

COMPREHENSIVE CONTRADICTION

The Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) and
President Jimmy Carter's Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy, 1977-1980

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INTRODUCTION

On May 13, 1976, Jimmy Carter - then the leading Democratic candidate for the U.S. Presidency - visited the United Nations General Assembly and outlined the specific nuclear arms control measures he would support as President to achieve the complete abolition of nuclear weapons from the world. During his first major address to an international audience as the presumed challenger to President Gerald Ford in the 1976 Presidential Election, Carter declared that halting the global proliferation of nuclear weapons would be one of his primary foreign policy objectives if elected President. The spread of nuclear energy throughout the world in the 1970s meant that the “spread of nuclear weapons to many nations” was a real and “fearsome prospect.”¹ Carter envisioned a future where “by 1990, the developing nations alone will produce enough plutonium in their reactors to build 3,000 Hiroshima bombs a year, and by the year 2000,” enough plutonium to produce “100,000 bombs a year.”² Carter suggested that failure to control the spread of nuclear weapons would magnify “the risk that nuclear warfare might erupt in local conflicts” and increase “the danger that these [local conflicts] could trigger a major nuclear war.”³

The apocalyptic scenario of a future world overflowing with atomic bombs could be averted, Carter said, if the United States, the Soviet Union and the international community negotiated nuclear arms control agreements, including a comprehensive ban on nuclear warhead tests and explosions in all environments, including underground,

¹ Jimmy Carter, "Nuclear Energy and the New World Order" (address, United Nations General Assembly Hall, May 13, 1976), *New York Times* Article Archive (NYTAA).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

underwater, in the atmosphere, and in outer space.⁴ Carter called for the United States and the Soviet Union to bilaterally negotiate “an agreement prohibiting all nuclear explosions for a period of five years, whether they be weapons tests or so-called ‘peaceful’ nuclear explosions, and [then] encourage all other countries to join.”⁵ A comprehensive ban on all peaceful and military nuclear explosions, Carter declared, would help prevent the global spread of nuclear weapons, prevent nuclear war, and ensure international peace.

President Jimmy Carter’s Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) policy, one component of Carter’s multi-pronged nuclear arms control and non-proliferation agenda, will be the primary subject of this thesis. Historians of U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms control analyzed Carter’s CTB policy in the 1980s and 1990s, but there has been little scholarship on the subject in recent years. According to the histories written in the 1980s and 1990s, Carter entered the Oval Office in January 1977 and immediately set out to negotiate with the Soviet Union a treaty of infinite, not five year, duration that prohibited both superpowers from conducting nuclear warhead tests and explosions in all environments.⁶ Carter desired a CTB to decelerate the U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear arms race, promote U.S.-Soviet détente, and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states.⁷ Although Carter supported CTB negotiations with the Soviet

⁴ Alan Neidle, "Nuclear Test Bans: History and Future Prospects," in *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures, Lessons*, ed. Alexander L. George, Philip J. Farley, and Alexander Dallin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 208.

⁵ Jimmy Carter, "Nuclear Energy and the New World Order."

⁶ Olav Njolstad, "Maintaining a Favorable Strategic Balance: The Nuclear Policy of Jimmy Carter," in *Peacekeeper and Troublemaker: The Containment Policy of Jimmy Carter, 1977-1978* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, 1995), 51; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985), 756; Thanos P. Dokos, "Negotiations During the Carter Administration," in *Negotiations for a CTBT, 1958-1994: Analysis and Evaluation of American Policy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), 170.

⁷ "Détente" is defined as a "relaxation" of diplomatic and military tensions between the United States

Union on a bilateral basis, he wanted other nuclear weapons states, such as the People's Republic of China and France, and potential nuclear weapons states, such as India, to adhere to a CTB.⁸

Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev was receptive to Carter's CTB initiative, and the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain (which joined the CTB negotiations in October 1977) achieved with relative ease "90-95 percent" agreement on the text of the CTB by the end of 1977.⁹ It appeared that within twelve months of becoming President, Carter was going to finalize a trilateral CTB and achieve a significant victory for his nuclear arms control and non-proliferation policies.

In 1978, however, Carter began to substantively change his position on specific provisions of the CTB agreement. For example, in May 1978, he decided to withdraw support for a CTB of infinite duration. He instead ordered U.S. diplomats to negotiate a CTB of maximum five years duration.¹⁰ Historians of Carter's CTB policy writing in the 1980s and 1990s argued that his policy modifications prevented completion of a trilateral CTB in 1978, because the Soviet Union was forced to evaluate and respond in later negotiating rounds.¹¹

Raymond Garthoff and Alan Neidle, who analyzed Carter's CTB policy in the 1980s, argued that the civilian and military bureaucracies responsible for nuclear testing, including the Energy Department and Joint Chiefs of Staff, vigorously opposed U.S. CTB

and the Soviet Union. According to Odd Arne Westad, the major "institutions of détente" were U.S.-Soviet arms control treaties, such as the CTB, which were designed to reduce the risk of nuclear war between the two superpowers. See Odd Arne Westad, ed. *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), 14.

⁸ Paul Warnke, "A Nuclear Test Ban and Prevention of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation," in *Nuclear Weapons Tests: Prohibition or Limitation*, ed. Jozef Goldblat and David Cox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 323-325.

⁹ Neidle, 182.

¹⁰ Njolstad, 51; Garthoff, 757; Dokos, 170.

¹¹ Njolstad, 51; Garthoff, 757-759.

adherence for two reasons. First, they argued that U.S. adherence to a CTB of infinite duration would undermine the “reliability” of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.¹² Second, they argued that the verification mechanisms supported by Carter, the State Department, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) were insufficient to prevent Soviet cheating of the CTB.¹³ Carter thus substantively modified his position on the duration and verification provisions to appease bureaucratic CTB opponents and garner their support for U.S. CTB adherence.¹⁴

Philip Schrag, Thanos Dokos, and Olav Njolstad, who analyzed Carter’s CTB policy in the 1990s, used different types of sources to draw the conclusion that sustained bureaucratic and Congressional CTB opposition prompted Carter to modify his position on specific CTB provisions beginning in May 1978.¹⁵ Schrag and Dokos relied heavily on memoirs of Carter Administration officials and transcripts of Congressional hearings on Carter’s CTB policy for sources. Njolstad primarily used document collections from the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (JCL), especially the files of Hamilton Jordan, Carter’s Chief of Staff, for sources. Having conducted archival research in the JCL, Njolstad persuasively argued that Carter privileged U.S. Senate ratification of the second U.S.-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) over Senate ratification of the CTB. Thus, Carter decided in the summer of 1978 to delay the completion of the CTB negotiations until after the Senate ratified SALT II.¹⁶

¹² Garthoff, 757; Neidle, 187.

¹³ Garthoff, 763; Neidle, 192.

¹⁴ Garthoff, 757; Neidle, 198.

¹⁵ Philip G. Schrag, *Global Action: Nuclear Test Ban Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 24-27; Njolstad, 51-53; Dokos, 170-171.

¹⁶ Njolstad, 51-53.

This thesis will methodologically diverge from past historical accounts of Carter's CTB policy by making use of over seventy five new declassified documents from JCL document collections and online databases unavailable to historians of Carter's CTB policy in the 1990s. This thesis will also make use of "critical oral histories," defined as interviews of Carter Administration National Security Council (NSC) officials supplemented with primary documents, which add "authenticity and accuracy" to the interviews.¹⁷ The newly declassified documents on Carter's CTB policy from the JCL confirm that bureaucratic opposition to the CTB caused Carter's policy modifications, which in turn prevented the finalization of a trilateral CTB in 1978. Whereas historians writing in the 1980s and 1990s have primarily analyzed the intra-governmental dimensions of Carter's CTB policy, they have not focused adequate attention on its international diplomatic and military dimensions. A side-by-side analysis and synthesis of the intra-governmental, international diplomatic, and military dimensions of Carter's CTB policy in this thesis will yield what Cold War historian Francis Gavin calls a "horizontal history," which will reveal "the complex interconnections and trade-offs that permeate[d]" Carter's CTB policy.¹⁸

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I will use Carter Administration CTB policy documents and negotiating instructions dating from 1977 to identify Carter's interconnected political, diplomatic, and military reasons for supporting a trilateral CTB of infinite duration in 1977. Carter and his State Department and ACDA advisors believed that a CTB that banned nuclear warhead tests and peaceful nuclear explosions

¹⁷ I employed the critical oral historical method during interviews with former Carter Administration National Security Council staff members Joseph Nye and Nicholas Platt. See James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang, "FORUM: When Empathy Failed Using Critical Oral History to Reassess the Collapse of U.S.-Soviet Détente in the Carter-Brezhnev Years," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 34-35.

¹⁸ Francis J. Gavin, "History and Policy," *International Journal* 63, no. 1 (Winter 2007/2008): 170.

(PNEs) could prevent Soviet “vertical proliferation,” defined as the “intensification and technological improvement” of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, and “horizontal proliferation,” or the spread of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states, such as India and Pakistan.¹⁹

In Chapter 2, I will analyze Carter’s negotiating strategy during the 1978 rounds of the trilateral CTB talks and his simultaneous negotiations with Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai for Indian CTB adherence. I will also use newly declassified Carter Administration memoranda from the JCL to provide a more thorough documentation of the internal Carter Administration debate over U.S. CTB adherence than histories written in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, this chapter will add to the historiography of Carter’s CTB policy with its focus on the international diplomatic consequences of the intra-governmental debate over U.S. CTB adherence.

In Chapter 3, I will examine why Carter secretly offered Chinese Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping technological support for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program in January 1979, which is a topic that has never been discussed in past histories of U.S.-China diplomatic relations or Carter’s CTB policy. I will also analyze the internal Carter Administration debate over the international diplomatic and military consequences of Carter’s offer of technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program. Some of Carter’s top level State Department advisors believed that his offer to Deng contradicted his simultaneous public declarations of support for a comprehensive

¹⁹ David A. Koplow, *Testing a Nuclear Test Ban: What Should Be Prohibited by a 'Comprehensive' Treaty* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1996), 6.

ban on underground nuclear tests and jeopardized his efforts to secure Soviet and Indian CTB adherence.²⁰

In the Epilogue, I will discuss the history of the trilateral CTB talks and Carter's CTB negotiations with the Government of India in 1979 and 1980.

From January 1977 to January 1979, President Jimmy Carter's CTB policy gradually disintegrated into incoherence. Beginning in 1978, bureaucratic dysfunction and opposition to U.S. CTB adherence inside the Carter Administration created an environment fertile for the genesis of contradictions in Carter's CTB policy. Intense bureaucratic infighting among top Carter Administration foreign policy and military advisors over U.S. CTB adherence in 1978 rendered Carter unable to manage effectively the complexities of the CTB policymaking process. Carter modified his position on specific CTB provisions in 1978 to assuage bureaucratic concerns over U.S. CTB adherence. However, Carter's CTB policy changes increased Soviet and Indian distrust of the Carter Administration and prevented him from securing Soviet and Indian CTB adherence in 1978.

Carter's January 1979 secret offer of technological support for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program overtly contradicted and jeopardized his efforts to secure Soviet and Indian CTB adherence. Carter's failure to inform the State Department that he intended to offer China technology for underground nuclear weapons testing caused him to commit a serious policy error, which risked undermining the trilateral CTB negotiations, U.S. nuclear non-proliferation objectives, Carter's own political credibility on nuclear arms control issues, and U.S. national security.

²⁰ Anthony Lake, "Technical Assistance to China for Underground Nuclear Testing," February 26, 1979, National Security Archive (NSA), George Washington University, Washington, DC, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb323/doc11a.pdf>.

CHAPTER 1:
THE “PROHIBITION” OF PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS
(1977)

Jimmy Carter’s 1976 Presidential victory over Gerald Ford empowered Carter to put the CTB proposal that he had articulated in his May 1976 United Nations address into action. On January 24, 1977, four days after his Inauguration, Carter “publicly called for an ‘instant and complete’ halt to all nuclear explosions.”²¹ On January 25, 1977, Carter signed Presidential Review Memorandum-16, which commanded the National Security Council (NSC) to “undertake a preliminary review of the major issues involved in the termination of all nuclear testing.”²² Carter ordered the NSC to analyze “the major problems of verifying a complete ban on all weapons testing as well as peaceful nuclear explosions by the US and the USSR” and “the effect of such a ban on US weapons testing programs as well as the likely effect on Soviet programs.”²³ According to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter quickly initiated CTB policy reviews because he wanted to ratify a U.S.-Soviet CTB sometime in 1977 or 1978.²⁴

Carter signaled his support for a CTB in his initial communications to Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev. On January 26, 1977, Carter wrote to Brezhnev and expressed his hope that the superpowers could “promptly conclude an adequately verified

²¹ Dokos, 163.

²² Jimmy Carter, “Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC-16,” January 25, 1977, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (JCL), Atlanta, GA, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/prmemorandums/prm16.pdf>.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 55.

comprehensive ban on all nuclear tests.”²⁵ On February 4, 1977, Carter received a positive response from Brezhnev: “Efforts should be intensified – and we [the Soviet political leadership] are ready to cooperate with the United States in this matter – for complete and general cessation of nuclear weapons tests and the prevention of proliferation of such weapons.”²⁶ On February 14, 1977, Carter responded to Brezhnev and welcomed Brezhnev’s “willingness to intensify efforts to reach agreement on a comprehensive test ban.”²⁷ To demonstrate his seriousness about negotiating a complete ban on all nuclear tests, Carter informed Brezhnev that he wanted the U.S. Senate to ratify the 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and 1976 PNE Treaty, two bilateral U.S.-Soviet agreements negotiated by President Ford that limited underground nuclear tests and explosions to a maximum of 150 kilotons yield.²⁸ A spirit of joint U.S.-Soviet cooperation on the specific issue of the CTB and the broader issue of nuclear arms control defined the early communications between Carter and Brezhnev.

