal during his term was to bolster the conventional military strength of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). His approach was two-pronged. First, he attempted

to convince NATO ministers that conventional defense of Western Europe was possible, and that doing so was worth increased military spending. Second, he pressed for rationalization of NATO policy—having each ally concentrate on specialized military functions—and standardization of parts and equipment across the Alliance. Schlesinger only partially succeeded; European governments remained wedded to the less expensive nuclear deterrent, while the standardization drive partially foundered on protectionist impulses in member states.

Outside of Alliance politics, Schlesinger's tenure was plagued by disputes with Kissinger. Poor personal relations intensified their many policy clashes. From August 1974, the two men also fought for influence with the new president, Gerald Ford, who came to trust Kissinger's judgment over Schlesinger's. Ford also resented Schlesinger's supercilious manner and his brusque comments at National Security Council meetings. Partially because of this lack of rapport, Kissinger nearly always prevailed when he and Schlesinger disagreed on policy. Schlesinger's failure to manage these two relationships came to define his tenure and led to his dismissal in late 1975.

Ford replaced Schlesinger with a close ally, Donald Rumsfeld, who had been White House chief of staff and who previously served as Ford's ambassador to NATO. Like Schlesinger, Rumsfeld clashed with Kissinger; Rumsfeld thought that Kissinger was too complacent about growing Soviet strength. Although Rumsfeld agreed with the secretary of state's assessment that the United States led the Soviet Union in defense capabilities, he argued that Kissinger's public optimism would prevent Congress from giving the Department of Defense (DoD) the funds it needed to maintain that lead. In response, Rumsfeld regularly presented DoD's more pessimistic view of the Soviet threat, which he credited with convincing Congress to increase investment in the military.

Rumsfeld's primary foreign policy interest was in arms control negotiations, where he surpassed his predecessors. Like Schlesinger, Rumsfeld was skeptical of détente. Unlike Schlesinger, however,

Rumsfeld was bolstered by shifting domestic politics. Events in Southeast Asia and criticism of the Helsinki Conference robbed détente of much of its luster within the United States by late 1975, weakening Kissinger's position in policymaking. Rumsfeld was able to leverage this domestic dissatisfaction to argue successfully against substantive new strategic arms limitation talks (SALT), a stance that put him at odds with both Ford and Kissinger.

The tumultuous mid-1970s saw three secretaries managing the Pentagon under two different presidents. These changes at the highest levels of DoD leadership, as well as Henry Kissinger's inordinate influence on both Nixon and Ford, limited the secretary of defense's role in U.S. foreign policy. No matter how worthwhile their intentions and goals, Richardson's tenure was too short for him to claim any major accomplishment, and Schlesinger's differences with the secretary of state led him first to marginalization in policy discussions and then to dismissal from office. Rumsfeld, too, found himself in conflict with the secretary of state, particularly in regard to arms control. Yet with domestic circumstances favoring a turn away from accommodation with the Soviet Union, Rumsfeld undermined Kissinger's progress toward a comprehensive strategic arms treaty and cast doubt on the viability of détente as a national policy.

Introduction

In January 1969, President Richard M. Nixon entered office seeking to replace the Cold War rivalry with superpower détente, laying the groundwork for a “generation of peace.” Yet, in dealings with his Cabinet officials, the president displayed little tolerance for the type of compromise and comity he sought with international rivals. The president and Henry A. Kissinger, assistant to the president for national security affairs, concentrated decision making in the White House to an unprecedented degree. They regularly bypassed established leadership channels to work through their own backchannels, negotiating with North Vietnam, orchestrating an opening to Communist China, and shaping strategic arms limitation agreements with the Soviet Union. By January 1973 they had recorded important successes: the Paris Peace Accords ending the U.S. combat role in the Vietnam War; a dramatic presidential visit to the People’s Republic of China; an antiballistic missile (ABM) treaty; and an interim agreement on offensive strategic weapons (SALT I) with the Soviet Union. Melvin R. Laird, Nixon’s first secretary of defense, made several important contributions to foreign policy, particularly in the areas of arms control and the drawdown from Vietnam, but distrust and conflict pervaded his relations with the White House. Like Laird, who stepped down after the 1972 presidential election, the three secretaries of defense who served Presidents Nixon and Ford from 1973 to 1977—Elliott L. Richardson, James R. Schlesinger, and Donald H. Rumsfeld—often found themselves battling to shape policy in an administration that concentrated the policymaking process and decision making in the White House to an unusual degree.

Nixon had only begun his second term when the Watergate scandal engulfed the presidency and sapped his authority. Between March 1973 and August 1974, with Nixon increasingly besieged, Kissinger publicly assumed a more visible role of articulating and conducting foreign policy. He became secretary of state in September 1973 while remaining national security adviser. After Nixon resigned on 9 August 1974 and was succeeded by Vice President Gerald R. Ford, Kissinger's influence over foreign policy continued.

Ford sought to heal bitter domestic divisions wrought by the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. His efforts to preserve a bipartisan foreign policy consensus around détente became increasingly difficult in the face of a series of crises in the mid-1970s, including war in the Middle East and an oil embargo by Arab states that exposed the vulnerability of Western economies; double-digit inflation and recession at home; the total defeat of anticommunist regimes in Cambodia and South Vietnam; and the apparent failure of détente to bring about lasting improvements in U.S.-Soviet relations. Moreover, Washington also had to adjust to strategic nuclear parity with the Soviets, increased economic competition from abroad, and diminished stature in the eyes of traditional allies. Schlesinger challenged Kissinger's control over policymaking and détente but found himself increasingly marginalized by the powerful secretary of state and a president alienated by the secretary's condescending manner. By 1975, however, the growing public perception that Kissinger controlled Ford and advocated a policy that accepted American decline exposed the president to attack from conservative Republican primary challenger Ronald Reagan. In November 1975, Ford stripped Kissinger of his national security adviser position, fired Schlesinger in favor of his White House chief of staff, Donald Rumsfeld, and replaced William E. Colby with George H.W. Bush as head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Organizational and Personality Issues

For his second term, Nixon selected Elliot Richardson, a Harvard-educated lawyer who publicly expressed agreement with the president's national security policies and was known for his excellent managerial skills. Richardson stood out as an embodiment of the Eastern establishment, heir to the tradition that had produced Dean G. Acheson, Robert A. Lovett, John J. McCloy, and James V. Forrestal. As undersecretary of state and then as secretary of health, education, and welfare, Richardson had gained a wide familiarity with governmental policy processes. He later remembered Nixon saying that one reason he wanted him in the Pentagon was to act as "an effective counterweight to Kissinger."¹

Upon taking office on 29 January 1973, Richardson reasoned that, at a time of diminished military budgets, it was more important than ever for the Defense Department to possess a clear appreciation of problems abroad in order to make the most effective use of available resources. Accordingly, he intended to bolster what he termed the department's capacity for "geostrategic" and "geopolitical" analysis, starting with the rejuvenation of the Office of International Security Affairs, or ISA. He also favored more military participation in diplomacy, such as warships "showing the flag," to "help stabilize critical situations and keep them from becoming shooting wars."² Yet four months after becoming secretary of defense, as the Watergate scandal widened, Nixon persuaded him to accept the post of attorney general. Richardson left the Pentagon on 24 May 1973.

