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Diane Labrosse

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Review by Tom Nichols, Naval War College

This volume of *FRUS* covers U.S.-Soviet relations during that strange interregnum in American politics called “the Ford presidency,” in which an unelected President held the executive branch of the United States. It is easy to think of the twenty-eight months Gerald Ford occupied the Oval Office merely as the coda to Richard Nixon’s incomplete second term, especially in foreign affairs, not least because Ford vowed to continue Nixon’s policies and even held on to Nixon’s powerful foreign policy vicar, Henry Kissinger, as a symbol of that continuity. This volume, however, shows in rich detail the challenges in Soviet affairs bequeathed to Ford by Nixon, and shows that Ford and his advisors could not, in the end, sustain Nixon’s untenable policies. The documents are not only a history of U.S.-Soviet relations in this period, but also provide invaluable materials for an autopsy of the short life and sudden death of Soviet-American détente.

Whatever the flaws or virtues of détente as practiced by Nixon, this collection depicts a Soviet Union that saw itself as being largely in control of international events in the wake of Nixon’s implosion. The volume is divided into several major issue areas: the 1974 Jackson-Vanik amendment linking trade with the USSR to Jewish emigration, nuclear arms negotiations, the 1975 Helsinki human rights accords, and events in the Middle East and Africa. In all of these areas, Soviet confidence and American weakness are obvious, especially to Kissinger himself. “In [1972],” he tells President Ford in 1974, “I could kick [the Soviets] around because we were strong – I could give or withhold a billion in credits and clobber North Vietnam. Now what can we do?” (289) His growing frustration with his Soviet counterparts was obvious, and when he finally describes Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko after a 1976 meeting as “really insolent,” (1095) he is not wrong.

The collapse of détente is the single thread underlying each of these issues. But as these documents show, détente did not mean the same thing to the Americans (or at least to the Republicans left to defend it in 1974) as it did to the Soviets. Ford, already looking to his re-

election fight in 1976, was getting hammered from all sides in Washington, including both Republicans and Democrats who thought Nixon, Kissinger, and Ford had gone too far in trying to maintain good relations with Moscow. The complaints of Democratic Senator Henry Jackson and his aide Richard Perle (who would later join the Reagan administration) were constant worries to Ford as he tried to salvage Nixon's policies on the one hand while fending off charges of weakness and appeasement on the other.

Kissinger is the ubiquitous presence here, not only because he was Secretary of State (and initially dual-hatted as Ford's National Security Adviser), but because he was the very personification of the detentist line and of Nixon's foreign policies in general, and he clearly knew it. Thus it is Kissinger who exerted extensive efforts to save détente – an effort of debatable wisdom now, but one to which there were few alternatives in 1974 – even as other figures in Washington (including members of the President's own cabinet, such as Defense Secretary James Schlesinger) complicated matters back home.

Kissinger in these documents is painfully aware of the grave damage Nixon has done to American foreign policy, and he is not reticent to admit it either in the confines of the White House or during his trips to Moscow. (Kissinger had never visited Leningrad, apparently a running joke between him and his hosts in the early 1970s.) His nostalgia is equally evident: "We will be going back to 1972 conditions," he tells Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev bluntly in late 1974, "instead of the conditions you saw in 1973-74" (186).

If only. There was no way to go back, a reality that sank in with the Americans within months of Ford's accession to the presidency. There could be no doubt about the changed balance between East and West, for example, after the Vladivostok meeting between Ford and Brezhnev in 1974, an event that was not quite a disaster but produced almost nothing of later consequence due as much to American uncertainty as to Soviet arrogance. In preparing Ford for the meeting, Kissinger tried to bolster his new boss's confidence by throwing his old one under the proverbial bus: "You don't have to worry about comparison with Nixon," he told the new President. "He was a poor negotiator. He was tough in private, but last June [1974] he hardly knew what the subject was....The Soviets respected him not for the negotiations but for his toughness, his daring to mine Haiphong just before his meeting with them" (316). Kissinger warned Ford that the goal must be to "demonstrate that you are completely in charge...that Brezhnev must deal with you and your policies, regardless of what he may hear or read about the Congress, domestic critics, or future political swings in the US" (293).