While Carter believed that a CTB could help foster broad U.S.-Soviet cooperation in nuclear arms control, Carter’s State Department and ACDA advisors approached their CTB policy reviews with a more competitive eye. Acting ACDA Director Leon Sloss predicted in a February 11, 1977 memorandum to Brzezinski that once U.S.-Soviet CTB negotiations commenced, the United States and the Soviet Union would sharply disagree

²⁵ Jimmy Carter, “Letter to Leonid Brezhnev,” January 26, 1977, Declassified Documents Reference System (DDRS), document number CK3100073400.

²⁶ Leonid Brezhnev, “Letter to Jimmy Carter,” February 4, 1977, DDRS, document number CK3100073404.

²⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Letter to Leonid Brezhnev,” February 14, 1977, DDRS, document number CK3100073408.

²⁸ Ibid; “Threshold Test Ban/Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaties,” JCL, NLC-132-163-6-4-4; A one kiloton yield is equal to the power released by the detonation of 1,000 tons of TNT. The yield of the Hiroshima atomic bomb was 12-15 kilotons.

on whether “peaceful nuclear explosions” (PNEs) should be permitted under a CTB.²⁹ PNEs were underground nuclear explosions undertaken by a particular state for economic, scientific or civil engineering projects.³⁰ By 1977, the Soviet Union had developed a significant PNE program under the declared premise that nuclear explosions could help the Soviet Union with peaceful economic projects, such as canal building, river diversion, and oil recovery.³¹ The United States had halted its PNE program in the mid-1970s for environmental reasons.³² Sloss anticipated that Soviet negotiators would advocate for a CTB that banned only U.S. and Soviet tests of nuclear warheads, but not Soviet PNEs, which were nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes and thus not equivalent to warhead tests.³³

Since the Soviet Union controlled an expansive PNE program while the United States controlled no corresponding PNE program, Sloss stated that there were “serious risks in attempting to accommodate ‘peaceful nuclear explosions’ under a comprehensive test ban treaty.”³⁴ Sloss asserted that a PNE exception would create a major loophole in the CTB, which the Soviet Union could use to enhance its strategic nuclear weapons capabilities against the United States. Sloss explained that a PNE exception “would extend to the USSR a substantial unilateral military asset (i.e., a clear basis for indirect continuance of weapon testing).”³⁵ A PNE exception could enable the Soviet Union to conceal covert nuclear warhead tests as PNEs, because the United States possessed no

²⁹ Leon Sloss, “Nuclear Test Cessation and PNEs,” February 11, 1977, JCL, NLC-15-83-5-46-9.

³⁰ Koplow, 49-50.

³¹ Leon Sloss, “Nuclear Test Cessation and PNEs,” February 11, 1977; Jozef Goldblat and David Cox, “Summary and Conclusions,” in *Nuclear Weapon Tests: Prohibition or Limitation*, ed. Jozef Goldblat and David Cox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13.

³² Goldblat and Cox, 13; Dokos, 166.

³³ Leon Sloss, “Nuclear Test Cessation and PNEs,” February 11, 1977.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

technical verification mechanisms to distinguish between an actual Soviet PNE and a Soviet nuclear warhead test.³⁶ With covert nuclear warhead tests masked as PNEs, the Soviet Union could technologically modernize its nuclear warheads and “verify experimentally the functional soundness of weapons in the [Soviet] stockpile.”³⁷ Meanwhile, the United States would be altogether constrained under a CTB from conducting any nuclear warhead tests, which would prevent the United States from technologically modernizing and improving its nuclear warheads. State Department and ACDA analysts assumed that the United States possessed an advantage over the Soviet Union in terms of nuclear warhead strength.³⁸ If the United States permitted a PNE exception and the Soviets successfully masked Soviet nuclear warhead tests as PNEs, then the Soviet Union could close the gap with the United States in warhead strength. Conversely, Sloss stated that a CTB that banned PNEs could “interrupt” the Soviet “process of developing new improved nuclear weapons” by way of nuclear warhead tests masked as PNEs.³⁹

Sloss argued that a PNE exception would harm U.S. nuclear non-proliferation objectives, because it could encourage states interested in acquiring nuclear weapons to start PNE programs, which could then serve as the basis for a nuclear weapons program.⁴⁰ However, a CTB that banned PNEs would “help prevent the further spread of nuclear explosive capabilities.”⁴¹ If the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to renounce PNEs and nuclear weapons testing with a CTB, then other states potentially interested in

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Njolstad, 52.

³⁹ Leon Sloss, “Nuclear Test Cessation and PNEs,” February 11, 1977.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

starting a nuclear weapons program, such as India or Pakistan, might join the CTB and renounce PNE or nuclear weapons programs.⁴²

Sloss suggested that a PNE ban was “probably the most promising way to head off a second Indian explosion.”⁴³ In May 1974, India had successfully detonated its own nuclear device and declared it “a peaceful nuclear explosion experiment.”⁴⁴ Although India had not detonated a second PNE between May 1974 and February 1977, the Carter Administration feared that a second Indian PNE could encourage Pakistan, India’s regional adversary, to accelerate the development of its covert nuclear weapons program, which Pakistani leaders had originally started in response to the May 1974 “Pokhran” explosion.⁴⁵ However, Sloss believed that a “non-discriminatory” CTB that prohibited all states – the United States, Soviet Union, India and Pakistan – from conducting PNEs could convince Indian and Pakistani political leaders to adhere to the CTB.⁴⁶ Sloss and other Carter Administration officials believed that a CTB that banned PNEs could be used as a U.S. non-proliferation instrument to prevent a nuclear arms race and “reciprocal proliferation” between India and Pakistan.⁴⁷

Sloss’ recommendation that the United States should oppose a PNE exception under a CTB became Carter Administration policy in March 1977. Carter ordered U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to communicate to Brezhnev during preliminary March

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 178.

⁴⁵ Joseph Nye, telephone interview by author, March 21, 2012; According to Joseph Nye, the Ford and Carter Administrations “had evidence that the Pakistanis intended to use a French plutonium reprocessing plant to create nuclear weapons;” David Armstrong and Joseph Trento, *America and the Islamic Bomb: The Deadly Compromise* (Hanover: Steerforth Press, 2007), 62; Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb: American Nuclear Intelligence from Nazi Germany to Iran and North Korea* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 338-339.

⁴⁶ Leon Sloss, “Nuclear Test Cessation and PNEs,” February 11, 1977; Joseph Nye, telephone interview by author.

⁴⁷ Joseph Nye, telephone interview by author.

1977 U.S.-Soviet diplomatic negotiations in Moscow that he opposed a PNE exception.⁴⁸ Carter also informed Vance that he supported a bilateral U.S.-Soviet CTB agreement that was “not conditional” on the participation of all nuclear weapons states, including China and France, for “entry into force.”⁴⁹ Although Carter and his advisors had pressed China and France to adhere to a CTB alongside the United States and the Soviet Union, Chinese and French diplomats had by March 1977 rejected CTB adherence for national security reasons.⁵⁰ Therefore, Carter believed that universal CTB adherence by all nuclear powers should not be a prerequisite for suspension of underground nuclear tests and explosions by the United States and the Soviet Union.⁵¹

The March 1977 Vance-Brezhnev summit revealed that the Carter Administration and the Soviet political leadership held divergent views on several CTB provisions, including PNEs, duration and entry into force. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko demanded a PNE exception, proving Sloss’s February 1977 prediction accurate.⁵² When Vance responded that the Carter Administration opposed a PNE exception, one Soviet military advisor named Smirnov suggested that if the United States allowed a PNE exception, then the United States could monitor the Soviet PNE program to prevent Soviet clandestine nuclear warhead tests masked as PNEs.⁵³ Soviet diplomats also agreed to suspend testing for 18-24 months without the participation of all nuclear powers, “after which time the two sides would be free to resume testing unless France

⁴⁸ Jimmy Carter, “Letter to Cyrus Vance,” n.d. circa March 25, 1977, JCL, NLC-128-16-11-1-9.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Goldblat and Cox, 23; Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Your Meeting with Huang Chen,” February 7, 1977, DDRS, document number CK3100098648; Cyrus Vance, “Meeting with Huang Chen,” March 23, 1977, JCL, NLC-128-12-6-22-6.

⁵¹ The Soviets had demanded universal CTB adherence during exploratory CTB negotiations in 1975. However, since China and France rejected outside constraints on national nuclear testing, the Soviet demand for universal adherence blocked any progress in the negotiations. See Njolstad, 51.

⁵² John Marcum and Vic Utgoff, “CTB Policy Review,” May 2, 1977, JCL, NLC-15-83-5-2-7.

⁵³ Ibid.

and the PRC [China] had adhered to the agreement.”⁵⁴ The Soviets wanted the ability to withdraw from a CTB after 18-24 months because they had expressed to Vance “security concerns” with China, which was a political and military adversary of the Soviet Union by 1977.⁵⁵ The Soviets feared that China would continue to test and improve its strategic nuclear capabilities while the Soviet Union would be constrained from testing and improving its strategic nuclear capabilities under a CTB.⁵⁶ Vance and Gromyko reached no agreement on PNEs, duration or entry into force, but agreed to schedule another round of CTB negotiations in June 1977.

The PNE verification proposal presented by Smirnov during the March 1977 Vance-Gromyko meetings prompted the National Security Council to review CTB technical verification mechanisms and on site human inspections (OSIs) of Soviet testing sites. In May 1977, the NSC discussed “whether the US should rely on national technical means (NTM) alone in monitoring a CTB, or whether we should seek to negotiate additional provisions such as location of unmanned seismic observatories in the Soviet Union.”⁵⁷ According to Jozef Goldblat, U.S. “national technical means (NTM) to verify a test ban consisted primarily of seismic monitoring, satellite observation or electronic eavesdropping” technology located in the United States.⁵⁸ Seismic observatories consisted of U.S. monitoring stations placed directly on Soviet territory that could detect extremely small, “one or two kiloton” Soviet nuclear weapons explosions.⁵⁹ The NSC agreed in May 1977 that U.S. negotiators “should attempt initially to negotiate intrusive,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Jozef Goldblat, "The Nuclear Explosion Limitation Treaties," in *Nuclear Weapon Tests: Prohibition or Limitation*, ed. Jozef Goldblat and David Cox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 129.

⁵⁹ John Marcum and Vic Utgoff, “CTB Policy Review,” May 2, 1977.

CTB verification provisions such as unmanned seismic observatories and mandatory [on-site] inspection rights.”⁶⁰ The agencies agreed that placing seismic observatories on Soviet territory would “slightly reduce Soviet opportunities for cheating” the CTB with low kiloton covert nuclear explosions.⁶¹

In June 1977, the United States and the Soviet Union began another round of bilateral CTB discussions in Washington. In a post-negotiation report to Carter, Paul Warnke, who had replaced Leon Sloss as ACDA Director, stated that both U.S. and Soviet diplomats emphasized “the contribution that a multilateral CTB treaty could make to common U.S.-Soviet objectives, including curbing the nuclear arms competition and especially nuclear proliferation.”⁶² However, Warnke informed Carter that the U.S. and Soviet delegations still disagreed on PNEs. The Soviets argued that existing nuclear weapons states, such as the United States and the Soviet Union, should give up nuclear weapons tests but “should be allowed to carry out PNEs.”⁶³ PNEs “had great value for the Soviet economy” and technical verification mechanisms could be devised “to ensure that PNEs were not used to gain military advantages.”⁶⁴ U.S. negotiators responded that they were “unaware of any technical means...capable of precluding the achievement of military benefits” from PNEs.⁶⁵ Furthermore, U.S. negotiators argued that “countries of particular concern, such as India, would not join a discriminatory arrangement enabling only a few countries to conduct peaceful nuclear explosions.”⁶⁶ Carter instructed Warnke

⁶⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “NSC Weekly Report # 12,” May 13, 1977, DDRS, document number CK3100470266.

⁶¹ John Marcum and Vic Utgoff, “CTB Policy Review,” May 2, 1977.

⁶² Paul Warnke, “Report on Comprehensive Test Ban Discussions with the Soviets,” June 20, 1977, JCL, NLC-15-67-5-37-7.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

to “hold firm as possible” against a PNE exception.⁶⁷ Carter’s handwritten comments on Warnke’s June 20, 1977 memorandum suggest that he still feared that a PNE exception could encourage potential proliferators, such as India or Pakistan, to initiate or continue PNE programs. Carter also concluded that even if the United States was allowed to inspect the Soviet PNE program, the Soviet Union would nevertheless still be able to derive military benefits from a PNE program and modernize their nuclear warheads to the military disadvantage of the United States.

On the subject of the treaty’s duration, Soviet negotiators maintained “they would be prepared to enter into a suspension of testing without the participation of all nuclear powers, provided that they would be released from the undertaking if all nuclear powers had not joined within 18-24 months.”⁶⁸ U.S. negotiators said that the Carter Administration still supported a CTB of indefinite duration and argued that “permitting the right to withdraw after such a short period (if all nuclear powers have not joined) would be counterproductive in terms of the objective of persuading France and China to join.”⁶⁹ U.S. negotiators instead proposed that permitting the right to withdraw from the CTB after “a longer period, such as about five years, would be a more effective means of achieving” Chinese and French CTB adherence.⁷⁰

U.S. and Soviet negotiators also discussed the subject of CTB verification procedures during the June 1977 talks. According to Warnke, Soviet negotiators expressed the belief that seismic observatories were “unnecessary for effective

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

verification” of the CTB.⁷¹ National technical means and on-site inspections (OSIs) would suffice as verification procedures, provided that a “principle of voluntariness” was followed for the OSIs, “whereby a state suspected of a violation has the right to turn down a request for an inspection visit.”⁷² Carter wrote in response to Warnke’s report about the status of the CTB verification debate that “adequate technical observation important.”⁷³ Carter supported a technical verification scheme – NTM, seismic observatories, or both – that would enable the United States to sufficiently detect any Soviet cheating of the CTB and prevent covert Soviet vertical proliferation.