To fill the now vacant position of secretary, Nixon turned to 44-year-old James Schlesinger, who held a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard and had engaged in strategic studies at the RAND Corporation, where he criticized Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara for his cost-effectiveness comparisons and his conviction that the ability to assure destruction of an enemy, statistically measured, would deter nuclear attack. After leaving RAND in 1969, he became assistant director of the Bureau of the Budget (now Office of Management

and Budget), where he devoted much of his time to the Defense budget. He acquired an influential ally in Senator Henry M. Jackson, a key member of both the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. In 1971 Schlesinger moved to the chairmanship of the Atomic Energy Commission, and in February 1973 he became director of central intelligence. While Schlesinger's intellectual reputation stood high and his grasp of national security issues was impressive, many found his manner alienating. According to William G. Hyland, a Kissinger protégé, Schlesinger "seemed in a perpetual state of condescension."³

Schlesinger entered office convinced that the secretary must work through the National Security Council (NSC) system to relate broad policy objectives to the development, sustainment, and deployment of forces. At the start of his tenure, he viewed State and Defense as coequal and even urged the adoption of procedures whereby State and Pentagon officials could operate interchangeably, perhaps by trading representation on NATO's planning bodies.⁴ He defined foreign affairs as an "operational responsibility" that frequently required him, in the interest of longstanding commitments (e.g., forces in Western Europe), to play an even larger and more active role than the secretary of state.⁵ "The interplay between foreign policy and military forces and between foreign policy and military strategy," he recalled, "was my area of interest."⁶

Schlesinger's effort to expand his role in foreign affairs suffered from the absence of a strong, well-managed support staff. Working to restore ISA to something approaching its 1960s stature, Schlesinger upgraded ISA's capacity for economic analysis by creating an office of international economic affairs to evaluate the national security implications of global economic changes, particularly those related to fluctuations in energy supplies. He improved the coordination of arms control policy by establishing a SALT task force under ISA's supervision and restructured the security assistance program in response to a White House directive calling for reductions in the scale and scope of military advisory and assistance missions.⁷

Robert C. Hill, a former ambassador and Republican stalwart, served as assistant secretary of defense (ISA) from May 1973 until January 1974. Upon Hill's departure, Schlesinger offered the ISA position to Paul H. Nitze, who had run ISA from 1961 to 1963, had been deputy secretary of defense from 1967 to 1969, and was then serving on the SALT delegation. Before the nomination could move forward, however, Nitze withdrew in the face of strong objections from conservative Republicans led by Senator Barry M. Goldwater.⁸ The position was then filled by Robert F. Ellsworth, a former congressman from Kansas and NATO ambassador from 1969 to 1971.

Schlesinger's desire to strengthen ISA conflicted with congressional pressure to reduce headquarters staffs worldwide. In March 1974, the secretary directed the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to cut personnel by 15 percent, which ultimately resulted in the elimination of 32 civilian and military positions within ISA.⁹ He also had to scale back restructuring of the security assistance organization and shelve plans to consolidate all four of the regional deputy assistant secretaries under one principal deputy assistant secretary.¹⁰

More than any organizational problems, what particularly hindered Schlesinger, and adversely impacted foreign policy, were his poor relationships with top officials, particularly Deputy Secretary of Defense William P. Clements Jr. The secretary and his deputy arranged a regional division of their responsibilities for international affairs. During his highly successful career in the oil drilling business, Clements had cultivated a wide range of acquaintances in the Middle East. Accordingly, he dealt with leaders in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman, and the Persian Gulf states. Clements' portfolio also included the Far East (except Vietnam and Cambodia). Schlesinger focused on Western Europe, rating as his top priority the strengthening of NATO's conventional capabilities.¹¹ This allocation of responsibilities appeared sensible, but it worked poorly because the two men could not get along. Schlesinger

later characterized his subordinate as deficient in judgment, while Clements concluded that his superior lacked integrity.¹² One senior official recalled a running joke in the Pentagon: “If you didn’t like the answer you got from Clements you could go to Schlesinger, and he would overturn it every time. If you thought you’d get a ‘no’ from Schlesinger, you could wait until he was out of town and then ask Clements.”¹³

More detrimental to foreign policy was the relationship between Schlesinger and Kissinger. How much of their falling-out stemmed from conflict between two strong-willed personalities, competition over influence with the president, or substantive policy differences is difficult to determine. Nonetheless, their often-fractious relationship made the secretary’s involvement in foreign policy frequently at cross-purposes with the State Department and the White House. An episode in June 1974 illustrates their poor chemistry: Kissinger called Schlesinger to say that he was “reading on the ticker tape all about how you were not consulted on commitments made to [Israeli Prime Minister] Golda Meir.” Kissinger declared that he wanted to talk not about the “substance” but rather the “ethics” of the situation. Schlesinger replied, “Henry, I doubt you are able to instruct anyone on ethics”—and hung up. The next morning, Schlesinger told his staff that Kissinger’s “technique is to deceive each group in a different way.” He directed subordinates to “accept no guidance ‘under the sun’ from State on any subject. Anyone receiving guidance will report it to me and we will develop our own policy here in this building.”¹⁴

Gerald Ford’s accession to the presidency did little to ameliorate the friction between senior officials. From the start, the Ford-Schlesinger relationship was tainted by rumors of the secretary of defense’s behavior in the final months of the Nixon administration. According to press reports, Schlesinger, worried that Nixon might resort to a coup to remain in power, took steps to ensure that he could not issue orders to the military without the defense secretary’s assent. Ford, who had been assured that no such measures were

taken, considered the possibility that military commanders would take part in any sort of illegal action troubling on constitutional grounds, and judged the allegation to be a slur on the military’s honor.¹⁵ Ford later claimed that he contemplated removing Schlesinger at that point but refrained to preserve continuity at the Pentagon.¹⁶ The president’s attitude towards his secretary remained sour. According to Kissinger, “Ford resented not only Schlesinger’s brusque comments at NSC meetings but also his tendency to arrive at the Oval Office with his tie loosened and to drop into an easy chair, draping one leg over an arm rest.” The president confided to Kissinger that “Jim . . . thinks I am stupid, and he believes you are running me, which he resents. This will not end until I either fire Jim or make him believe *he* is running me.”¹⁷ As the months wore on, the Kissinger-Schlesinger relationship also deteriorated, resulting in the marginalization of the defense secretary in foreign policy.

The 1973 Arab-Israeli War

Schlesinger’s first test in managing foreign crises came after he had been in office only three months. On 6 October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces launched surprise attacks against Israelis occupying Arab lands—Syria’s Golan Heights and Egypt’s east bank of the Suez Canal. When Israeli counterattacks failed, Israel presented urgent and sizable requests for U.S. arms. Schlesinger worried that openly supporting Israel would cause U.S. interests in the Middle East to “go down the drain,” turning the Arabs toward Moscow and endangering Western access to oil. Containing Soviet influence was his overriding objective.¹⁸

Schlesinger had serious doubts whether the approach pursued by Nixon and Kissinger, positioning the United States to act as honest broker between Arabs and Israelis, could succeed. Convinced that diplomacy would not work unless Israel first won tactical victories, Kissinger complained to Nixon’s chief of staff, Alexander M. Haig Jr., that Schlesinger “panics easily” and that Pentagon officials were “dragging their feet” about making materiel available to Israel.¹⁹

Schlesinger met almost daily with the Israeli ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, to discuss Israel's ever-increasing arms requests. The defense secretary thought they were deliberately inflated. Kissinger, who also was conferring regularly with Dinitz, disagreed.²⁰ Matters reached a point where Kissinger complained about "massive sabotage" by the Pentagon to delay arms transfers, which Schlesinger denied. Finally, Kissinger opened a high-level interagency meeting with words aimed at the Defense Department: "The president said if there are any further delays in carrying out orders, he wants the resignation of the officials involved."²¹

Starting on 10 October, a Soviet airlift of arms to Syria changed the complexion of the conflict. Nixon and Kissinger decided that Moscow's clients must not gain the upper hand. On 13 October, with Schlesinger's agreement, American C-141s and C-5As began flying equipment directly to Israel.²² These deliveries contributed to Israel's battlefield successes in the Golan Heights and then in crossing the Suez Canal. On 25 October, after cease-fire violations briefly threatened to precipitate a direct Soviet intervention to support Egypt, the fighting ended.