Brezhnev, of course, had already heard and read plenty about Ford and the mess in Washington. Vladivostok produced almost nothing except the doomed SALT II framework, for which Ford and his successor, Jimmy Carter, would be attacked, and which Ronald Reagan would eventually pull off life support after years of pointless U.S. debate.

The volume is organized both chronologically and thematically, which is a bit difficult, since the underlying issue, at least for Ford and Kissinger, was a nuclear deal with the USSR. Kissinger, as he was cleaning out his desk the day after the 1976 election, even told Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin: "If we had obtained a SALT agreement we would have

won.” (1099) Given the tidal wave of anti-Republican sentiment after 1974, it is difficult to accept that analysis, but the documents in the volume show that Kissinger and Ford acted as if it had been true.

More to the point, Kissinger -- the historian, rather than the policymaker -- was deeply and consistently concerned about the way in which two great powers might come into conflict over issues that would later seem trivial. “Europe destroyed itself [in World War I] over Serbia,” he told Gromyko in 1975. “We should not destroy ourselves over Syria, Israel and Iraq. Ten years from now it will be irrelevant” (601). He tried again with Brezhnev in 1975: “Issues that seem important now my look like nothing a few years from now. Tens of millions were killed in Europe over Alsace-Lorraine, and what difference does it make today? The casualties in a future war would end civilized life as we know it” (924).

Indeed, in a few places, Kissinger went so far as to make the case that the U.S. and USSR should avoid conflict because the former World War II allies were destined to be allies once again. At one point he told the Soviets that by the mid-1980s, the United States and the Soviet Union could end up in each other’s arms, perhaps as a counterweight to a Japanese-Chinese alliance. “After 1985, events may drive us into ever closer collaboration, if not alliance,” he said at a 1975 meeting. “Provided we don’t weaken each other too much. But we should bear in mind the alliance between Japan and China could be directed against either of us” (601). Later in 1975, he raised this possibility again: “By the 1980s the identity of interest [between us] will become self-evident” (658).

Nothing of the sort happened, and by late 1984 relations between the U.S. and the USSR were arguably the worst they’d ever been. Brezhnev predicted in 1974 that he would live for another twenty years. He was off by over a decade. (185) Détente’s life, however, was to be even shorter, and the collapse of détente chronicled in this volume foreshadows the hardening of both the American and Soviet positions that would take place within just a few years of Ford’s defeat.

For the purposes of clarity, I will structure the remainder of this review on a discussion of analyze the volume based on four topics: The Jackson-Vanik amendment and Jewish emigration; human rights and détente; nuclear arms; and the Middle East and the Third World. I conclude with thoughts on the potential path of future FRUS volumes.

Senator Henry M. Jackson’s insistence on tying trade to the plight of the Jews alternately irritated and enraged Ford’s White House. Although President Ford does not emerge as a strong presence in the documents, it is important to remember that his roots were in Congress, not in the executive branch, and while his instinct was to work with his former colleagues, at times he seems defeated by the degree to which U.S. legislators did not understand his new responsibilities further down Pennsylvania Avenue.

Kissinger, by contrast, had nothing but contempt for the way that Jackson, the Israelis, and American Jews were complicating his efforts to keep the peace with Moscow. (Or his desire to placate the Kremlin, depending on where one stands on the issue.) Kissinger did not hesitate, for example, to tell Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that the increased

harassment and restrictions on Soviet Jews in 1974 were “due to the behavior of the Jewish community in America” (82). Of course, the Soviets exploited these divisions in the West, with Brezhnev playing dumb – which was not much of a reach for the late Soviet leader – about the number of Jews who wished to leave the USSR. When Jackson pushed for a Soviet commitment for 60,000 exit visas, Brezhnev basically argued to Kissinger that he was helpless to force more Jews to leave than the 15,000 that he claimed had already applied to go. (169, 181)