No agreements on PNEs, withdrawal rights, or verification were reached at the June 1977 CTB talks. A few days after Soviet negotiators departed Washington, British Prime Minister James Callaghan “informed President Carter and Brezhnev that the UK wished to take part” in the scheduled July 1977 CTB negotiations, which Carter and Brezhnev both accepted.⁷⁴ While “the British were a positive factor” in the July 1977 round of negotiations, they were not able to broker any U.S.-Soviet agreements on PNEs, entry into force, or verification.⁷⁵

With the trilateral CTB talks particularly deadlocked on PNEs, Vance and Warnke jointly authored a strategy document for the October 1977 negotiations, which was designed to “accelerate the shift to concrete negotiation of practical solutions with the Soviets” and “increase Soviet receptivity to sound solutions which will be

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Dokos, 164.

⁷⁵ Paul Warnke, “Report on Trilateral Consultations on a Comprehensive Test Ban,” August 1, 1977, JCL, NLC-132-37-2-6-6.

advantageous over the long haul.”⁷⁶ Vance and Warnke wrote that the United States had to compel the top Soviet leadership to withdraw support for a PNE exception.⁷⁷ Holding the line was all the more important because Vance and Warnke had learned from Joseph Nye, Carter’s chief envoy on nuclear non-proliferation issues, that Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai would halt India’s PNE program only “if the U.S. and the USSR agreed to forego PNEs in a CTB.”⁷⁸

Vance and Warnke proposed a three-pronged negotiating strategy designed to persuade the Soviets to drop their support for a PNE exception: PNE deferral, linkage, and high-level U.S.-Soviet CTB consultations. Vance and Warnke suggested that the U.S. delegation offer the Soviets “a significant face-saving element – deferral rather than permanent prohibition of PNEs.”⁷⁹ Vance and Warnke suggested that the CTB, “instead of banning PNEs outright and forever, could reflect that the parties would keep under continuing review whether the military benefits of PNEs can be eliminated. However, PNEs would not be allowed unless and until mutually acceptable agreement was worked out.”⁸⁰ Vance and Warnke suggested PNE deferral as a possible option to achieve a breakthrough in the CTB negotiations because a Soviet military official had alluded to the acceptability of PNE deferral during the July 1977 negotiations: “A Soviet military official commented to one of our delegation officers in Geneva that the PNE issue might

⁷⁶ Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke, “Proposed Strategy for CTB Negotiations,” September 6, 1977, JCL, NLC-132-37-2-6-6.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

be like the XVIII Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – drinking was banned but later permitted by further amendment.”⁸¹

If the Soviets rejected PNE deferral, Vance and Warnke suggested that U.S. negotiators link U.S. movement towards the Soviet position on specific CTB provisions to Soviet movement towards the U.S. position on PNEs. In other words, Vance and Warnke said that the United States should concede to the Soviet position on certain CTB provisions, such as verification or withdrawal rights, if the Soviets agreed to forgo or defer a decision on a PNE exception. For example, they suggested that the U.S. “pick up [on Soviet] willingness to have on-site inspections whenever there is mutual agreement to permit one.”⁸² Vance and Warnke believed that if the United States accepted the Soviet proposals for OSIs based on voluntariness, then the Soviets might accept the new U.S. PNE deferral proposal.⁸³

Vance and Warnke suggested that Carter directly pressure high-level Soviet political leaders to forgo support for a PNE exception. They asserted that one of the primary reasons why the Soviets had not compromised on PNEs was because the head of the Soviet CTB negotiating delegation, Igor Morokhov, was also the head of the Soviet PNE program. Morokhov’s leadership of the Soviet CTB delegation, Vance and Warnke said, “could result in undue Soviet emphasis on preserving PNEs.”⁸⁴

In October 1977, Carter himself entered the PNE debate and began to speak forcefully against a PNE exception. On October 3, Carter met with Gromyko and gave him “a hard political push – the first the Soviets have received above delegation level”

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

about his opposition to a PNE exception.⁸⁵ On October 4, Carter visited the UN General Assembly again and reiterated his belief “that the time has come to end all explosions of nuclear devices, no matter what their claimed justification, peaceful or military.”⁸⁶ Carter categorically rejected a PNE exception in front of the UN General Assembly to impress on the Soviets that he would not compromise his support for a PNE ban. On the same day as his General Assembly speech, Carter issued another set of CTB negotiating instructions that largely adopted the recommendations made by Vance and Warnke in their September 6, 1977 memorandum. Carter instructed Warnke to maintain the position that the CTB should enter into force without the participation of all nuclear powers and that the United States and the Soviet Union “should have the right...to withdraw after five years” if China and France did not accede to the CTB.⁸⁷ However, Warnke could “indicate to the Soviets that we are prepared to reduce the duration [withdrawal] provision to three years if in your [Warnke’s] judgment this will elicit commensurate Soviet moves on other outstanding differences,” such as PNEs.⁸⁸ Carter thus gave his consent to the linkage negotiating strategy proposed by Vance and Warnke. Carter ordered Warnke to reduce the withdrawal provision from five years to three years if Warnke believed that such a concession would impel the Soviets to drop their demand for a PNE exception.

U.S. negotiators employed the linkage negotiating strategy proposed by Vance and Warnke during the October 1977 CTB negotiations. The Soviets in turn employed

⁸⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Instructions for CTB Negotiations,” October 3, 1977, DDRS, document number CK3100126808.

⁸⁶ Jimmy Carter, “United Nations Speech” (address, United Nations General Assembly Hall, October 4, 1977), NYTAA.

⁸⁷ Jimmy Carter, “Instructions on CTB Negotiations for Paul Warnke,” October 4, 1977, DDRS, document number CK3100114862.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

linkage to induce the United States to accept a PNE exception. For example, on October 14, 1977, Roland Timerbaev, a member of the Soviet CTB negotiating delegation, said to Edward Ifft, an U.S. diplomat to the CTB talks, that the “US must show some willingness to work out something on PNEs...if the US shows a willingness to work something out on PNEs, the sides could move forward on a ‘three-track approach’ – PNEs, verification, and legal issues.”⁸⁹ However, “without progress on PNEs, progress on these other issues would not be possible.”⁹⁰ Ifft maintained his objection to a PNE exception for the same weapons benefits and proliferation reasons that U.S. diplomats had articulated since June 1977.⁹¹ Soviet diplomats disputed the U.S. argument that a PNE ban would help prevent the international spread of nuclear weapons. Timerbaev attempted to persuade Ifft that “based on information [that Timerbaev] has, India will not sign a CTBT whether or not PNEs are allowed.”⁹²

Warnke explained the Soviet linkage strategy in a October 27, 1977 cable to Carter: “Recent Soviet flexibility on such questions as verification and entry into force can be attributed, at least in part, to tactical judgment that their reasonableness on those matters may help persuade us to accommodate them on PNEs.”⁹³ Warnke said that the United States should continue to reject any PNE exception and “get the Soviet leadership to come to grips with the reality that we are not prepared to pursue PNE accommodation schemes, and that reaching agreement with US on a CTB will require a basic change of

⁸⁹ Edward Ifft, “Memorandum of Conversation with Roland Timerbaev,” October 14, 1977, JCL, NLC-132-37-2-2-0.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Paul Warnke, “CTB Negotiations: Recommended Strategy,” October 27, 1977, JCL, NLC-132-37-2-1-1.

Soviet thinking on PNEs.”⁹⁴ To induce the Soviets to withdraw support for a PNE exception, Warnke suggested that U.S. diplomats again offer PNE deferral and link Soviet movement on PNEs to U.S. movement toward the Soviet position on OSIs based on voluntariness.⁹⁵

On November 2, 1977, Brezhnev finally came to grips with the reality that the United States was not prepared to accommodate a PNE exception under a CTB. During a Kremlin foreign policy speech, Brezhnev withdrew the long-standing Soviet demand for a PNE exception and also accepted some U.S. proposals on PNE deferral and entry in force. Brezhnev “proposed a three-year treaty banning nuclear weapons tests, accompanied by a protocol providing for a concurrent three-year moratorium on PNEs.”⁹⁶ The CTB “would come into force without French or Chinese adherence,” but “upon entry into force, negotiations would continue on finding mutually acceptable ways to permit PNEs in the future.”⁹⁷ However, “at the end of three years, the treaty and moratorium would lapse, unless the PRC and France had acceded to the treaty.”⁹⁸ Although Brezhnev did not agree with the U.S. position that the CTB would continue indefinitely with a right to withdraw after three to five years, Carter was pleased with Brezhnev’s decision to institute a moratorium on PNEs for three years. “Let’s expedite an agreement if possible,” Carter instructed Vance.⁹⁹

After roughly eight months of negotiation, Carter and his State Department and ACDA advisors had achieved a major political and strategic victory by convincing

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Cyrus Vance, “Brezhnev’s Speech,” November 2, 1977, JCL, NLC-128-13-2-2-1.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Brezhnev to forgo a PNE exception under a CTB and instead institute a three year moratorium on PNEs. What is particularly remarkable about U.S. policy on PNEs is how little it changed in 1977. From February 1977, when Leon Sloss first described his reservations about a PNE exception, until November 1977, when Brezhnev yielded on PNEs, the primary U.S. objective for the CTB negotiations was consistent and coherent. The United States had to persuade the Soviet Union to withdraw its demand for a PNE exception and instead accept a ban on PNEs. Carter and his State Department and ACDA advisors believed that a CTB that banned PNEs could prevent “horizontal proliferation,” or the spread of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states. After learning from Joseph Nye in September 1977 that Indian Prime Minister Desai might adhere to a non-discriminatory CTB that banned PNEs, Carter and his advisors held firm in their opposition to the Soviet demand for a PNE exception throughout 1977.

Carter and his advisors also considered a CTB that banned PNEs as a means to prevent the Soviet Union from engaging in “vertical proliferation,” or the intensification and technological improvement of Soviet nuclear warheads. Carter and his advisors wanted to protect a perceived U.S. military advantage in warhead strength vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Carter and his advisors categorically opposed a PNE exception throughout 1977 because they believed that it could enable the Soviet Union to modernize their nuclear warheads with covert nuclear warhead tests masked as PNEs. Modernized Soviet nuclear warheads would in turn undercut the U.S. warhead advantage over the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER 2:

A POOR JUGGLER (1978)

Under instructions from President Carter to expedite the CTB negotiations, U.S. diplomats responded to Brezhnev's CTB proposals during the December 1977 round of CTB negotiations. While the Carter Administration had successfully persuaded Brezhnev to restrict PNEs for three years, Warnke wanted more restrictions on PNEs. Warnke and the U.S. negotiating delegation opposed Brezhnev's "guillotine" proposal that the CTB "would terminate automatically if China and France had not joined within three years."¹⁰⁰ Warnke also said to the Soviet delegation that the United States still supported a CTB agreement of indefinite duration, with a right to withdraw after three to five years if continued testing by China and France affected Soviet security.¹⁰¹

With respect to PNEs, U.S. diplomats accepted the Soviet suggestion for a protocol that banned PNEs for three years and also "agree[d] that the possibility of carrying out PNEs in the future should be kept 'under consideration'" by the two parties.¹⁰² However, the U.S. delegation opposed the Soviet proposal that the PNE ban would automatically lapse after three years, irrespective of whether the Soviet Union adhered to a weapons test ban. U.S. diplomats instead "took a strong position that the ban on PNEs must remain in force as long as the weapons test ban remains in force, unless of course the PNE ban is replaced earlier by arrangements for conducting PNEs that the U.S. can support."¹⁰³ Carter and his advisors in the State Department, ACDA, and

¹⁰⁰ Paul Warnke, "December Round of Trilateral Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) Negotiations," December 29, 1977, JCL, NLC-126-11-1-2-6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Defense Department were convinced that a PNE ban had to remain in force alongside the nuclear weapons test ban for the same reasons that they had opposed a PNE exception earlier in 1977. Assistant Secretary of Defense Walter Slocombe and Vice Admiral Patrick Hannifin, the Director of the Joint Staff, wrote in a memorandum to U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown that “unconstrained resumption of PNEs will result in unilateral military advantage [for the Soviet Union] in the absence of a US PNE program. Moreover, resumption of PNEs would undermine US non-proliferation objectives, since it could be interpreted by some states to justify nuclear explosions.”¹⁰⁴

Carter authorized Warnke to employ linkage again to persuade the Soviets that the PNE ban would have to remain in force for the duration of a nuclear weapons test ban. Warnke thus formally conceded to the long-standing Soviet request for OSIs based on voluntariness during the January 1978 round of CTB negotiations.¹⁰⁵ Carter’s concession to the Soviet request for OSIs based on voluntariness during the January 1978 round was well received by the Soviets. Vance wrote in a February 14, 1978 report to Carter that “the CTB talks have entered an active phase. The challenge inspection concept [OSIs based on voluntariness] was well-received by the Soviet delegation and has brought us closer to agreement. Our initiative on inspection has also put pressure on the Soviets for