In the war's immediate aftermath, Kissinger assured senior U.S. officials that "we have come out in the catbird's seat. Everyone has to come to us since we are the only ones who can deliver."²³ He undertook "shuttle diplomacy," flying back and forth between Cairo, Jerusalem, and Damascus. Israel presented the administration with a series of large requests for arms, for which the Defense Department could find no real military justification. In theory, the ability to grant or withhold arms would give Washington considerable diplomatic leverage. But in practice, linking supply for Israel to withdrawals by Israel from occupied territory enjoyed only limited success. Over a two-year period, Schlesinger held frequent conversations with a range of Israeli officials about the merits of various weapon systems. In September 1975, he advised President Ford that meeting Israel's requests, without substantially diminishing inventories and diverting production schedules, was

beyond DoD's capacities. Schlesinger warned, also, that meeting these requests would "exacerbate Arab perceptions of Israel as a kind of Western spearhead and would be seen as giving Israel a kind of lien on our own Middle Eastern policy."²⁴ Nonetheless, Israel received regular, large-scale aid unrelated to diplomatic progress. Schlesinger's achievement, such as it was, lay in making certain that weapons would be supplied from future production rather than taken from U.S. inventories, as had occurred during and immediately after the war.²⁵

Bolstering NATO

Despite preoccupation with turmoil in the Middle East, Schlesinger later observed, "My central concern as secretary of defense was to protect Western Europe." He believed that the allies made only the minimum effort they thought was needed to deter a Warsaw Pact attack and to keep the Americans from withdrawing from Europe in disgust. His concern was not new. With limited success, his predecessors, dating to Robert McNamara, had cajoled NATO allies into increasing their contributions for conventional defense. As Schlesinger saw it, the advent of nuclear parity between the superpowers meant that what constituted a minimum effort kept increasing.²⁶ He made his top priority the strengthening of conventional capabilities in Allied Command Europe. Knowing how slowly the Alliance's decision-making process moved, he told his staff in September 1973 that "we cannot afford a NATO-typical, three-year dillydally."²⁷ Through dozens of meetings with fellow defense ministers, he argued that creating a viable nonnuclear defense was well within their means. The most receptive European leader was West German Defense Minister Georg Leber, with whom Schlesinger held frequent, productive conversations. As part of his campaign to persuade allies that the conventional threat was not overwhelming, Schlesinger became personally involved in revising what he considered unduly pessimistic intelligence estimates. A byproduct of that exercise was closer collaboration between U.S. and West German military intelligence agencies.²⁸

Convinced that NATO's array of weapon systems wasted money and adversely affected military efficiency, Schlesinger pressed for rationalization—having each ally concentrate on specialized functions—and for standardizing armaments. Europeans should purchase U.S. weapons in those areas where American technology was superior, and vice versa. After intense lobbying by U.S. personnel, including Schlesinger, four of the smaller European allies—Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark—agreed to buy F-16s. The United States agreed to purchase Roland II, a Franco-German short-range air defense system. Had all such proposals been carried to completion, the improvement for Allied Command Europe's weapons arsenal could have been dramatic. Instead, the pace was ragged and the results were mixed. National pride and politics, guided by a desire to protect jobs and industries, inevitably affected decision making on both sides of the Atlantic. The Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), housed in a modified Boeing 707, promised to provide low-altitude radar surveillance over an area at least 20 times greater than any surface-based system. Europeans, however, balked at U.S. pressure to share the costs of AWACS production and deployment. Similarly, a decision about commonality among tank components, such as whether to place a West German or a British gun on the U.S. M-1, had not been reached by January 1977.²⁹

Schlesinger devoted considerable effort to winning Alliance approval of the Long-Range Defense Concept that called for creating a capability to defend Western Europe without rapidly resorting to nuclear weapons. What emerged was a compromise document, fulfilling his objective only in part. Approved by NATO's Defense Planning Committee in May 1975, it placed a "major emphasis" on conventional capabilities that would require "some modest annual increase in real terms in defense expenditure." However, the call for an increase was followed by a qualifying clause declaring that "NATO has already achieved a large measure of success in this regard."³⁰ Ultimately, therefore, Schlesinger could count on only

modest conventional improvements for Allied Command Europe. He fell short not because his approaches were flawed but because nothing could shake the Europeans' conviction, West Germans included, that a threat of swift nuclear escalation constituted the best deterrent, while prolonged conventional combat would devastate their homelands.

The 1973 war in the Middle East had unpleasant repercussions for NATO. Many Europeans blamed the United States for acquiescing to Israel's refusal to withdraw from any of the occupied territories, which they viewed as the chief cause of renewed conflict in the Middle East and the subsequent oil embargo imposed by Arab oil states. In November 1973, Schlesinger told NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns that, once the Soviets became involved, "a strategic defeat for the U.S. in the Middle East would have had incalculable consequences for NATO, and NATO nations should have realized that."³¹ His argument changed no minds, and Middle East policy remained a point of contention between the allies.

An area in which Schlesinger did exercise influence was in the field of arms control negotiations with the Soviets. For example, in the long-lasting East-West negotiation over mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) in Central Europe, he worked in complete harmony with Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger.³² From the administration's standpoint, MBFR's main value lay in deflecting the growing demands from Congress for unilateral U.S. withdrawals.³³ Since an approximate balance existed in Central Europe between the immediately available forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, Schlesinger told the Senate Appropriations Committee, he could not "in good conscience recommend that we take out units short of an agreement with the Pact on mutual and balanced force reductions."³⁴ That argument helped defeat legislative proposals for unilateral reductions.