The hottest debates over Jackson-Vanik, of course, were in Washington, not Moscow, where Kissinger usually agreed with his interlocutors that Jackson was the main problem for both of them. “Jackson has won a great victory over the White House and...has managed to extract certain concessions from the Soviet Union,” Brezhnev complained in October 1974. “What burns me up,” Kissinger said even before the translation was over, “is that a lot of what the General Secretary has said is true” (181-182). Kissinger later told Ford, through his deputy Brent Scowcroft, that “the Soviet perception of the US is the most negative I have encountered in the last two years, based on what they see” as failures on U.S.-Soviet trade and “a deliberately staged humiliation on [the] emigration issue by Jackson.” Brezhnev, Kissinger warned, “seems to question my authority to speak for U.S. policy and, more broadly, whether we are capable of delivering on policy commitments. He thus seems to question [the] entire credibility of the new administration” (194).

Kissinger even suggested to the Soviets that they had a common enemy in Jackson. “I could have a big impact [on Congressional elections],” he told Brezhnev, “perhaps more than the President because I’m not considered a partisan political figure.” (Whether this was Kissinger generously interpreting his own press or dissembling to the Kremlin chief is hard to determine.) “The best way is if you and I are on the same side and Jackson is on the other” (199). Kissinger then complained to Brezhnev that Jackson-Vanik was being described by the U.S. press as a personal defeat for Kissinger himself, which was true, but seems an odd gripe to air to the leader of the Soviet Union. (201) In the end, Jackson-Vanik was passed, but this would be among the least of Ford’s problems, especially as the U.S. election neared.

In terms of human rights and détente, the Ford administration went out of its way to avoid antagonizing the Kremlin over human rights issues. Even without the benefit of hindsight, this policy was tremendously short-sighted, because it assumed that ignoring Soviet human rights abuses would generate Soviet cooperativeness in other areas. The Soviets, of course, were determined to go to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe without giving an inch on rights in the USSR regardless of American feelings on the matter.

The so-called ‘Basket Three’ issues on human rights in Helsinki led to severe arguments within the Kremlin about the degree of risk involved to the Soviet regime. In his memoirs Dobrynin described “heated debates” in the Politburo over Helsinki, and especially the “grave doubts” about “international commitments that could open the way to foreign

interference in our political life.”¹ Whether the Americans knew about these debates is unclear, but Kissinger must have intuited them, because he tried to assuage Soviet concerns by telling Gromyko that Helsinki would only have as much meaning as Moscow wanted it to: “Mr. Minister, why are we quibbling over these forms of words? No matter what goes into the final act, I don’t believe the Soviet Union will ever do anything it doesn’t want to do.”²

As it turns out, the Soviet leaders were prescient: there was considerable risk in opening the Soviet system even a fraction. Unfortunately, these documents depict the Ford White House as doing what its most severe critics accused it of doing, by trying to help Brezhnev and his colleagues mitigate the impact of CSCE and the issues surrounding it.

The flap over whether to invite Soviet dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to the White House is an instructive case. Kissinger and his fellow realists, in the midst of nuts-and-bolts conversations about nuclear arms, were dead set against such a visit, while many members of Congress and some of the more ardent Cold Warriors in the U.S. wished to see it take place. In the summer of 1975, Scowcroft (the deputy National Security Advisor at this point) sent an alarmed message to Kissinger regarding Congressional pressure for Ford to see Solzhenitsyn, noting that there was now a bipartisan “unholy alliance” on the issue. (661) Ford’s liaison to Congress, Max Friedersdorf, disagreed, and noted pointedly the day after Scowcroft’s message: “With all due deference to Dr. Kissinger, I believe that if détente is so fragile that it cannot stand a meeting with Solzhenitsyn, it will fall on some other account” (663).

Kissinger thereafter made the case to Ford directly that détente, while not “absolute” was “substantial and real.” The Secretary told the President in July 1975: “Deliberate war with the U.S. is impossible, but war could come by mistake or provoked by the Chinese. Détente kept the 1973 Middle East War from getting out of control” (664). That last claim is especially audacious, since Kissinger’s critics argued – with some justice – that the United States was facing problems like the Yom Kippur crisis (in which the Soviets threatened to intervene in the Middle East unilaterally) precisely *because* of détente and the determination by the Nixon-Kissinger duumvirate to maintain it at almost any cost.