¹⁰⁴ Walter Slocombe and Patrick Hannifin, “Talking Paper for the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Comprehensive Test Ban Issues,” January 19, 1978, http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/operation_and_plans/NuclearChemicalBiologicalMatters/nuclear_test_ban_docs_pt2.pdf.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Warnke, “On-Site Inspections (OSIs) Under a Comprehensive Test Ban,” January 13, 1978, JCL, NLC-15-83-8-22-2; Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Instructions for Paul Warnke on January 1978 CTB Negotiations,” January 25, 1978, DDRS, document number CK3100047888; The Carter Administration originally proposed “mandatory” OSIs subject to a quota, whereby both states would perform a fixed number of OSIs each year. The Carter Administration agreed to “voluntary” OSIs in January 1978, “whereby one party could request to inspect a suspicious event and the other party could either grant or refuse the request.” According to Steve Fetter, the United States realized that the mandatory and the voluntary approach to OSIs would operate “the same in practice, because an OSI request of a clandestine test that was not well hidden would be refused whether OSIs were ‘mandatory’ or not.” See Steve Fetter, *Toward a Comprehensive Test Ban* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1988), 133.

corresponding movement, especially on duration, PNE linkage, and other verification issues.”¹⁰⁶

As U.S. and Soviet diplomats continued to discuss PNEs and CTB technical verification mechanisms, Carter traveled to New Delhi in January 1978 to discuss a series of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues with Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai. In September 1977, Carter had learned from Joseph Nye that Desai would endorse Indian CTB adherence and halt India’s PNE program if the United States secured a non-discriminatory CTB that prohibited all states – the United States, the Soviet Union, and India - from conducting nuclear warhead tests and PNEs.¹⁰⁷ After securing a trilateral CTB that banned PNEs for at least three years in November 1977, Carter pushed Desai for Indian CTB adherence. Carter wanted to convince Desai to adhere to the CTB because he believed that if India conducted another PNE, then Pakistan would accelerate the development of its ongoing nuclear weapons program.¹⁰⁸ Desai confirmed to Carter that if the finalized trilateral CTB “contains no exceptions for weapons states and excludes all nuclear explosions,” then India would “forswear any further peaceful nuclear explosions.”¹⁰⁹

By January 1978, Carter was successfully juggling and achieving positive movement in the Soviet and Indian CTB negotiations. However, in March 1978, Carter’s ability to juggle the Soviet and Indian CTB negotiations successfully became more difficult. Congressional CTB opponents, led by Congressman Melvin Price, began House

¹⁰⁶ Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum for the President,” February 14, 1978, JCL, NLC-128-13-5-8-2.

¹⁰⁷ Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke, “Proposed Strategy for CTB Negotiations,” September 6, 1977.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Nye, telephone interview by author.

¹⁰⁹ Cyrus Vance, “Non-Proliferation Policy Progress Report,” February 26, 1978, JCL, NLC-15-123-2-4-3; Desai was a devout Gandhian who was morally opposed to nuclear weapons tests and also believed that India could not afford to finance a PNE or nuclear weapons program. See Perkovich, 211.

Armed Services Committee (HASC) hearings on the status of the trilateral CTB negotiations and asked representatives of different federal agencies to offer testimony on the benefits and drawbacks of U.S. CTB adherence.¹¹⁰ Assistant Secretary of State Leslie Gelb and Assistant Secretary of Defense David McGiffert presented a case for U.S. CTB adherence to the HASC. They testified that a CTB would help decelerate the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race and prevent the international spread of nuclear weapons. Gelb and McGiffert said that India would likely adhere to a non-discriminatory CTB.¹¹¹

Some members of Carter's own Administration, including Donald Kerr, the Assistant Secretary of Energy for Defense Programs, testified that U.S. CTB adherence would not advance U.S. nuclear non-proliferation objectives and would harm U.S. national security. First, Kerr said that a CTB would not directly prevent the international proliferation of nuclear weapons because "it was possible for an aspiring [nuclear weapons] state to deploy simple first-generation nuclear weapons without prior testing."¹¹² Second, Kerr argued that a CTB would prevent the United States from testing and completing nuclear weapons development projects necessary to preserve a U.S. warhead advantage over the Soviet Union.¹¹³ Third, Kerr claimed that a CTB of indefinite duration would undermine U.S. confidence in the reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile. In other words, the United States could not be sure that its nuclear warheads would work properly in a theoretical crisis situation if it adhered to a CTB that banned all testing.¹¹⁴ Why did Kerr offer Congressional testimony against U.S. CTB adherence when Carter supported a CTB? Kerr testified against U.S. CTB adherence because the

¹¹⁰ Ben Huberman, "Evening Report," March 15, 1978, JCL, NLC-10-9-7-6-8.

¹¹¹ Dokos, 175.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid, 176.

¹¹⁴ Schrag, 26; Ibid, 178.

Energy Department was responsible for overseeing the U.S. nuclear weapons program and thus had an interest in the continuation of U.S. nuclear weapons testing.¹¹⁵

Bureaucratic opposition to the CTB intensified when the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the chief uniformed officers of the U.S. military, declared their opposition to U.S. CTB adherence in an April 18, 1978 memorandum to Secretary of Defense Brown. Although the JCS had indicated their opposition to U.S. CTB adherence as early as March 1977, General David C. Jones, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reiterated in April 1978 that some low-yield underground testing of U.S. nuclear weapons was necessary under a CTB to “maintain high confidence in the reliability of US nuclear weapons and hence confidence in the US nuclear deterrent.”¹¹⁶ With underground testing, the U.S. military would be able to “identify and correct reliability and potential safety problems in existing nuclear weapons” and “adapt existing warhead designs to new [nuclear weapon] delivery systems with high confidence.”¹¹⁷ A complete and indefinite ban on nuclear testing would degrade and undermine the reliability of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.¹¹⁸

Increased bureaucratic and Congressional skepticism about U.S. CTB adherence meant that Carter had to juggle CTB negotiations with his own government and the Congress alongside CTB negotiations with the Soviets and the Indians. By May 1, 1978, Carter’s State Department and ACDA advisors concluded that if Carter was going to achieve Soviet and Indian CTB adherence, then he would have to negotiate and persuade CTB opponents in the Carter Administration to support U.S. CTB adherence. Without

¹¹⁵ Njolstad, 52.

¹¹⁶ David C. Jones, “Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense on Comprehensive Test Ban,” April 18, 1978, JCL, NLC-1-6-1-40-9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

full bureaucratic support for U.S. CTB adherence, Carter would not be able to secure Congressional support for U.S. CTB adherence, and by extension Soviet and Indian CTB adherence.

The State Department and ACDA therefore designed a policy modification designed to persuade the Energy Department and the JCS to support U.S. CTB adherence. The State Department and ACDA recommended that Carter support a CTB that would automatically terminate after five years instead of a CTB of infinite duration. Jerome Kahan, a State Department official, wrote in a May 1, 1978 memorandum to Warnke that “a short-term CTB treaty with no exceptions, lasting perhaps 5 years, would be most unlikely to involve us in stockpile problems, yet would accord with our commitment to a comprehensive test ban.”¹¹⁹ Kahan also said “some countries posing proliferation problems might actually prefer a five year test ban treaty over an indefinite duration test ban. India, for example, has recently expressed this preference.”¹²⁰

Kahan said that Carter should not consent to the JCS request for permission to conduct low-yield nuclear tests during the five year CTB period, because such an exception would “not be a truly comprehensive test ban” and would be rejected by India as discriminatory: “A treaty which permits low-yield testing by nuclear weapons states but not by non-nuclear weapons states would be perceived by many such states as discriminatory. These states could use this as a rationale for non-participation in the treaty itself and for rejecting other non-proliferation measures.”¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Jerome Kahan, “Memorandum for Paul Warnke on CTB,” May 1, 1978, NSA, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb323/doc07.pdf>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

On May 20, 1978, Carter signed Presidential Directive-38 (PD-38) and approved the five year CTB approach proposed by the State Department and the ACDA. PD-38 instructed U.S. negotiators to propose to the Soviets that the CTB “have a fixed, five year duration, which would automatically terminate at the end of five years. During the fifth year, there would be a review conference to determine whether to negotiate a replacement treaty.”¹²² Carter overruled the JCS proposal for kiloton level testing during the five year CTB period. However, he informed U.S. negotiators that he intended to resume testing “limited only to weapons safety and reliability purposes” at the end of the five years unless the United States had implemented a “safeguards” program that ensured stockpile reliability.¹²³ Gesturing to the concerns of the JCS and Energy Department, Carter wrote in PD-38 that “the importance of maintaining confidence in the safety and reliability of our stockpiled nuclear weapons” was the reason why he decided to support a treaty of a fixed, five year duration.¹²⁴

Carter also ordered “that the Soviets be informed of his desire to expedite the CTB negotiations.”¹²⁵ Carter instructed Warnke to link the U.S. concession on a fixed, five year duration to the CTB verification issues still under discussion during the June 1978 round of negotiations. Carter wanted the Soviets to understand that he expected Soviet movement toward the U.S. position on verification – fifteen seismic observatories on Soviet territory - in exchange for U.S. movement towards the Soviet position on duration.¹²⁶

¹²² Jimmy Carter, “Presidential Directive/NSC-38,” May 20, 1978, JCL, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/pddirectives/pd38.pdf>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid; Dokos, 168.

June 1978 was a pivotal month for Carter's juggling of the Soviet and Indian CTB negotiations. Carter's decision to support a CTB treaty of a fixed, five year duration proved popular with the Soviets. When Warnke "presented the new position on a five year, fixed duration treaty in the trilateral talks in Geneva...the Soviet response was upbeat. The head of the delegation called the meeting 'a turning point in the talks' and our proposal a 'definite step forward,' and said that the Soviet Government shared [the U.S.] desire to expedite the negotiations."¹²⁷ Soviet diplomats rewarded Carter's decision to support a five year CTB by increasing the duration of the PNE moratorium from three years to five years.¹²⁸

Carter and Desai discussed Indian CTB adherence and the internal Carter Administration debate over CTB adherence during Desai's State Visit to the White House on June 14, 1978.¹²⁹ Carter explained to Desai "some of the detailed challenges remaining in the nuclear test ban negotiations, including the need to ensure that nuclear weapons stockpiles remain reliable until they are eliminated."¹³⁰ Carter heard good news from Jagat Mehta, the Indian Foreign Secretary, three days after Desai's departure from Washington. Desai intended to adhere to a non-discriminatory five year CTB once a trilateral CTB agreement was completed.¹³¹ As Vance stated in a June 17, 1978 memorandum, Desai's decision to endorse Indian CTB adherence was a "major non-proliferation gain" for the United States.¹³²

¹²⁷ Cyrus Vance, "Memorandum to the President," June 8, 1978, JCL, NLC-128-13-9-6-0.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Cyrus Vance, "Prime Minister Desai's Visit to Washington, June 13-14," n.d. circa June 13, 1978, JCL, NLC-24-92-7-1-6.

¹³⁰ Perkovich, 211-212.

¹³¹ Cyrus Vance, "Memorandum for the President," June 17, 1978, JCL, NLC-128-13-9-13-2.

¹³² Ibid.

Although Carter moved the trilateral negotiations closer to completion and convinced Desai to adhere to a CTB in June 1978, bureaucratic opposition to U.S. CTB adherence dramatically escalated in that month. After Carter opted for a five year CTB in May 1978, CTB opponents inside the Carter Administration sensed blood in the water. Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger argued that a CTB of five years duration would still undermine the reliability of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.¹³³ Although Carter had explicitly ruled out kiloton level testing in PD-38, Schlesinger asked Carter to permit kiloton level testing during the five year CTB period under the premise that such testing was necessary to preserve stockpile reliability.¹³⁴

The State Department and the ACDA immediately sought to counter the arguments offered by the Energy Department that kiloton level testing during the five year CTB period was necessary to preserve stockpile reliability. Vance asked in a June 12, 1978 memorandum to Carter: “Why haven’t we been routinely testing weapons in our stockpile for reliability, if such tests are so critical? It is striking that no certified nuclear weapons has ever failed to explode.”¹³⁵ Vance also rejected the arguments offered by CTB opponents that the CTB verification provisions supported by the Carter Administration were inadequate, and thus the Soviets would attempt to improve their nuclear capabilities with covert low-level testing: “Given the five-year duration of the CTB, isn’t it extremely unlikely the Soviets could gain any strategic advantage through

¹³³ “Special Coordination Committee Meeting on Comprehensive Test Ban,” June 12, 1978, JCL, NLC-132-95-3-3-4.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum for the President on Comprehensive Test Ban,” circa June 12, 1978, NSA, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb323/doc08.pdf>.

undetected low-level testing during such a short period? Wouldn't the Soviets have to assume a formidable political risk if they were to attempt any clandestine testing?"¹³⁶

CTB advocates from the State Department and ACDA and CTB opponents from the JCS and Energy Department openly debated the merits and drawbacks of U.S. CTB adherence during a July 6, 1978 NSC meeting in the White House Situation Room.

Before the July 6 NSC meeting, the JCS had sent a memorandum to Carter stating that if he was committed to finalizing a CTB that banned all kiloton level testing, he should propose a CTB of a fixed three year duration instead of a fixed five year duration.¹³⁷

During the meeting, General Jones argued that a maximum three year CTB would do less harm to the reliability of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile than a CTB of a fixed five year duration.¹³⁸ Donald Kerr again pushed for kiloton level testing under a CTB and said that the Energy Department "could only certify continuing reliability with testing at 3-5 KT (kilotons)."¹³⁹ However, if Carter was committed to a CTB that banned kiloton level testing, Kerr agreed with the JCS that "three years represented a good compromise for national security."¹⁴⁰

The JCS also expressed their skepticism that a CTB would advance U.S. nuclear non-proliferation objectives during the July 6, 1978 NSC meeting.¹⁴¹ Vance and Warnke argued that switching the CTB from a five to a three year fixed duration and allowing kiloton level testing "would weaken the treaty from a nonproliferation perspective."¹⁴²

Vance and Warnke also stated that "there was a good chance that India and perhaps other

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ "Special Coordination Committee Meeting on Comprehensive Test Ban," July 6, 1978, JCL, NLC-15-70-8-6-4.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

[states] of concern would sign the agreement.”¹⁴³ At the end of the hour-long meeting, Harold Brown and Brzezinski demanded to know whether all of the agencies would support a CTB of maximum three years duration. “All the agencies were prepared to sign on, and that although JCS stood by its concerns, the Chiefs were more satisfied with the three year approach than five years.”¹⁴⁴ Brzezinski then promised to take the three year CTB proposal advanced by the JCS and the Energy Department to Carter for his consideration.