Schlesinger oversaw the preparation of a proposal for the MBFR talks, dubbed Option III, to trade the pullback of a Soviet tank army

for the withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear elements. The Soviets, he reasoned, had built up their conventional forces to compensate for their nuclear inferiority. Thus, as strategic forces came into balance, the United States was entitled to call for cuts in Soviet conventional strength.³⁵ Even though Soviet acceptance of Option III would have worked to NATO's advantage, given that the U.S. tactical nuclear arsenal was so large that the reductions on the table would have little effect, Schlesinger felt no disappointment when the MBFR talks stalled. In fact, he characterized Soviet obstinacy as "the best incentive the U.S. can have to improve its own conventional capabilities in Europe."³⁶ During 1974–1976, NATO prepared to increase the strength of U.S. Army Europe by stationing two more U.S. Army brigades in West Germany. Thus the failure of MBFR served the administration's purpose—avoiding force reductions.³⁷

During Schlesinger's tenure, NATO's gravest crisis was internal; in 1974, NATO members Greece and Turkey came close to war over Cyprus. The island nation's population was 80 percent ethnic Greek and 20 percent ethnic Turk, and many of the former group favored union with Greece. In mid-July, guided by the ruling military junta in Athens, extremist Greek Cypriots seized control of the government. In response, Turkish troops promptly landed on the island's north coast. Debate in the Washington Special Actions Group (an operational subgroup of the NSC that coordinated and managed actions in carrying out presidential decisions) revealed mounting tension between Schlesinger and Kissinger. Schlesinger wanted to "move subtly" to oust the Athens junta, arguing that "the future status of NATO" was at stake. Describing members of the junta as "unsophisticated, irresponsible . . . increasingly desperate," Schlesinger feared they might launch an attack against Turkey unless a cease-fire could be arranged. Expecting that the junta would collapse without any U.S. machinations, Kissinger complained to the president's chief of staff afterward, "We are having a massive problem with Defense. Schlesinger is taking an all-out position on the overthrow of the Greeks . . . Schlesinger will crucify us."³⁸

Although the Athens junta and the regime in Cyprus did resign, Turkish forces in mid-August launched a swift offensive that overran one-third of the island. The new democratic government in Greece, angered by Washington's inaction during what amounted to ethnic cleansing of Greek Cypriots, withdrew for a time from NATO's integrated command. Many in Congress concluded that Turkey had violated provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act that restricted the use of U.S. equipment to national self-defense. However, Turkey hosted crucial U.S. intelligence collection facilities valuable to the Defense Department. In February 1975, after Congress suspended all military aid, Schlesinger asked his Turkish counterpart to preserve "an open channel of military-to-military communication." Working with President Ford and Kissinger, Schlesinger lobbied members of Congress to reverse the ban, arguing that otherwise "Turkey will go down the irrevocable path of forcing us out."³⁹ In October 1975, Congress eased the arms ban and Turkey once again began cooperating.⁴⁰

Reacting to Defeat in Indochina

In the spring of 1975, the U.S. witnessed complete victories by Communist forces in Cambodia and South Vietnam. In March, South Vietnamese defenses in the Central Highlands and Northern provinces collapsed. At NSC meetings early in April, when some still spoke of trying to sustain South Vietnam as a rump state into 1976, Schlesinger stated bluntly that the situation had become "hopeless" and that Saigon likely would fall within a few weeks. Kissinger presented three options: do nothing or next to nothing; ask Congress for \$300 million worth of military aid, with perhaps more to follow; or seek \$722 million that might strengthen South Vietnam for negotiations with Hanoi. Schlesinger recommended asking Congress for only \$300 million, but he exhorted President Ford to give a fighting speech along the lines of Winston Churchill's "blood, sweat and tears" summons of 1940: "The important thing is for you to establish leadership. . . . You could say that U.S. foreign policy is in the most difficult period since 1939." The president

rejected and perhaps resented his advice. How, Ford replied, could he deliver a blood, sweat, and tears oration and then ask for only \$300 million? The president opted for \$722 million, saying that he would deliver “a strong speech in my own way.”⁴¹ Ford appealed to a joint session of Congress for prompt aid to help Saigon stabilize the situation and create the opportunity for a political solution. However, Congress refused. On 12 April, Cambodia’s capital of Phnom Penh fell to the Communist Khmer Rouge. In Saigon, South Vietnamese President Duong Van Minh unconditionally surrendered to the North Vietnamese on 30 April.

Barely two weeks after the fall of Saigon, Cambodian forces seized the U.S. merchant vessel *Mayaguez* steaming in international waters. A successful rescue that cost the lives of 18 U.S. service members provides another example of the incompatibility between Schlesinger and Ford. The president was deeply dissatisfied with Schlesinger’s supervision of the operation, concluding that he had been inept at best and perhaps deliberately disobeyed presidential orders by calling off a final wave of airstrikes. Ford ordered a detailed report on the rescue, and although it exonerated Schlesinger, the president continued to blame the secretary for “high-level bumbling.” Schlesinger also provided the president with a set of “observations” that placed blame for any mishaps on the White House rather than the Pentagon: “Washington’s role should be to define the larger goal . . . while attempting to avoid too many and too frequent interventions.” The president and his White House advisers, Schlesinger asserted, “are concerned that nothing go awry—and are searching for apparent mistakes.” By contrast, people in DoD “have far more information and are in the position of having to execute any decisions in a fast-moving situation.”⁴²

Schlesinger reacted to defeat in Southeast Asia by calling for a hard-line elsewhere. Debate over the future of the Panama Canal gave him an opportunity. In the spring of 1975, negotiations over a new treaty that would cede U.S. control over the canal to Panama but retain U.S. defense rights seemed near success. But at an NSC

meeting on 15 May, just after the *Mayaguez* rescue, Schlesinger declared himself a treaty opponent, arguing that “one of the biggest mistakes the United States has made since 1945 was not to acquire sovereign base rights in a number of places around the world.” He criticized the U.S. approach to canal negotiations as reducing requirements to what the administration thought the Panamanians would accept: “When the U.S. shows strength and determination, it receives respect. When it recedes from its position, it whets appetites.” Oddly, his contrary position clashed with that of his principal subordinates—Deputy Secretary Clements and JCS Chairman General George S. Brown—who judged the proposed treaty acceptable.⁴³ Early in 1976, when the presidential primary campaign began, conservative Republicans portrayed Ford as giving the canal away, causing him to postpone further action.

SALT under Schlesinger

Despite the deteriorating situation in Southeast Asia, arms control talks with the Soviet Union remained paramount in American foreign policy, and Schlesinger played a major role in these negotiations. By 1973, arms control had become the centerpiece and symbol of superpower détente. Thanks to his work at RAND, OMB, and the CIA, Schlesinger came to the Pentagon with a deep knowledge of arms control issues. While director of central intelligence, he had discerned a pattern in strategic arms limitation talks with the Soviets that he believed could lead to U.S. inferiority over the long term.⁴⁴ What worried him was not so much the risk of nuclear war as the danger of a Cuban missile crisis in reverse, with the Soviets enjoying such a large advantage that U.S. leaders could be forced to back down during a crisis. The 1972 Interim Agreement on Offensive Weapons and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty had put numerical caps on the nuclear arms race. As things stood, a U.S. lead in numbers of warheads offset a Soviet lead in numbers of missile launchers. The United States was first to equip its intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) with multiple independently

targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs), which allowed for the targeting of several geographically distinct sites with a single missile. But in mid-1973 the Soviets began flight tests of MIRV missiles. Since Soviet launchers were larger than their U.S. counterparts, MIRV versions could threaten many more targets—potentially enough to render all U.S. silo-based missiles vulnerable. Schlesinger therefore insisted that SALT II establish essential equivalence through “equal aggregates,” meaning that the combined numerical totals of each side’s ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers be equal. But, in his view, parity must also be established by including the total throw-weight (maximum weight of the warheads and MIRVs that can be lifted) of each side’s MIRV missiles.⁴⁵