By July 11, 1978, Carter endorsed the JCS and Energy Department proposal for a CTB of maximum three years duration, but sided with the State Department and the ACDA against kiloton level testing under a CTB.¹⁴⁵ Carter decided that a three year CTB with a ban on kiloton level testing was a compromise approach that would unify the State Department, ACDA, JCS, and Energy Department behind U.S. CTB adherence.

Carter decided to hold off formally announcing his decision to pursue a three year CTB for several months. Carter’s domestic political advisors - Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan, Congressional Affairs Liaison Frank Moore, and White House Communications Director Jerry Rafshoon - believed that a public announcement of support for a three year CTB and an effort to finalize the trilateral CTB negotiations in 1978 would be counterproductive to Carter’s goal of successful ratification of the second Strategic Arms

¹⁴³ Ibid; In a July 10, 1978 joint memorandum to the JCS, Vance and Warnke said that a CTB would “impose a “constraint” on “Soviet strategic force modernization.” They also stated that “Indian adherence to the CTB would have a beneficial effect on other countries, particularly Pakistan.” See Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke, “Non-Proliferation Value of a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB),” July 10, 1978, NSA, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb323/doc09.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ “Special Coordination Committee Meeting on Comprehensive Test Ban,” July 6, 1978.

¹⁴⁵ Frank Moore and Bob Beckel, “Memorandum for the President on Meeting with Senators John Stennis, Henry Jackson, Thomas McIntyre, Sam Nunn,” July 11, 1978, JCL, NLC-126-13-21-1-3.

Limitation Treaty (SALT II).¹⁴⁶ Moore argued that “a CTBT submitted to the Senate before a SALT agreement will result in a premature and damaging debate on SALT.”¹⁴⁷

In other words, Moore believed that an increasingly anti-Soviet U.S. Senate would be unwilling to ratify SALT if it had already begun a ratification debate on a CTB.

Rafshoon for his part told Carter that it was “going to be hard enough to do SALT in today’s atmosphere. Preceding [SALT] with something [CTB] more vulnerable and with which you will have divided voices in your administration will hurt us in trying to project you as someone in control of your own government.”¹⁴⁸ After reading the memoranda of his domestic political advisors, Carter decided in July 1978 that “SALT [was] more imp[ortant]” than CTB ratification and that submission of CTB for Senate ratification “will not come before SALT under any circumstances.”¹⁴⁹

Although Carter had not formally announced in July 1978 that he supported a three year CTB, newspaper reports in the *New York Times* that Carter was seriously considering a JCS and Energy Department proposal for a three year CTB permitting kiloton level testing endangered Carter’s effort to achieve Indian CTB adherence.¹⁵⁰

Desai had warned Carter in a July 1978 conversation that “a CTB which permitted kiloton level testing would ‘open the flood gates for proliferation.’”¹⁵¹ On July 24, 1978,

¹⁴⁶ SALT II was a U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear arms control agreement that placed an aggregate ceiling of 2,250 for strategic nuclear delivery vehicles. See Westad, 40.

¹⁴⁷ Frank Moore, “Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – Congressional Implications,” July 7, 1978, “Comprehensive Test Ban/SALT, 1978” folder, Box 34A, Hamilton Jordan Chief of Staff Collection, JCL.

¹⁴⁸ Jerry Rafshoon, “Memorandum for the President,” July 7, 1978, “Comprehensive Test Ban/SALT, 1978” folder, Box 34A, Hamilton Jordan Chief of Staff Collection, JCL.

¹⁴⁹ Hamilton Jordan, “Memorandum for the President,” n.d. circa July 7, 1978, “Comprehensive Test Ban/SALT, 1978” folder, Box 34A, Hamilton Jordan Chief of Staff Collection, JCL.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Burt, “U.S., in a Shift, Asks Less Than a Complete Test Ban,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1978, NYTAA.

¹⁵¹ Frank Moore and Bob Beckel, “Memorandum for the President on Meeting with Senators John Stennis, Henry Jackson, Thomas McIntyre, Sam Nunn,” July 11, 1978.

Desai expressed his distress over the ongoing CTB domestic political debate in a letter to Carter:

During our [June 1978] talks in Washington, we touched upon the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. I was greatly encouraged by your assurance that the negotiations on this Treaty were making good progress. I was, therefore very distressed at the reports that the CTB would exempt testing in the low kiloton range and that the duration of the Treaty is likely to be reduced to three years. I hope for the good of all of us that this is not true. If, on the other hand, these reports are true, the so-called Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty will be yet another Threshold Treaty, permitting the continued testing and development of nuclear weapons. I doubt whether without a non-discriminatory and really comprehensive treaty with safeguards against clandestine breaches we would find it possible to subscribe to it.¹⁵²

Carter was forced to conduct damage control and clarify to Desai that he firmly opposed kiloton level testing under a CTB. Carter responded in an August 14, 1978 letter to Desai that he still wanted “a treaty which will gain the widest possible international support, including that of India. The treaty we seek would be a comprehensive ban which would not permit kiloton level testing.”¹⁵³ Although Carter had secretly decided to pursue a three year CTB in July, he told Desai that he had “decided to pursue a limited duration treaty but a final decision as to the length of the duration has not been made.”¹⁵⁴

CTB opponents from the nuclear testing bureaucracy continued to make it difficult for Carter to win their support for CTB adherence. Although Donald Kerr had agreed to the three year CTB approach during the July 6, 1978 NSC meeting, he invented new conditions for Energy Department acceptance of U.S. CTB adherence in August 1978. Kerr testified in front of Congressman Price’s subcommittee that the Energy Department would not oppose U.S. adherence to a three year CTB because the probability of “major stockpile problems” arising during a “three-year cessation of

¹⁵² Morarji Desai, “Letter to Jimmy Carter,” July 24, 1978, JCL, NLC-128-3-2-8-6.

¹⁵³ Jimmy Carter, “Letter to Morarji Desai,” August 14, 1978, JCL, NLC-128-3-2-9-5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

testing” was low.¹⁵⁵ However, Kerr said that it was entirely possible that stockpile problems could occur, and thus the Energy Department would support U.S. CTB adherence if the United States automatically resumed testing after the three year period.¹⁵⁶ Leslie Gelb of the State Department testified that a CTB would not undermine stockpile reliability and would solidify U.S. nuclear warhead superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, since the United States was already “ahead [of the Soviet Union] in warhead design.”¹⁵⁷

While the U.S. domestic political atmosphere did not appear conducive to Senate ratification of a CTB agreement, the United States and the Soviet Union nevertheless were scheduled to begin another round of CTB negotiations. Vance and Warnke wrote in a September 2, 1978 memorandum to Carter that it was possible “to resolve the remaining substantive [CTB] issues” and finalize a trilateral CTB during the September 1978 round.¹⁵⁸ According to Vance and Warnke, “the Soviets [were] eager to complete the talks and have continued to move toward our positions on all major issues, including our approaches on national seismic stations, on-site inspection procedures, and peaceful nuclear explosions.”¹⁵⁹ If a trilateral CTB was finalized in the September 1978 round, Vance and Warnke said that the United States could begin in 1979 to “build support for the trilaterally negotiated” CTB with U.S. allies, such as France, West Germany and Japan, and other states, including India.¹⁶⁰ The “principal advantage of this approach is that it would enable us to nail down agreement with the Soviets soon without having

¹⁵⁵ Donald Kerr, “Statement before the House Armed Services Committee,” n.d. circa August 14, 1978, “Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB): 1-12/78” folder, Box 13, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Njolstad, 52; Dokos, 175.

¹⁵⁸ Cyrus Vance and Paul Warnke, “Comprehensive Test Ban Negotiations,” September 2, 1978, “Serial Xs—[9/78-12/78]” folder, Box 36, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

either to proceed directly with ratification or to delay the process artificially.”¹⁶¹ Vance and Warnke developed this strategy to help Carter successfully juggle his international CTB objectives with his domestic political realities. Vance and Warnke believed that with the new strategy, Carter could complete negotiations with the Soviets, begin to finalize Indian CTB adherence, but also hold off the CTB ratification debate until after SALT II was ratified.¹⁶²

On September 19, 1978, Warnke informed Carter that if he wanted to maintain positive momentum in the trilateral CTB negotiations, he would have to formally “release [his] decision setting a three year fixed” CTB.¹⁶³ Warnke said to Carter that the United States “cannot settle the verification issues, particularly the number and types of seismic stations, without a firm decision on duration.”¹⁶⁴ Warnke said that if Carter did not release his decision to pursue a three year CTB, then “the only alternative would be now to approach the Soviets and the British and to tell them we have decided to suspend the CTB talks until after SALT ratification.”¹⁶⁵ If Carter failed to inform the Soviets about a final decision on duration during the September 1978 round, then Warnke believed that the CTB negotiations would stall.

Warnke informed Carter that there were a number of political and diplomatic risks for Carter himself if he decided to suspend the trilateral CTB negotiations. “The Soviets are already charging us privately with welching on a CTB. If we suspend the talks, there is no question of the fact that they [the Soviets] will saddle us with the blame. The non-

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Paul Warnke, “Future of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Negotiations,” September 19, 1978, “Serial Xs—[9/78-12/78]” folder, Box 36, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

aligned countries, probably led by India, will complain that they have been misled and our non-proliferation efforts will suffer a severe setback.”¹⁶⁶ Warnke concluded that if Carter decided to suspend the CTB talks, “the picture that will be painted is that the Administration steadily retreated from a genuine test ban of indefinite duration to a ban of a fixed and limited period and now to the indefinite suspension of the talks.”¹⁶⁷

Warnke’s September 19, 1978 memorandum “precipitated a sharp debate within [the Carter Administration] about how to proceed” with the September 1978 CTB negotiations.¹⁶⁸ Brown, Schlesinger, and Brzezinski argued in memoranda to Carter that finalizing a CTB in the September 1978 round and showing the CTB treaty to other states, such as India, would inevitably start an early confrontation with Congress on CTB ratification. Brown said that CTB “opponents in Congress will then hold hearings, claiming that they have as much of a right to be consulted and to influence the text of the agreement as do the non-nuclear states.”¹⁶⁹ Brown, Schlesinger and Brzezinski all contended that an early confrontation with Congress over CTB would damage the prospects of successful SALT II ratification.¹⁷⁰

Carter, again forced to juggle the recommendations of the State Department and the ACDA against the opposing recommendations offered by the Defense Department, Energy Department, and his own National Security Advisor, decided to adopt a

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Approach to CTB,” September 21, 1978, “Serial Xs—[9/78-12/78]” folder, Box 36, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL.

¹⁶⁹ Harold Brown, “Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski on CTB,” September 19, 1978, “Serial Xs—[9/78-12/78]” folder, Box 36, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL; James Schlesinger, “Recommendations Regarding the Vance-Warnke Memorandum on CTB Procedures,” September 20, 1978, “Serial Xs—[9/78-12/78]” folder, Box 36, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL.

¹⁷⁰ Brzezinski wrote in his memoir that he “saw CTB as a likely embarrassment to any effort on our part to obtain SALT ratification. I feared that our legislative circuits would become overloaded if we tried to obtain both SALT and CTB.” See Brzezinski, 172.

compromise approach. Carter approved Warnke's recommendation to finally inform the Soviets that he supported a three year CTB, because he wanted to avoid a complete cessation of the CTB talks during the September 1978 round.¹⁷¹ Carter also agreed with Brown, Schlesinger and Brzezinski that the finalization of CTB negotiations during the September 1978 round and the initiation of multilateral CTB consultations would start a premature Congressional CTB debate, which would cripple the Administration's SALT II ratification effort.

On September 25, 1978, Carter instructed U.S. diplomats to communicate to the Soviets that he supported a CTB of maximum three years duration and that he was willing to accept ten, not fifteen, seismic observatories on U.S. territory.¹⁷² He also privately informed the U.S. delegation that he decided "to resume testing at the end of the agreement unless a vigorous safeguards program" preserved stockpile reliability.¹⁷³ Shortly thereafter, Carter met Gromyko at the White House and decided jointly "to conclude the SALT II treaty first, followed by a comprehensive test-ban agreement."¹⁷⁴

Although Carter and Gromyko agreed that CTB should play second fiddle to SALT II, Soviet government officials and press organs publicly condemned Carter's decision to finalize CTB negotiations after SALT II ratification. Gromyko accused the Carter Administration on September 27, 1978 of "dragging its feet" on CTB negotiations during a speech to the UN General Assembly.¹⁷⁵ Soviet political commentator Yuriy Zhukov wrote in the Soviet party newspaper *Pravda* on October 19, 1978 that

¹⁷¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Approach to CTB," September 21, 1978.

¹⁷² Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Comprehensive Test Ban Instructions," September 25, 1978, "Serial Xs— [9/78-12/78]" folder, Box 36, Brzezinski Subject File, JCL.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982), 231.

¹⁷⁵ Andrei Gromyko, "General Assembly Speech," *Izvestiya*, September 27, 1978, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Daily Report: Soviet Union, FBIS-SOV-78-189.

radiological fallout from U.S. atmospheric testing on the Bikini Atoll in the 1940s and 1950s was responsible for the deaths of Japanese fisherman and native islanders and the environmental destruction of the atoll. Zhukov wrote that the “painful Bikini lesson serves as a warning that it’s high time to ban nuclear tests once and for all.”¹⁷⁶ The unstated message of Zhukov’s article was that the United States had been responsible for deadly atmospheric nuclear testing in the past, and was refusing to restrict underground nuclear testing in the present.

Soviet press organs excoriated particular Carter Administration officials, especially Schlesinger and Donald Kerr, as “enemies of détente” who were deliberately seeking to “torpedo” progress in the trilateral CTB negotiations. On November 26, 1978, Yevgeniy Shashkov, a foreign policy commentator for *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the official news agency of the Soviet Council of Ministers, compared Kerr and “those who oppose the conclusion of a treaty on the general and complete prohibition of nuclear weapons tests” to the paranoid and fearful inhabitants of the island of Laputa of Jonathan Swift’s novel *Gulliver’s Travels*: “Like the inhabitants of the island of Laputa in the story, [Kerr] is in a state of perpetual anxiety. Kerr is ‘afraid’ that if the sinister mushrooms of nuclear explosions stop appearing on our planet, then in time the nuclear bombs stored in American dumps could ... decay.”¹⁷⁷ Shashkov accused Kerr of creating false theories about diminished stockpile reliability under a CTB to justify the continuation of nuclear

¹⁷⁶ Yuriy Zhukov, “Lesson of Bikini Atoll Lies in Banning All Nuclear Tests,” *Pravda*, October 19, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report: Soviet Union, FBIS-SOV-78-207.

¹⁷⁷ Yevgeniy Shashkov, “DOE Opposition to Nuclear Test Ban Denounced,” *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, November 26, 1978, in FBIS Daily Report: Soviet Union, FBIS-SOV-78-232.

weapons tests and “the development of increasingly modern systems of mass destruction weapons.”¹⁷⁸

In October 1978, CTB supporters inside the Congress - including Senator Ted Kennedy, one of Carter’s political rivals inside the Democratic Party – publicly criticized Carter for modifying his CTB policy under pressure from the nuclear testing bureaucracy. In a lengthy address to the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations entitled “Soviet-American Relations and Arms Control,” Kennedy criticized Carter’s decisions to “retreat from the initial goal of a test ban of unlimited duration, to a 5 year and now to a 3 year nuclear test ban:”

The tragedy is that we could have achieved a 5 year ban which would have limited the qualitative arms race, protected important US advantages in nuclear weapons design, assured a 5 year moratorium on so-called “peaceful nuclear explosions” in the Soviet Union, maximized our leverage for tough verification provisions, and enhanced our ability to attract potential nuclear weapons states to an effective non-proliferation regime. With just a 3 year test ban, we will have to work much harder to achieve the same objectives.¹⁷⁹

Kennedy argued that “there should be no undertaking to resume nuclear testing after the treaty expires...a 3 year CTB must be renewable and should be renewed if it continues to serve our best interests, and I am confident that it will.”¹⁸⁰ Kennedy concluded his remarks by reminding his audience that his brother, President John F. Kennedy, had persevered against the stockpile reliability arguments articulated by the nuclear testing bureaucracy and signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) in 1963, which prohibited atmospheric nuclear tests. “If many American and Soviet nuclear testers had their way, our two countries would still be conducting nuclear tests in the atmosphere today...Under President Kennedy 15 years ago, we took the first step toward a CTB

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Kennedy, “Soviet-American Relations and Arms Control,” October 23, 1978, “USSR, 10/78” folder, Box 80, Brzezinski Country File, JCL.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

when we signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty. Let us not retreat from the goal that treaty then proclaimed – the ban of all tests for all time.”¹⁸¹

Just as Kennedy had criticized Carter’s decision to pursue a three year CTB instead of a five year CTB, Soviet negotiators also privately expressed their suspicions about Carter’s decision to pursue a three year CTB during the November 1978 round of CTB negotiations. Soviet diplomats accused the Carter Administration of possessing the intention to resume nuclear warhead tests after the three year CTB period terminated. While “the Soviet delegation accepted the US proposal for networks of 10 national seismic stations” on Soviet territory on November 28, 1978, they said that the Soviet Union would not “commit themselves to elaborate, unprecedented verification measures” if the United States planned to terminate the CTB agreement and resume testing after three years.¹⁸² If the Soviets could not presume that the United States would renew the CTB after three years, then the Soviet Union would not go to the trouble of installing seismic observatories on Soviet territory. As Alan Neidle writes, Carter’s decision to pursue a three year CTB “stimulated primordial Soviet fears regarding arms control as a means of collecting intelligence...[the Soviets] feared that the American intention was to learn a great deal about monitoring Soviet tests in the three year term of the treaty and then return to underground testing.”¹⁸³

By the end of 1978, influential Congressional officials, such as Senator Ted Kennedy, and the Soviet Union criticized Carter’s approach to the trilateral CTB

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum for the President,” November 28, 1978, DDRS document number CK3100521414.

¹⁸³ Neidle, 182-183; Alan Neidle was also the senior Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) representative to the U.S. CTB negotiating team from 1977-1980. See Herbert F. York, *Making Weapons, Talking Peace: A Physicist's Odyssey from Hiroshima to Geneva* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 291.

negotiations. Carter poorly juggled and balanced the demands of CTB opponents inside his Administration with Soviet and Indian expectations for the CTB negotiations. Carter's 1978 policy modifications, which were designed to secure the support of the JCS and Energy Department for U.S. CTB adherence, were in fact counterproductive to his effort to secure Soviet CTB adherence. Only when Carter decided to support a three year CTB in July 1978 did the JCS and Energy Department no longer oppose U.S. CTB adherence. However, Carter's public endorsement of the three year CTB in September 1978 increased Soviet distrust of the Carter Administration. Public reports about intra-governmental infighting over U.S. CTB adherence discouraged Desai from endorsing Indian CTB adherence in 1978, as evidenced by Desai's July 24, 1978 letter to Carter. Carter's own decision in September 1978 to privilege SALT II ratification over the CTB prevented him from finalizing a trilateral CTB agreement and securing Soviet and Indian CTB adherence in 1978.

It is critical to state that Carter's 1978 CTB policy modifications and his inability to rally JCS and Energy Department support for U.S. CTB adherence for much of 1978 did not fatally undermine the Soviet and Indian CTB negotiations. Carter and Gromyko decided in September 1978 that the trilateral CTB negotiations would continue in 1979.¹⁸⁴ On October 10, 1978, Carter and Desai also agreed that India would still adhere to a non-discriminatory trilateral CTB banning kiloton level testing. Carter wrote a letter to Desai expressing his disappointment that the United States and the Soviet Union had "not moved faster and further" toward the completion of a trilateral CTB. However, Carter

¹⁸⁴ Carter, 321.

said to Desai that he hoped the United States and the Soviet Union would “achieve progress” and a finalized CTB agreement in 1979.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Jimmy Carter, “Letter to Morarji Desai,” October 10, 1978, JCL, NLC-16-103-1-28-9.

CHAPTER 3: “CLANDESTINE FOREPLAY”

The trilateral CTB negotiations were scheduled to begin again in January 1979, but Carter’s attention was focused squarely on the State Visit of Deng Xiaoping, the top political leader of the People’s Republic of China. Deng traveled to the White House in late January to celebrate the “normalization” of U.S.-China diplomatic relations, which had occurred on January 1, 1979. During this significant event in the history of U.S.-China diplomatic relations, Carter secretly informed Deng of two interconnected foreign policy decisions that directly impacted his own CTB policy.

First, Carter informed Deng that U.S. diplomats would not pressure China to join the CTB and halt nuclear testing. Carter said to Deng that he was “confident that we [the United States] can achieve a non-discriminatory Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that will benefit all nations...We recognize that you [China] may not be in a position to join such a treaty in the near future. And we will not pressure you to do so.”¹⁸⁶

By promising Deng that U.S. diplomats would not pressure China to join the CTB, Carter reversed his own policy on Chinese CTB adherence. In 1977 and early 1978, Carter had instructed his advisors and U.S. diplomats to vigorously pressure Chinese diplomats for CTB adherence. In March 1977, Vance asked Huang Chen, a Chinese diplomat serving at the Chinese Diplomatic Liaison Office in Washington, whether China would adhere to a CTB. Huang Chen rejected Chinese CTB adherence, stating that China “[felt] that up until now the United States and the Soviet Union have conducted enough tests for themselves. Now you [the United States] don’t want to allow

¹⁸⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Talking Points for Your Second Session,” n.d. circa January 25, 1979, “China, [People’s Republic of]—President’s Meeting with [Vice Premier] Deng [Xiaoping: 12/19/78-10/3/79]” folder, Box 9, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Historical Collection, JCL.

others to conduct tests.”¹⁸⁷ China “adamantly opposed” CTB adherence “on the grounds that it [was] a device aimed at blocking the development of weapons essential to their security, particularly in the face of the Soviet nuclear threat.”¹⁸⁸ When Carter learned from Vance that Huang Chen rejected Chinese CTB adherence, Carter said “We’ll push this later,” meaning that Carter wanted to continue pressuring China for CTB adherence.¹⁸⁹

After Vance’s initial meeting with Huang Chen in March 1977, U.S. diplomats consistently stated during the 1977 trilateral CTB negotiations that China should eventually join the CTB and halt nuclear testing, but that Chinese CTB adherence should not be a precondition for CTB entry into force.¹⁹⁰ In January 1978, Senator Ted Kennedy and Leonard Woodcock, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.S. Diplomatic Liaison Office in Beijing, met with Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua and briefly expressed that the United States supported Chinese CTB adherence. According to Woodcock, Huang Hua resisted Kennedy’s pressure and “reiterated the standard CTB position” against Chinese participation.¹⁹¹ One year after Kennedy’s visit to Beijing, Carter reversed his policy and informed Deng that he would no longer pressure China to join a CTB.

Carter then secretly informed Deng that he was willing to transfer underground nuclear testing technology to China: “The President suggested to Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping that Chinese experts meet with Dr. Frank Press to discuss ‘how it might be

¹⁸⁷ Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum to President Carter,” March 23, 1977.

¹⁸⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Your Meeting with Huang Chen,” February 7, 1977.

¹⁸⁹ Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum to President Carter,” March 23, 1977.

¹⁹⁰ Paul Warnke, “Report on Comprehensive Test Ban Discussions with the Soviets,” June 20, 1977.

¹⁹¹ “Senator Kennedy’s Meeting with Foreign Minister Huang Hua,” January 4, 1978, JCL, NLC-1-5-1-9-5.

made easier for you [China] to do your testing underground.’ Deng agreed, adding that American technical help would be useful, too.”¹⁹² Carter’s offer of U.S. technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program was of a general nature. He did not define to Deng the specific types of technology the United States would be willing to transfer to China for the purpose of creating and operating an underground nuclear testing program.

When some of Carter’s top State Department advisors learned that he had secretly offered Deng technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing, they argued that Carter’s secret offer directly imperiled his efforts to secure Soviet and Indian CTB adherence. Anthony Lake, the Director of the State Department Policy Planning Committee, argued in a February 26, 1979 memorandum to Vance that Carter’s offer to Deng carried three potential political and diplomatic dangers for the Carter Administration.

First, Lake argued that Carter’s secret offer overtly conflicted with his continuing public support for a trilateral CTB. Lake argued that if Deng accepted Carter’s offer, then the United States would “need to examine how we reconcile technical assistance for Chinese underground nuclear testing with our objective of a Comprehensive Test Ban. Giving China the means to conduct more effective underground nuclear tests may be seen to conflict with renunciation of all testing by the US, UK, and USSR.”¹⁹³ Lake even suggested that Carter’s offer imperiled CTB negotiations with the Soviet Union. Lake feared that if the Soviet political leadership learned of Carter’s offer, then they might

¹⁹² Reginald Bartholomew, Anthony Lake, and Michael Armacost, "Assistance to China’s Underground Nuclear Testing Program – INFORMATION," October 31, 1980, NSA, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb323/doc11b.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Anthony Lake, "Technical Assistance to China for Underground Nuclear Testing," February 26, 1979.

terminate CTB negotiations with the United States: “Given Soviet paranoia about China and US-China relations, Soviet hardliners could well portray this step as part of a US effort to build up Chinese nuclear capabilities against the USSR. Moscow might even use it as a pretext to abrogate arms control agreements, or break off negotiations on CTB.”¹⁹⁴

Second, Lake argued that Carter’s offer of technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program contradicted and potentially undermined U.S. nuclear non-proliferation objectives, including Carter’s effort to achieve Indian CTB adherence: “Apparent US assistance to a nuclear weapons state – especially one that is not an ally – could raise fundamental objections to the gamut of our non-proliferation policies among the non-nuclear weapons states, especially those on or near the threshold.”¹⁹⁵ Lake said that if India learned that Carter offered technical support for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program, then Desai might renounce Indian CTB adherence and could be pressured by the Indian military to start a nuclear weapons program: “India would pose a special problem, in light of...India’s continuing concern about the threat from China.”¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, Lake said that several East Asian allies of the United States and potential CTB signatories, such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, might reject CTB adherence and initiate nuclear weapons programs if they learned that Carter had offered technical assistance to the underground nuclear testing program of China, a state that posed a potential military threat to Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid; India considered China a potential military threat since 1962, when hostilities between the two states broke out into a border war. Joseph Nye said that Indian military officials were reluctant to accept Indian CTB adherence in September 1977 because “the Indians saw themselves in a military competition and an arms race with China;” Joseph Nye, telephone interview by author.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

Third, Lake said that Carter's offer would "also raise concerns in Congress and careful consultations would be necessary before we committed ourselves unequivocally to provide China with any specific assistance."¹⁹⁸ Seeking Congressional approval for technical support for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program was fraught with numerous political perils for Carter himself, in Lake's opinion. In March 1978, the Congress had overwhelmingly passed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) into law, which prohibited the United States from exporting technology that could be used by an importing state for the creation of nuclear explosive devices.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, it is ironic that the NNPA, a law which Carter himself had supported and signed into law, prohibited Carter's offer to transfer underground nuclear testing technology to China, unless Carter received a Congressional waiver for the transfer. Leslie Gelb wrote in a March 15, 1979 memorandum to Vance that the Carter "Administration might have to declare China's nuclear weapons program in our [the U.S.] security interest" if it was to receive Congressional approval for U.S. technology transfers to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program.²⁰⁰ The process of acquiring Congressional approval for U.S. technology exports to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program would be an extremely controversial and highly publicized national security debate inside the Congress, Gelb predicted, given Congress' strict stance on nuclear proliferation after the 1974 Indian Pokhran PNE.²⁰¹ Lake and Gelb worried that a public and controversial Congressional

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Frederick Williams, "The United States Congress and Nonproliferation," *International Security* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1978): 46.