As the Watergate scandal deepened, Schlesinger worried that Nixon might offer the Soviets dangerous concessions to score a diplomatic success and bolster his public standing. At an NSC meeting in March 1974, Schlesinger said the worst possible approach would be to push for a permanent agreement that simply continued the current programs of both sides—which was what Nixon appeared to be seeking. In June, as a U.S.-Soviet summit drew near, Schlesinger urged the president to insist that an agreement preserve the U.S. advantage in numbers of MIRV launchers. He brushed aside the Soviets’ rejection of a similar proposal with an argument that Nixon found insulting: “You can be very persuasive—you have great forensic skills.” In Kissinger’s opinion, “Only a conviction that Nixon was finished could have produced so condescending a presentation by a Cabinet officer to his president.” In Moscow, when the president put forward a variation of Schlesinger’s proposal, General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev rejected it.⁴⁶

Nixon’s resignation on 9 August 1974 dissipated the atmosphere of tension and suspicion that had surrounded internal U.S. discussions about SALT. At Vladivostok in late November 1974, Ford and Kissinger reached an understanding with Brezhnev that limited each side to 2,400 central weapon systems—ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers—and 1,320 MIRV launchers, an accord made possible

by Soviet concessions. Afterwards, Schlesinger assured Ford of his support, telling him that “you’ve got the high ground” against any criticism from Congress.⁴⁷

Both sides intended for Vladivostok to point the way toward a comprehensive treaty that would be concluded by 1976. Negotiations revolved around two issues: range limits to place on cruise missiles, a category where the United States held a wide lead, and constraints on the new Soviet Backfire bomber. At the NSC meeting on 25 July 1975, Schlesinger told the president that Brezhnev was anxious to reach an agreement. Therefore, he recommended, “Give only a little ground, showing a considerable degree of firmness, responding to their tactics in kind.” But the Soviets also stood their ground, believing that they had made significant concessions at Vladivostok and it was the Americans’ turn to reciprocate. In mid-September 1975, Schlesinger and Kissinger settled on a complicated negotiating proposal. Otherwise, however, their relationship remained frigid. Kissinger bluntly told Deputy Secretary Clements that he held “a grievance against DoD. We haven’t had a working relationship for two years.” The Defense Department, Kissinger claimed, had “become a political party—positioning itself both to the right and left of the administration.”⁴⁸ Their disagreements escalated to the point where one of the two secretaries had to leave, and the president’s preference was clear.

Rumsfeld and SALT

In October 1975, Donald Rumsfeld, the president’s special assistant who functioned as a chief of staff, and his deputy, Richard B. Cheney, offered Ford their resignations, claiming his administration had become increasingly dysfunctional and urging an overhaul in order to better confront Ronald Reagan, the likely Republican primary challenger. On 25 October, Ford met with Kissinger and Rumsfeld in the Oval Office and told them that he would begin a major Cabinet shakeup, which the press would dub the “Halloween Massacre.” Among other changes, Rumsfeld replaced Schlesinger as

secretary of defense; Kissinger lost his position as national security adviser but remained secretary of state. Ford concluded that Kissinger's prominence had become a political liability for him. Despite the memo he had drafted urging radical changes, Rumsfeld later asserted that he had no intention of replacing Schlesinger at the Pentagon. He recalled, "I told the President I thought that Schlesinger was a darn good secretary of defense and I didn't know of a national security issue about which I disagreed with him."⁴⁹ Nevertheless, on 2 November 1975, in what Ford remembered as "one of the most disagreeable conversations I have ever had," the president asked for Schlesinger's resignation.⁵⁰ According to Ford, Schlesinger responded, "I haven't resigned, sir. You're firing me." While the president grew angrier, the secretary of defense argued for nearly an hour against his dismissal before leaving the Oval Office.⁵¹ Although Rumsfeld shared many of his predecessor's views, the changeover marked a shift in the Ford administration's approach to foreign policy, as the new defense secretary would prove to be a more formidable opponent for Kissinger.⁵²

With Ford in command, NSC meetings began functioning as deliberative forums rather than as pro forma sessions to approve predetermined decisions, as so often had been the case in Nixon's second term. Ford promoted Kissinger's deputy, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF, to national security adviser. Unobtrusive, yet effective, Scowcroft played an expediter's role in policy formulation. Although Ford moved toward a more corporate approach to policy and decision making, Kissinger remained his principal adviser.

Rumsfeld, an adept bureaucratic operator, had several advantages over his predecessor in contesting Kissinger. He was far closer to Ford personally and, when serving as a representative from Illinois, had helped propel Ford to House minority leader in 1965. Rumsfeld's protégé and friend, Richard Cheney, replaced him as White House chief of staff, ensuring that the White House staff would not seek to come between the defense secretary and the president. Moreover,

Rumsfeld's hawkish arguments resonated more deeply now that Ford was facing reelection in a political climate that had become less favorable to détente.⁵³

Rumsfeld found that the volume of sensitive cable traffic from the State Department to the Pentagon had dropped precipitously during Schlesinger's last months. The defense secretary suspected Kissinger of cutting off the flow of information as a means of protecting his power. Remembering the importance of sensitive embassy cables from his time as Nixon's ambassador to NATO, Rumsfeld presented a graph of DoD's receipt of State cable traffic to Kissinger. The secretary of defense thereafter received a higher volume of State Department communications.⁵⁴

Rumsfeld did not have sufficient time to devise and implement organizational changes that might have strengthened the OSD's role. Like Schlesinger, Rumsfeld did not get along well with Deputy Secretary Clements, but he was reluctant to remove him with Ford's reelection campaign fast approaching.⁵⁵ When Rumsfeld needed help, he tended to look first to his immediate staff or to Robert Ellsworth, whom he had promptly moved from ISA to be the second deputy secretary, a position created by Congress in 1972 but left vacant by Laird and Schlesinger. Rumsfeld also gave Ellsworth responsibility for overseeing the Pentagon's large intelligence portfolio, which included the services' intelligence organizations, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the National Reconnaissance Office and accounted for more than two-thirds of the federal government's intelligence funds and personnel. By taking over that portfolio, in Rumsfeld's view, Ellsworth spared the secretary from having to spend "almost full time on it."⁵⁶

Rumsfeld differed with Kissinger on arms control issues carried over from Schlesinger's time. At the heart of the matter lay what Rumsfeld later characterized as Kissinger's overly complacent assessment of growing Soviet strategic power and his confidence in the ameliorating effect of arms control accords. "It was not that

we were in an inferior position,” Rumsfeld recalled, “but rather that the trends were taking us toward a position of inferiority.”⁵⁷ Instead of tempering Soviet behavior, Rumsfeld feared that an overly conciliatory SALT II treaty would embolden the Soviets to confront the United States and threaten American interests.⁵⁸

President Ford, very much wanting to conclude a comprehensive arms control agreement, directed his advisers to prepare fresh approaches.⁵⁹ By then, however, the U.S. political climate had changed considerably. Détente in general and SALT in particular came under attack from domestic critics, including former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, who charged that the Soviets had violated aspects of SALT I without being challenged by the administration.⁶⁰ Rumsfeld never openly joined the critics, but in Kissinger’s view he “permitted and indeed encouraged the bureaucratic process to run into the sand.”⁶¹ Thus, early in December 1975, Rumsfeld cited Kissinger’s absences from Washington as reasons for delaying NSC discussions about SALT positions, which in turn caused the postponement of negotiations with the Soviets. When the NSC did convene on 13 January 1976, instead of opening up a discussion of all the options, Rumsfeld tabled an option he disfavored and then, only hours after the meeting, sent Ford what amounted to a revision of his own proposal.⁶²

On 19 January 1976, Kissinger took to Moscow several negotiating options that he believed Rumsfeld and JCS Chairman General Brown had endorsed. After Brezhnev rejected some, Kissinger cabled Washington for permission to present “Option Three,” which U.S. officials viewed as the one most likely to win Soviet acceptance. Essentially, it would allow the Soviets to deploy 300 Backfire bombers while the United States would be allowed to deploy 250 or more sea-launched cruise missiles on 25 surface ships. But at an NSC meeting on 21 January, while Rumsfeld and Brown were in Europe, the acting JCS chairman, Admiral James L. Holloway, said he opposed Option Three on grounds that the Navy did not plan to build that many cruise missile ships, if any.

Subsequently, as Scowcroft cabled Kissinger, a stunned and furious president “ranted” that “Rumsfeld and Brown could damn well try themselves to get the extra money [for a buildup] if we failed to get a SALT agreement.” Almost simultaneously, Rumsfeld and Brown cabled Scowcroft their recommendation that Kissinger “politely say that he wishes to discuss . . . new ideas personally with the President and come home.” The secretary of state returned from Moscow empty-handed.⁶³

Continuing to face opposition within his own administration, Ford, at the next NSC meeting on 11 February 1976, emphasized that a SALT agreement would serve the country’s interests. While discussing Ford’s primary election campaign in a contentious Oval Office meeting the following month, Kissinger exclaimed, “It is inevitable that our margin since ’60 has slipped. Are we trying to maintain the same margin as we had in 1960 or to maintain adequate forces?” Rumsfeld responded, “We have been slipping since the ’60s from superiority to equivalence, and if we don’t stop, we’ll be behind.”⁶⁴ Rumsfeld urged the president to postpone any substantive negotiations with the Soviet Union until January 1977. During an NSC discussion on 30 July, Ford made his final effort to move SALT forward. Rumsfeld reacted by arguing against new initiatives, because “as we look at the charts [comparing U.S. and Soviet force postures], we see that pieces of our leverage are moving away. . . . Incrementally, not any one piece is significant, but the cumulative effect is.”⁶⁵ No further movement on SALT negotiations occurred during Ford’s tenure. Rumsfeld had first delayed and then quashed Kissinger’s SALT II efforts; the president would later blame Soviet Premier Brezhnev and Rumsfeld for his administration’s failure to achieve a strategic arms limitation breakthrough.⁶⁶

The Debate over Détente

Between 1973 and 1976, public attitudes toward foreign commitments and defense spending underwent an unexpected change. In March 1973, President Nixon warned the secretaries

of state and defense that he foresaw a “massive” problem: members of Congress would likely want to transfer money from defense to domestic programs. Yet, in his judgment, maintaining a robust military posture involved “the possible success or failure of our entire foreign policy and of our initiatives toward peace.”⁶⁷ Late in September 1973, the Senate supported maintaining funding for a new ballistic missile submarine by the narrow margin of 49–47. Two weeks later, however, a new Arab-Israeli war changed the climate on Capitol Hill. The Soviet reaction—rushing arms to the Arabs—struck many as contrary to the spirit of détente. Consequently, the FY 1974 DoD budget emerged from Congress with only modest cuts, and it was promptly augmented by a readiness supplemental. The following year the administration’s budget request encountered no major opposition.

In January 1975, with the House and Senate now containing lopsided Democratic majorities, administration leaders again worried about how their defense requests would fare. Three months later, Communist victory in Southeast Asia persuaded many members of Congress—including some who had been strongly antiwar—that this was not the time to make sizable budget cuts or reduce overseas deployments. But developments abroad could work against the administration as well. The Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, concluded in August 1975, sparked criticism in the United States because it appeared to ratify Soviet control over Eastern Europe. The provisions addressing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which came to acquire great significance later, were viewed dismissively at the time. By autumn 1975, therefore, détente had lost a good deal of its luster. For a number of observers, Kissinger represented the continued pursuit of détente while Schlesinger stood for a more combative approach. Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., chief of naval operations from 1970 to 1974, published a memoir early in 1976 that portrayed the conduct of foreign policy as having pitted Kissinger’s pessimistic outlook, accommodating to the notion of U.S. decline, against Schlesinger’s determination to resist Communist inroads.⁶⁸

Rumsfeld later described his basic difference with Kissinger in subtler terms. Kissinger, he concluded, wanted to maintain publicly that the United States was, and would remain, the world’s most powerful nation because this perception would strengthen his hand in negotiations. Rumsfeld, however, believed that the trends in relative military capabilities were adverse, and that Congress would not vote the funds needed to reverse those trends unless it could be persuaded that there were compelling reasons for doing so. Therefore, he arranged numerous briefings for senators, representatives, and public interest groups detailing the Soviet buildup. Rumsfeld’s carefully orchestrated briefings painted a dire picture. To add credibility, Rumsfeld held the sessions in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, and Ford often briefly entered the room.⁶⁹ The payoff, he claimed, could be seen in congressional willingness to vote more funds for investment in defense programs.⁷⁰

Conclusion

In hindsight, Kissinger characterized Gerald Ford’s presidency as years of renewal. Purely from the standpoint of foreign affairs, this judgment appears open to question. Notwithstanding Kissinger’s successful shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, a train of events seemed to show that, in the words of one Soviet official, “the world was going our way.”⁷¹ These events included victories in South Vietnam and Cambodia. Moreover, the sharp rise in oil prices disrupted U.S. and West European economies, making real increases in their defense budgets difficult to achieve. Conversely, the spike in prices enriched oil exporters like the Soviet Union, providing Moscow with the means to finance foreign adventures.

Kissinger believed that, while his policy differences with Schlesinger had been mostly intellectual or technical, many of his disagreements with Rumsfeld derived from domestic politics.⁷² Essentially, this domestic political factor flowed from the discrediting of détente

among conservative Republicans and influential Democrats like Senator Henry Jackson. In 1976, Rumsfeld could block any movement on SALT because he spoke for a powerful constituency.

In his farewell speech, on 10 November 1975, Schlesinger said that détente should be pursued vigorously but without illusion. Détente, by his definition, “rests upon an underlying equilibrium of force, the maintenance of a military balance.” Yet, he insisted, the adverse trend in military power “is not a matter of theory; it is a matter of simple arithmetic.” The Soviets were lengthening their leads in some categories of armaments and narrowing their disadvantages in others. Recalling the lethargy of democracies during the 1930s, Schlesinger appealed for a rekindling of national values and purposes.⁷³ Basically, he was warning against the danger of negotiating with the Soviets from a position of weakness. How imminent that danger might become would remain a topic of debate well into the 1980s.

The tumultuous mid-1970s saw three secretaries managing the Pentagon under two different presidents. These changes at the highest levels of DoD leadership, as well as Henry Kissinger’s substantial influence on both Nixon and Ford, limited the secretary of defense’s role in U.S. foreign policy. No matter how worthwhile their intentions and goals, Richardson’s tenure was too short for him to implement major changes, and Schlesinger’s differences with the secretary of state led him first to marginalization in policy discussions and then to dismissal from office. Rumsfeld, too, found himself in conflict with the secretary of state, particularly in regard to arms control. Yet, with domestic circumstances favoring a turn away from accommodation with the Soviet Union, Rumsfeld undermined progress toward a comprehensive strategic arms treaty and cast doubt on the viability of détente as a national policy.