²⁰⁰ Anthony Lake, Roger Sullivan and Leslie Gelb, "Technical Assistance to China for Underground Nuclear Testing," March 15, 1979, NSA, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb323/doc11a.pdf>.

²⁰¹ Ibid; Perkovich, 206.

debate about U.S. technical support for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program would cause the Soviets and the Indians to reject CTB adherence.

After reading Lake's February 26, 1979 memorandum, Vance agreed that Carter's secret offer was imprudent, because it imperiled CTB negotiations with the Soviets and Indians, and Carter's own credibility with the U.S. Congress on nuclear non-proliferation issues. Vance wrote on the top of Lake's February 26, 1979 memorandum that "Your points are well taken – This does present real problems."²⁰²

Why did Carter decide to no longer pressure China to adhere to the CTB and halt nuclear testing in January 1979? Why did he secretly offer Deng technical support for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program, in spite of the risks that his offer carried for his efforts to secure Soviet and Indian CTB adherence?

Carter believed that no longer pressuring China to join the CTB would increase Chinese diplomatic goodwill towards the United States. Furthermore, Carter could not offer to help China test nuclear warheads underground while at the same time pressure China to adhere to a CTB and halt underground nuclear testing. Carter decided to no longer pressure China to join the CTB precisely because he wanted to provide technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program.

Carter offered Deng underground nuclear testing technology because he wanted to prevent radioactive fallout from Chinese atmospheric testing. Lake's memorandum, top secret Carter Administration documents authored by Vance, Brown and several State Department officials, as well as memoirs of former NSC officials indicate that Carter offered to "help the Chinese with underground nuclear testing techniques...to enable

²⁰² Anthony Lake, "Technical Assistance to China for Underground Nuclear Testing," February 26, 1979.

China to stop testing in the atmosphere.”²⁰³ By January 1979, China was the only nuclear weapons state testing nuclear warheads in the atmosphere.²⁰⁴ Carter was worried about the negative global health and environmental impacts of radioactive fallout from Chinese atmospheric testing, and thus believed that his offer of technical assistance would “encourage [China] to carry out nuclear explosive tests underground rather than in the atmosphere.”²⁰⁵ During his bilateral meeting with Deng, Carter expressed his hope that China would “consider complying with the provisions of the Limited Test Ban Treaty by limiting your nuclear tests to underground explosions. This step should not affect your security interests.”²⁰⁶ Since Carter wanted China to comply with the LTBT, which banned atmospheric nuclear tests, he offered China technical assistance to move its nuclear testing program underground.

Carter also offered technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program because he considered the offer part of a larger Carter Administration U.S.-China technological transfer initiative, which was designed to promote Chinese diplomatic goodwill toward the United States. Historians of U.S.-China diplomatic relations should regard Carter’s offer to Deng as one element of – rather than distinct from – his broader U.S.-China technology transfer policy for two reasons. First, Carter offered Deng U.S. technical assistance at the very same State Visit that he and Deng publicly signed an agreement that formalized general U.S.-China technological

²⁰³ Ibid; Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum for the President,” December 9, 1979, “China, [People’s Republic of]—Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]” folder, Box 9, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Historical Materials, JCL; Harold Brown, “Memorandum for the President on U.S. Policy Toward China,” December 13, 1979, “China, [People’s Republic of]—Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]” folder, Box 9, Zbigniew Brzezinski Donated Historical Materials, JCL; Nicholas Platt, *China Boys: How U.S. Relations with the PRC Began and Grew* (Washington, DC: New Academia, 2009), 253.

²⁰⁴ Reginald Bartholomew, Anthony Lake, and Michael Armacost, “Assistance to China’s Underground Nuclear Testing Program – INFORMATION,” October 31, 1980,

²⁰⁵ Ibid; Fetter, 21.

²⁰⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Talking Points for Your Second Session,” n.d. circa January 25, 1979.

cooperation.²⁰⁷ Second, Carter suggested that Frank Press, the Director of the White House Office on Science and Technology Policy, meet with Chinese technical experts to discuss underground nuclear testing techniques.²⁰⁸ Frank Press had been one of the leading champions of U.S. technological transfer and cooperation with China and had persuaded Carter to endorse expanded U.S. technological transfer and cooperation with China beginning in October 1977.

Press supported technological cooperation with China because he believed that offers of U.S. technology would induce Deng and the Chinese political leadership to improve diplomatic relations with the United States. On October 14, 1977, Frank Press wrote a memorandum to Carter stating that Deng had “moved technological development to the highest priority” and had “repeatedly expressed a desire to buy U.S. technology” in order to rebuild China’s research and development infrastructure, which had “fallen far behind global standards” during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.²⁰⁹ Press warned Carter that U.S. technology transfers to China could have a “negative reaction in Moscow, if a technology export appears to aid Peking [Beijing] in building up its anti-Soviet military capabilities.”²¹⁰ In spite of the possible Soviet backlash to U.S. technological cooperation with China, Carter approved Press’s suggestion that the United States “expedite” licenses for technology exports to China, because he believed that “major

²⁰⁷ Garthoff, 602.

²⁰⁸ Reginald Bartholomew, Anthony Lake, and Michael Armacost, "Assistance to China's Underground Nuclear Testing Program – INFORMATION," October 31, 1980.

²⁰⁹ Frank Press, “P.R.C. Access to U.S. Technology,” October 14, 1977, “U.S.-China Science and Technology 5/77-8/79” folder, Box 6, Science and Technology Advisor to the President—Press Files, JCL; Evan Feigenbaum, "Who's Behind China's High Technology 'Revolution'? - How Bomb Makers Remade Beijing's Priorities, Policies and Institutions," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 101; Richard P. Suttmeier, "Scientific Cooperation and Conflict Management in U.S.-China Relations from 1978 to the Present," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 866 (December 1998): 138.

²¹⁰ Frank Press, “P.R.C. Access to U.S. Technology,” October 14, 1977.

technological expansion” with China could help lay the groundwork for a new diplomatic partnership.²¹¹

With Press as the chairman of the “China S&T” Policy Review Committee, U.S. technological cooperation with China gradually increased in 1978.²¹² Press began working with Brzezinski in January 1978 to “develop a range of scientific and technological initiatives with China,” including transfer of U.S. seismological technology to China.²¹³ In the summer of 1978, Carter authorized Brzezinski and Press to discuss U.S. scientific and technological transfer with Deng and Chinese scientific officials in Beijing.²¹⁴ On October 13, 1978, Press wrote another memorandum to Carter outlining the political benefits and drawbacks of U.S. technological cooperation with China. According to Press, a broad U.S.-China technological and scientific relationship could “strengthen the hand of those Chinese leaders who want to deal pragmatically with the US [and] anchor Peking’s [Beijing’s] current ‘tilt’ toward the West and diminish further any prospects for Sino-Soviet reconciliation.”²¹⁵ However, Press wrote that the Soviet Union and East Asian allies of the United States (such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea) could object to an extensive program of U.S.-Chinese technological cooperation out of fear that the United States was helping China “enhanc[e] [its] military capabilities” with U.S. technology.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Frank Press, “Science and Technology in the White House, 1977 to 1980: Part 2,” *Science* 211, no. 4478 (January 1981): 142, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1686127>.

²¹³ Frank Press, “An Approach to the People’s Republic of China Through Science and Technology,” January 23, 1978, JCL, NLC-30-1-8-3-6.

²¹⁴ S. Mahmud Ali, *U.S.-China Cold War Collaboration, 1971-1989* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 129-130; Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 158-160.

²¹⁵ Frank Press, “US-PRC S&T Relationships,” October 13, 1978, “China (PRC), 9-11/78” folder, Box 8, Brzezinski Country File, JCL.

²¹⁶ Ibid; Nicholas Platt, interview by author, 131 East 69th Street, New York, NY, March 30, 2012.

In his October 14, 1977 and October 13, 1978 memoranda to Carter, Press advised Carter to weigh the political and diplomatic benefits and risks attached to particular technology transfers to China. When Carter extended his offer to Deng, he failed to heed Press' advice. Carter evaluated only the political and diplomatic benefits of his offer. He considered his secret offer of technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program as a form of "clandestine foreplay" that would induce Chinese leaders to improve diplomatic and political relations with the United States post-normalization.²¹⁷

Carter did not identify the political and diplomatic risks attached to his offer because he failed to inform his top State Department advisors that he intended to offer technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program. Carter's offer to Deng was the product of an ill-considered White House policymaking process. The documentary evidence suggests that Carter did not consult with Vance, Lake, or Gelb before extending his offer to Deng. Lake began his February 26, 1979 memorandum to Vance stating "I understand that during the visit of Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, the President offered to help the Chinese with underground nuclear testing techniques...to enable China to stop testing in the atmosphere."²¹⁸ Lake's use of the words "I understand that" suggest that Lake did not have foreknowledge or an understanding that Carter intended to offer Deng technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program. Lake and Gelb also stated in their respective memoranda that the State Department had to "think through" and fully analyze the potential "political/military questions" and "broader foreign policy considerations" of

²¹⁷ Platt, 251; Nicholas Platt, interview by author.

²¹⁸ Anthony Lake, "Technical Assistance to China for Underground Nuclear Testing," February 26, 1979.

Carter's offer of technical assistance, which also strongly suggests that the State Department did not conduct such analyses before Carter extended his offer to Deng.²¹⁹

Having failed to solicit the views of the State Department, Carter did not realize that his offer directly jeopardized the Soviet and Indian CTB negotiations. Given Soviet and Indian sensitivities over U.S.-China diplomatic cooperation, it seems highly unlikely, as Anthony Lake pointed out in his February 26, 1979 memorandum to Vance, that the Soviets and the Indians would have continued CTB negotiations with the United States if they learned that Carter offered to provide China, a political and military adversary of the Soviet Union and India, with technical assistance for an underground nuclear weapons testing program.²²⁰ Carter's State Department advisors believed that the Soviet Union and India would misinterpret his offer as a covert U.S. effort to help China modernize and upgrade its nuclear weapons program.

Carter's secret offer to provide technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program is historically significant because it was the first, and perhaps only, time that a U.S. President offered to support China – a state that had been one of America's major Cold War adversaries throughout the 1950s and 1960s – with its nuclear weapons testing program.²²¹ In 1980, the State Department argued that U.S. technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program would undermine U.S. national security and the U.S. military position vis-à-vis China in the long term. With underground nuclear testing technology provided by the Carter Administration, China

²¹⁹ Ibid; Anthony Lake, Roger Sullivan and Leslie Gelb, "Technical Assistance to China for Underground Nuclear Testing," March 15, 1979.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Fifteen years before President Carter offered technical assistance to the Chinese underground nuclear testing program, President John F. Kennedy considered a preemptive military strike against China's nuclear weapons program. See William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle' - The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-1964," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/2001): 54-55.

could vertically proliferate and make it “more difficult for [the United States] to monitor their [Chinese] nuclear tests.”²²² The State Department imagined a nightmare scenario where China would place nuclear warheads modernized by way of U.S.-provided underground nuclear testing technology on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). China would then point its new warheads and missiles toward the United States: “Given the Chinese capability of reaching the US with their new ICBMs, we have long-term concern over facilitating Chinese warhead development.”²²³

²²² Reginald Bartholomew, Anthony Lake, and Michael Armacost, "Assistance to China's Underground Nuclear Testing Program – INFORMATION," October 31, 1980.

²²³ Ibid.

EPILOGUE (1979-1980)

President Carter's handling of the CTB policymaking process during the period January 1977-January 1979 was a comprehensive contradiction. Although Carter actively pursued Soviet and Indian CTB adherence in the period January 1977-January 1979, he began in September 1978 to support policies and policy changes that were counterproductive or contradictory to his efforts to secure Soviet and Indian CTB adherence. Two instances of bureaucratic dysfunction caused Carter's CTB "policy schizophrenia" in 1978 and 1979.²²⁴

The first instance of bureaucratic dysfunction occurred when Carter's own advisors from the nuclear testing bureaucracy joined forces and actively interfered with Carter's efforts to finalize a trilateral CTB agreement in 1978. Carter modified his CTB policy on several occasions to secure the support of the nuclear testing bureaucracy for U.S. CTB adherence. However, Carter's September 1978 policy modifications and intense bureaucratic opposition to the CTB actually increased Soviet distrust of the Carter Administration, discouraged Desai from endorsing Indian CTB adherence, and prevented the completion of a CTB agreement in 1978.