Notes

¹ Elliot Richardson, interview by Stuart Rochester and Maurice Matloff, 31 Aug 1989, 11–12 (quote), Oral History Collection, OSD Historical Office (hereafter OSD/HO).

² *Ibid.*, 5–6 (quotes); Richardson, interview by Stuart Rochester and Maurice Matloff, 14 Dec 1989, 8, 16 (quote), Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

³ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 623 (quote).

⁴ Ltr, Schlesinger to Rogers, 2 Jul 1973, folder SD-Schlesinger Signers (Jul 1973), box 48, Biographical Files, OSD/HO.

⁵ James R. Schlesinger, “The Office of the Secretary of Defense,” in *Reorganizing America’s Defense: Leadership in War and Peace*, eds. Robert J. Art, Vincent Davis, and Samuel P. Huntington (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1985), 255 (quote), 256–274.

⁶ James R. Schlesinger, interview by Maurice Matloff and Alfred Goldberg, 7 Feb 1991, 4 (quote), Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

⁷ Memo, SecDef to Assistant Secretary of Defense (ASD) (Comptroller) et al., subj: Establishment of Deputy ASD (Economic Affairs) in ISA, 13 Jul 1973, folder 020, box 7, Acc 330-78-0001, Records of the Secretary of Defense, Record Group (RG) 330, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) II, College Park, MD; memos, SecDef to Secretaries of the Military Departments et al., subj: Director of DoD SALT Task Force, 15 Sep 1973, folder SD-Schlesinger Signers (Sep 1973), box 48; SecDef to Secretaries of the Military Departments et al., subj: Director of DoD SALT Task Force, 17 Sep 1974, folder SD-Schlesinger Signers (Sep–Oct 1974), box 49; both in Biographical Files, OSD/HO; memos, Kissinger to Chairman, Under Secretaries Committee, subj: U.S. Government Presence Abroad, 6 Jan 1973; Director, Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) to Director Security Assistance Plans et al., subj: Organization for Security Assistance, 11 Sep 1974; both in folder 020, box 6, Acc 330-78-0011.

⁸ “Nitze Out as Appointee for Pentagon,” *Washington Post*, 27 Mar 1974; Schlesinger, interview by Maurice Matloff and Alfred Goldberg, 1 Aug 1991, 19, Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

⁹ “Secretary of Defense Schlesinger Announces Further Reductions in Pentagon, Headquarters Staffs of Military Services,” 5 Mar 1974, OSD Historical Office, comp., *Public Statements of James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense, 1974*, 4:1457; memos, Amos Jordan to ISA Staff, subj: Personnel Reductions and Reorganization, 7 May 1974; Jordan to Clements, subj: ISA Additional Personnel Requirements, 24 Oct 1974: both in folder 020, box 6, Acc 330-78-0011.

¹⁰ Memo, Latimer to Clements, subj: ISA Reorganization, 16 May 1974, folder 020, box 6, Acc 330-78-0011.

¹¹ Schlesinger, interviews by Maurice Matloff and Alfred Goldberg, 12 Jul 1990, 7; 28 May 1991, 31–32, Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

¹² Schlesinger interview, 7 Feb 1991, 16; William P. Clements Jr., interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 16 May 1996, 10, 24, Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

¹³ John L. McLucas, *Reflections of a Technocrat: Managing Defense, Air, and Space Programs during the Cold War* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2006), 85 (quote). McLucas served as secretary of the Air Force from July 1973 to November 1975.

¹⁴ Notebook of Brig. Gen. Robert C. Taylor, USAF, Military Assistant to SecDef, entries for 5 and 6 Jun 1974 (quote), folder 020 OSD (31 Dec 1974), box 7, Acc 330-78-0011; memo, Moorer (M-33-74), subj: Breakfast with SecDef Schlesinger and DepSecDef Clements, 0720–0840, Thursday, 6 Jun 1974 (quote), Adm. Thomas H. Moorer Diaries, box 11, Entry P 05D9, Acc 218-05-006, Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, RG 218, NARA II.

¹⁵ Gerard R. Ford, interview by Maurice Matloff and Alfred Goldberg, 5 Dec 1990, 6–7, Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

¹⁶ Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal: The Autobiography of Gerald R. Ford* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 136, 322–323.

¹⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1982), 181–182 (quotes).

¹⁸ Telcon, Kissinger-Schlesinger, 10 Oct 1973 (quote), 8:27 a.m., folder 10, box 22, Henry A. Kissinger (HAK) Telephone Conversation

(Telcon) Transcripts, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA (hereafter Nixon Library).

¹⁹ Telcons, Kissinger-Schlesinger, 8:22 a.m.; Scowcroft-Kissinger, 8:59 p.m. (quote); Haig-Kissinger, 9:14 p.m. (quote): all on 10 Oct 1973, folder 10, box 22, HAK Telcon Transcripts, NSC Files, Nixon Library.

²⁰ Telcon, Kissinger-Schlesinger, 13 Oct 1973, 12:49 a.m., folder 1, box 23, HAK Telcon Transcripts, NSC Files, Nixon Library.

²¹ Transcript, Telcon, Kissinger-Schlesinger, 13 Oct 1973, 12:49 a.m.; memcon, subj: Special WSAG [Washington Special Action Group]–Principals Only, 13 Oct 1973: both in *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1969–1976*, 25:467 (quote), 482 (quote).

²² Memo, Deputy ASD(PA) William Beecher to SecDef, subj: The October Airlift, 21 Jun 1974, 5–6, folder Israel 091.3 (Jun-Sep) 1974, box 65, Acc 330-78-0011.

²³ Minutes, WSAG Meeting, 24 Oct 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 25:714 (quote).

²⁴ Memo, SecDef to President, subj: Military Co-operation with Israel, 2 Sep 1975 (quote), folder Israel 091.3 1975, box 3, Acc 330-78-0059.

²⁵ Study prepared by the National Security Council Ad Hoc Group, NSSM 231, n.d., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:858.

²⁶ Schlesinger interview, 1 Aug 1991, 16 and 12 Jul 1990, 7 (quote).

²⁷ Memo, subj: Meeting of NATO Task Force with Secretary of Defense on 6 Sep 1973, 10 Sep 1973, folder NATO 092 (Jun–Dec 1973), box 74, Acc 330-78-0001.

²⁸ Chapter 3 in “Richardson, Schlesinger, and Rumsfeld,” MS for future volume 8 in Secretaries of Defense Historical Series, OSD/HO.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ The concept is printed in *NATO Facts and Figures* (Brussels: NATO Information Services, January 1976), 344–349 (quotes).

³¹ Memcon, subj: Bilateral Between SecDef and NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns, 6 Nov 1973 (quote), folder NATO 123 1973, box 74, Acc. 330-78-0001.

³² The MBFR talks began in 1973 as an effort to limit conventional military forces in Central Europe that were deployed by both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The negotiations continued until 1989, and while no treaty was ever signed, the experience did prove valuable in leading to the successful conclusion of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty of 1989. Jeffrey A. Larsen and James M. Smith, *Historical Dictionary of Arms Control and Disarmament* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 140.

³³ Memcon, 12 Apr 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 39:415–418. The Soviets participated in MBFR because the U.S. joined the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which in 1975 ratified the territorial status quo—an important Soviet objective.

³⁴ Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1975: Hearings*, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 5 Mar 1974, pt. 1, 124–125 (quote).

³⁵ Memcon, subj: Meeting Between SecDef and US MBFR Ambassador [Stanley] Resor, 29 Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 39:1014–1018.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1017 (quote).

³⁷ Memcon, subj: US Briefing on Vladivostok Meeting, 5 Dec 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 39:769–770.

³⁸ Minutes of WSAG Meeting, subj: Cyprus, 21 Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 30:360–361 (quote); Conversation between Secretary Kissinger and General Haig, 21 Jul 1974, 10:50 a.m., Item 25B (quote), folder 8, box 26, HAK Telcon Transcripts, NSC Files, Nixon Library.

³⁹ Ltr, SecDef to DefMin Sancar, 13 Feb 75, folder Turkey 091.3 1975, box 80, Acc 330-78-0058; memcon, President's Meeting with Republican Leadership, 21 Jul 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 30:766–767 (quote), 768.

⁴⁰ Memcon, subj: Secretary's Meeting with Foreign Minister Caglayanil, 24 Mar 1976, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 30:800–814.

⁴¹ Minutes of WSAG Meeting, subj: Indochina, 2 Apr 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10: 731–732 (quote), 733–739; Minutes of National Security Council (NSC) Meeting, subj: Indochina, 9 Apr 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 10:762–776, 777–779 (quotes).

⁴² Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 275–284; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 570–573; memo, subj: Some Observations on the Decision Process in the Mayaguez Incident, 20 May

1975 (quote), attached to memo, SecDef to President, subj: Rescue of the SS *Mayaguez* and Its Crew, 22 May 1975, folder Cambodia 385.3 1975, box 3, Acc. 330-78-0059.

⁴³ Minutes of NSC Meeting, 15 May 1975, pt. 2, 8–9, 12–13 (quotes), Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum, Grand Rapids, MI (hereafter Ford Library), <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁴⁴ Telcon, Schlesinger-Kissinger, 7 Feb 1973, 9:25, folder 7, box 18, HAK Telcon Transcripts, NSC Files, Nixon Library.

⁴⁵ Notebooks of BG Taylor, entries for 29 Aug and 3 Dec 1973, folder 020 SD (31 Dec 1973), box 7, Acc. 330-78-0001; entries for 7 Jan, 8 Jan, 23 Feb, and 20 Mar 1974, folder 020 SD (31 Dec 1974), box 7, Acc 330-78-0011.

⁴⁶ Notes of NSC Meeting by DepSecDef, 20 Jun 1974, folder USSR 388.3 (Jun-Aug) 1974, box 4, Acc. 330-78-0010; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1157–1159 (quote), 1170.

⁴⁷ Minutes of NSC Meetings, subj: SALT, 14 Sep, 7 Oct, and 2 Dec 1974, 4, 9 (quotes), Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁴⁸ Minutes of NSC Meetings, subj: The Soviet Union and SALT, 25 Jul 1975; and subj: The Middle East, SALT, 9 Aug 1975, Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014; memo, Maj. Gen. John Wickham to SecDef, subj: SALT Meeting between Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger on 19 September 1975, 29 Nov 1975, folder USSR 388.3 (Jan–Feb 76), box 3, Acc 330-79-0059; memcon, 27 Sep 1975 (quote), 11:50 a.m.–1:25 p.m., Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553248.pdf>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁴⁹ Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), 196 (quote). Ford also recalled Rumsfeld's initial reluctance to replace Schlesinger at the Pentagon.

⁵⁰ Memcon, 3 Nov 1975, 9:20 a.m.–10:13 a.m., 2, Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553284.pdf>, accessed 23 Oct 2014; Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 329–330 (quote).

⁵¹ Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 329–330.

⁵² Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 197.

⁵³ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 66. Mann conducted an interview with Morton Abramowitz, a senior foreign policy official at the time, on 12 December 2001.

⁵⁴ Bradley Graham, *By His Own Rules: The Ambitions, Successes, and Ultimate Failures of Donald Rumsfeld* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 127; Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 233.

⁵⁵ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 218. Clements later told OSD historians, "As far as I know, Rumsfeld and I never agreed on anything. It was a very unpleasant period for me." William P. Clements, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 16 May 1996, 28 (quote), Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

⁵⁶ Donald Rumsfeld, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 12 Jul 1994, 25 (quote), Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 35; Rumsfeld, interview by Alfred Goldberg and Roger Trask, 2 Aug 1994, 1 (quote), Oral History Collection, OSD/HO.

⁵⁸ Rumsfeld interview, 12 Jul 1994, 53–54.

⁵⁹ Minutes of NSC Meeting, subj: SALT, Israeli Arms Request, 17 Sep 1975, Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁶⁰ Melvin Laird, "Is This Détente?" *Reader's Digest*, Jun 1975, 54–57.

⁶¹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 850 (quote).

⁶² Msgs, Scowcroft to Rumsfeld, SCOTOs 11 and 20, 4–5 Dec 1975; Rumsfeld to Scowcroft, TOSCOs 66, 79, and 97, 4–5 Dec 1975; Kissinger to Rumsfeld, 082318Z Dec 1975: all in folder USSR 388.3 (Dec) 1975, box 82, Acc 330-78-0058; Minutes of NSC Meeting, subj: SALT, 8 Jan 1976; Minutes of NSC Meeting, subj: Israeli Military Requirements and SALT, 13 Jan 1976, pt. 2: both in Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁶³ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 853–860 (quote); Minutes of NSC Meeting, subj: SALT, 21 Jan 1976, Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014; msg, Rumsfeld to Scowcroft, 220350Z Jan 1976 (quote), folder USSR 388.3 (Jan-Feb) 1976, box 3, Acc. 330-79-0059.

⁶⁴ Memcon, 29 Mar 1976 (quote), 9:20 a.m.–10:25 a.m., Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553410.pdf>, accessed 23 Oct 2014. To see the guidance to Rumsfeld, see memo, Marshall to Rumsfeld, subj: Key Military Balances, 6 Dec 1975, <<http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/195/1975-12-06%20From%20A.%20W.%20Marshall%20re%20Key%20Military%20Balances%20.pdf>>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁶⁵ Minutes of NSC Meeting, subj: SALT, 11 Feb 1976; Minutes of NSC Meeting, subj: SALT, 30 Jul 1976 (quote): both in Ford Library, <www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/guides/findingaid/nscmeetings.asp>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁶⁶ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 233; Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 357–358.

⁶⁷ Memo, President to SecDef et al., 10 Mar 1973 (quote), folder 110.01 (Mar–) 1973, box 20, Acc. 330-78-0001.

⁶⁸ Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., *On Watch: A Memoir* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1976).

⁶⁹ Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, 224–226.

⁷⁰ Rumsfeld interviews, 12 Jul 1994, 19, 20, 23; and 2 Aug 1994, 2. While Schlesinger and Rumsfeld claimed to have achieved real growth in U.S. defense spending, the distortions imposed by high inflation make such claims hard to assess. From FY 1974 to FY 1977, DoD total obligational authority in constant dollars rose, while outlays in constant dollars decreased. See DoD, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), "National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2014," May 2013, 91, 179, <http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2014/FY14_Green_Book.pdf>, accessed 23 Oct 2014.

⁷¹ Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 24.

⁷² Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 175–177.

⁷³ Remarks by Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, 10 Nov 1975, *Schlesinger Public Statements 1975*, 7:2476 (quote).

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