The second instance of bureaucratic dysfunction occurred in 1979, when Carter failed to consult his State Department advisors about his offer of technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program. Since Carter failed to consult his State Department advisors before extending his clandestine offer to Deng, he did not realize that his offer directly contradicted his public support for a comprehensive ban on all

²²⁴ James Michael Martinez, "The Carter Administration and the Evolution of American Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy, 1977-1981," *Journal of Policy History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 275.

nuclear tests, imperiled his efforts to achieve Soviet and Indian CTB adherence, and potentially undercut a U.S. warhead advantage vis-à-vis China in the long term.

When Carter decided in September 1978 to defer the finalization of the trilateral CTB negotiations until after the Senate ratified SALT II, he missed an opportunity to conclude a trilateral CTB by the end of 1978.²²⁵ Carter's failure to finalize a trilateral CTB agreement in September 1978 enabled the Soviet Union to increase the number of nuclear warhead tests and vertically proliferate in early 1979.²²⁶ On March 1, 1979, Brzezinski expressed his concerns to Carter about "a growing asymmetry in U.S. and Soviet testing as the two countries prepare for a CTB."²²⁷ Brzezinski warned Carter that "the U.S. program has declined from an average of 25 to an FY 80 low of 12 tests per year, [while] the Soviets have accelerated their program by over 50 percent to a 1979 high of 30 tests."²²⁸ Brzezinski worried that the increase in Soviet tests meant that the Soviet Union was closing the gap with the United States in warhead strength. In response to the increase in Soviet tests, Brzezinski advised Carter to permit an "Enhanced Stockpile Testing Plan," which Brzezinski said would accelerate the completion of already scheduled warhead tests and test the reliability of existing U.S. warhead systems.

Carter approved Brzezinski's "Enhanced Stockpile Testing Plan" but warned Brzezinski: "Do not subvert CTB."²²⁹ Carter was right to suspect that his own National Security Advisor was maneuvering against U.S. CTB adherence. Brzezinski admitted in his memoir that he "did what he could to move the bureaucratic machinery" towards

²²⁵ Blight and Lang, 32.

²²⁶ Pavel Podvig writes that the Soviet Union was able to study the effects of "hard X-ray radiation on the electronics of missiles and their warheads" with these tests. See Pavel Podvig, "The Window of Vulnerability That Wasn't: Soviet Military Buildup in the 1970s - A Research Note," *International Security* 33, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 134.

²²⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Nuclear Testing Program," March 1, 1979, JCL, NLC-SAFE 17 C-17-19-2-3.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

proposals “which would not jeopardize our ability to continue the minimum number of tests necessary for our weapons program.”²³⁰ However, by approving a stockpile testing plan, Carter ironically played into the hands of CTB opponents and gave them another chance to subvert the CTB. Energy Department officials “predictably” tried to manipulate the Enhanced Stockpile Testing Program and “accelerate new weapons development efforts rather than propose testing aimed at the real CTB reliability issues,” but were thwarted by a CTB Testing Review Panel led by Frank Press.²³¹

Unable to convert the Enhanced Stockpile Testing Program into a program of American vertical nuclear proliferation, CTB opponents in the Energy Department and the U.S. military invented new tactics of subversion designed to inhibit progress in the trilateral CTB negotiations. They decided to convince the newly elected British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, that British CTB adherence would undermine the reliability of the British nuclear weapons stockpile.²³² Thatcher was a CTB skeptic who believed that the Soviets could engage in “evasive testing” under the verification schemes proposed by the Carter Administration.²³³ On June 13, 1979, U.S. Army General Alexander Haig, the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, met with Thatcher and reinforced her preexisting skepticism about British CTB adherence. Haig said that British CTB adherence was “naïve and dangerous” because a CTB would degrade the reliability of the British nuclear weapons stockpile.²³⁴ Just as the JCS – America’s highest level

²³⁰ Brzezinski, 172.

²³¹ Ben Huberman, “Enhanced Test Program Review,” April 19, 1979, JCL, NLC-10-20-1-46-7.

²³² Herbert York writes that Donald Kerr communicated and conspired with CTB opponents inside the British Ministry of Defense to prevent British CTB adherence in 1979. See York, 307.

²³³ Frank Press, “CTB Consultation with Prime Minister Thatcher,” June 7, 1979, JCL, NLC-126-17-22-1-8.

²³⁴ “General Haig’s Farewell Call on the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street,” June 13, 1979, Margaret Thatcher Foundation (MSF), <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/5EC38A1BEAD844CDBA89B2B3B420DF5A.pdf>.

uniformed military officers - had sabotaged Carter's effort to finalize CTB negotiations in 1978, Haig's private meeting with Thatcher in June 1979 was another example of a uniformed high-level U.S. military officer actively sabotaging Carter's effort to achieve a CTB agreement.

Thatcher's opposition to British CTB adherence delayed progress in the CTB negotiations for months. The trilateral CTB negotiations stalled because the British and the Soviets disagreed on the number of seismic observatories (called "National Seismic Stations") to be installed on British territory. The Soviet Union demanded that Great Britain accept ten NSS, while Thatcher replied that Britain would only accept one NSS. During a June 1979 bilateral meeting with Carter, Thatcher said that she "recognise[d] importance of achieving 10 National Seismic Stations in Soviet Union, but Soviet demand for 10 NSS in UK is absurd."²³⁵ Carter and his advisors in the State Department and ACDA unsuccessfully tried to persuade Thatcher to accept more than one NSS but she said that the operating costs of the NSS were too high for the British budget.²³⁶ Thatcher's refusal to compromise on the number of British NSS prevented progress in the 1979 CTB negotiations. The Soviets refused to continue any discussion on seismic observatories until the British accepted the same number of NSS as the United States and the Soviet Union.

The British-Soviet impasse over NSS prevented Carter from securing Indian CTB adherence in 1979. In June 1979, Desai informed Carter that he was "not encouraged by the slow pace of the CTB negotiations or the time limitation that has come to be attached

²³⁵ John Hunt, "Briefing for the Prime Minister on Bilateral Meeting with Jimmy Carter," June 26, 1979, MSF, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/74118FC8AEDD40AFA2F325F6D20678CA.pdf>.

²³⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Jimmy Carter," June 29, 1979, MSF, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/CDA04A141C4345CA8A957D7AFDE03541.pdf>; York, 317.

to it.”²³⁷ According to George Perkovich, Carter publicly stated in June 1979 that “his efforts in [the CTB negotiations] had not ‘been adequate to encourage other countries like India,’ and he said that he found it ‘a little bit difficult’ to press Desai when ‘we ourselves have not yet restrained the spread of nuclear weapons.’”²³⁸

The lack of progress in the CTB negotiations also prevented Carter from using a CTB to deescalate heightened nuclear tensions between India and Pakistan. The Carter Administration had learned from the Central Intelligence Agency as early as March 1979 that Pakistan was accelerating the development of its nuclear weapons program.²³⁹ The Carter Administration feared that a Pakistani nuclear weapons capability would “gravely damage prospects for stability as well as for such future measures as a CTB, and increase the likelihood of the spread of nuclear weapons elsewhere.”²⁴⁰ Carter and the State Department pressed Desai and Pakistan’s military leader, General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, for joint Indian and Pakistani CTB adherence once a trilateral CTB was achieved.²⁴¹

In June 1979, Desai informed Robert Goheen, the U.S. Ambassador to India, that he was fearful of “Pakistani duplicity” and was hesitant to constrain India’s nuclear explosive program with a CTB.²⁴² One month later, Desai’s political coalition collapsed and Charan Singh assumed India’s Premiership.²⁴³ On August 15, 1979, Singh stated in a public speech that he would start an Indian nuclear weapons program “if Pakistan goes

²³⁷ Robert Goheen, “New Delhi 10890 on South Asia Nuclear Problem,” June 21, 1979, JCL, NLC-16-49-4-1-6.

²³⁸ Perkovich, 219.

²³⁹ PRC Meeting on Pakistan,” March 28, 1979, JCL, NLC-132-74-3-7-3; Richelson, 339-341; Armstrong and Trento, 81.

²⁴⁰ PRC Meeting on Pakistan,” March 28, 1979.

²⁴¹ Frank Wisner, “Issues Paper for PRC Meeting on the Pakistan/Indian Nuclear Problem, May 16, 1979, JCL, NLC-132-75-5-9-8.

²⁴² Robert Goheen, “New Delhi 10890 on South Asia Nuclear Problem,” June 21, 1979.

²⁴³ Perkovich, 219.

ahead with the atom bomb.”²⁴⁴ In October 1979, Sultan Khan, Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States, informed Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher that Pakistan would adhere to a CTB only if it permitted Pakistan to conduct PNEs, a condition that was unacceptable to the Carter Administration given its long-standing opposition to a PNE exception under a CTB.²⁴⁵ Therefore, Desai’s fall from power and Zia’s resistance to U.S. CTB policy rendered Carter unable to secure Indian and Pakistani CTB adherence in 1979.

CTB supporters inside the Administration, especially Vance, hoped that the United States could breakthrough the British-Soviet NSS disagreement and achieve a trilateral CTB in 1980. Vance believed that Carter’s secret offer of technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program was a political landmine for U.S. efforts to secure Soviet and Indian CTB adherence. “It could only be viewed by the Soviet Union, the Indians, and others as the beginnings of a nuclear relationship with China, with all that implies. It would be inconsistent with our efforts to negotiate a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.”²⁴⁶ Therefore, Vance recommended that Carter rescind his offer of technical assistance for the Chinese underground nuclear testing program. Vance believed that there was no need to provide China with technology to help move its nuclear testing program underground: “Over time, the Chinese will come under increasing diplomatic and world pressures to halt atmospheric testing and move underground and may find it in their interest to do so.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 220.

²⁴⁵ Warren Christopher, “State 276397 on Clarifications on Possible Pak Nuclear Explosion Plans,” October 23, 1979, JCL, NLC-16-118-4-6-4.

²⁴⁶ Cyrus Vance, “Memorandum for the President,” December 9, 1979.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

Harold Brown wrote in a December 13, 1979 memorandum to Carter that he would not oppose transferring to China unclassified diagnostic and drilling technology necessary for testing if such transfers “would facilitate an earlier cessation of Chinese atmospheric testing.”²⁴⁸ However, Brown said that he “shared Cy’s reservations concerning the wisdom of selling equipment and technology to the Chinese to help them move their test program underground.”²⁴⁹ Brown warned that if the United States provided technology and equipment for China’s underground nuclear testing program, “China’s motives are unlikely to be limited to learning how to avoid the environmental costs of atmospheric testing.”²⁵⁰ Brown worried that the Chinese would use U.S. underground nuclear testing technology to vertically proliferate and modernize Chinese nuclear warheads.

By the end of 1979, Carter ultimately decided that if the Chinese asked for technical assistance, U.S. diplomats could offer to help China obtain unclassified drilling and diagnostic technology from other countries, not the United States.²⁵¹ Carter agreed with Vance that the Soviet Union and India could misinterpret direct U.S. technical assistance as a U.S. effort to build up Chinese nuclear capabilities, and that the Soviet Union and India would then renounce CTB adherence.

Two weeks after Brown authored his memorandum to Carter, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Herbert York, the head of the U.S. CTB negotiating delegation, said “it was obvious that all was lost” for the trilateral CTB negotiations after the Soviet

²⁴⁸ Harold Brown, “Memorandum for the President on U.S. Policy Toward China,” December 13, 1979.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Reginald Bartholomew, Anthony Lake, and Michael Armacost, “Assistance to China’s Underground Nuclear Testing Program – INFORMATION,” October 31, 1980.

invasion of Afghanistan.²⁵² Although Carter wanted the trilateral CTB negotiations to continue at “a slow pace,” Carter concluded that he would be unable to persuade an anti-Soviet Senate to ratify a CTB in 1980.²⁵³ Carter and his advisors believed that it might be possible to achieve a trilateral CTB in 1981.²⁵⁴

Ronald Reagan’s victory over Carter in the 1980 Presidential Election prevented Carter from continuing the trilateral CTB negotiations during a second term. Reagan appointed former U.S. Army General Alexander Haig, who had persuaded Margaret Thatcher to oppose British CTB adherence in June 1979, as his first Secretary of State. Reagan quickly ordered U.S. withdrawal from the trilateral CTB negotiations in 1982.²⁵⁵

As early as December 1978, CTB advocates inside the Carter Administration attacked Carter for missing the opportunity to conclude a CTB agreement in September 1978. McGeorge Bundy, President John F. Kennedy’s National Security Advisor and a member of Carter’s General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, criticized Carter for putting off CTB negotiations: “It may be tactically prudent to put CTBT below SALT, and Mr. Carter may have another view at another time. But on the record of 1978, one has to say that when he seemed to have a chance to get what he said he wanted, he looked around his own government and pulled back.”²⁵⁶

Ultimately, Carter did not get another view at a CTB. Carter’s gravest CTB policy error was his incorrect September 1978 prediction that he would have another opportunity to finalize CTB negotiations sometime in 1979 or 1980. Bureaucratic

²⁵² York, 319.

²⁵³ John Marcum, Ben Huberman, and Jasper Welch, “CTB Strategy,” June 13, 1980, DDRS, document number CK3100147842.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Schrag, 27-29; Fetter, 17.

²⁵⁶ McGeorge Bundy, “High Hopes and Hard Reality: Arms Control in 1978,” *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 3 (1978): 501.

subversion and a number of external international political, military, and domestic political events intervened and prevented Carter from securing Soviet and Indian CTB adherence during his Presidency.

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