Ironically, there was one person in the administration who had a clear-eyed view of détente: Richard B. Cheney, who at the time was the deputy to Ford’s Chief of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld. As the Solzhenitsyn mess was stewing in the summer of 1975, Cheney wrote to Rumsfeld:

¹ Anatolii Dobrynin, *In Confidence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 346.

² Quoted in Odd Arne Westad, “The Fall of Détente and the Turning Tides of History,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), 17.

I think the decision not to see [Solzhenitsyn] is based up on a misreading of détente. Détente means nothing more and nothing less than a lessening of tension. Over the last several years it has been sold as a much broader concept to the American people. At most, détente should consist of agreements wherever possible to reduce the possibility of conflict, but it does not mean that all of a sudden our relationship with the Soviets is all sweetness and light. (612)

Dick Cheney turned out to be wrong about a lot of things later in life, but on this, his understanding of détente would have been read approvingly by the Kremlin itself, which saw détente in far more limited terms than did Kissinger or other, more optimistic, Americans. Unfortunately, he was writing to Rumsfeld, the future Secretary of Defense, whose own Defense Intelligence Agency's view was that détente was "intended to facilitate their attainment of ultimate, overall dominance over the West" (740). While that evaluation might have been accurate in a more abstract sense, it was not helpful to see Soviet policy in 1974 in terms that could have been written in 1954.

There is also an intriguing moment in the volume that suggests that Kissinger was among the briefers who helped Ford to make his epic and now-legendary gaffe about human rights, in which he claimed during a televised debate with Jimmy Carter that Poland was not under Soviet domination and never would be under his administration. During an October 1976 meeting before the debate, Kissinger described Carter as "the man who wants to cut the budget, bring troops home and advocate revolution in Eastern Europe. This," Kissinger warns, "is the way to get us into war."

When [Carter] says [Helsinki] recognizes spheres of influence, it showed Carter doesn't know what he's talking about. Helsinki says nothing about the Soviet Union in Europe. It says that borders can't be changed by force, but only by peaceful means....I am getting worked up. But this guy really burns me. He is a super liberal and now he is turning tough. (1098)

It is easy to see how this, garbled through Ford's often wooden and awkward delivery, could end up as an attempted rebuke to Carter's attempt to outflank Ford on the right. If nothing else, however, it illustrated the degree to which the foreign policies associated with the liberal Republicanism of the mid-1970s had become muddled even in the minds of its own practitioners.

The mid-1970s were the apogee of the era of the arms controllers, the experts who could argue at length over whether stable deterrence and the peace of the world rested on whether the size of Soviet silos were going to be increased by 15 or 32 percent. (This was actually an issue with the Soviets at the time, because larger silos with greater volume could accommodate weapons with more 'throw-weight,' and thus more warheads.) Kissinger was the master of such negotiations, not least because his grasp of the larger problem of war and peace often managed to cut through the fog of technical issues. But here as well, the limitations of the exhausted American system in the mid-1970s are evident in the volume's documents. In arms control as in other affairs, the United States

had run out of energy, figuratively as well as literally. Worse, American negotiators now faced Soviet leaders who felt at the top of their powers and acted accordingly.

Neither Moscow nor Washington seemed to know what it really wanted from these talks. Unlike the strange moment over a decade later when Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev each realized that the other might not be bluffing about a wish to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the Soviet-American talks of the 1970s have a kind of desultory, workmanlike quality to them that actually makes negotiations over the most dangerous weapons on earth seem like the boring haggling of tax lawyers over the finer points of business regulations. For historians of arms negotiations, the eye-glazing details are a feast here, but there are larger conclusions about the Cold War and détente to be drawn from them.

The new Ford administration, and Kissinger most of all, was desperate to maintain the momentum, real or imagined, generated by the 1972 signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Kissinger believed that without an agreement on arms, there would not be much else worth discussing with the Soviets, and he had no patience for the intricate nuclear calculations of an economist like Secretary of Defense Schlesinger. In a December 1974 meeting with a group of academic experts, Kissinger was clearly at ease with his peers, and as happens in such moments, the truth came out: “To argue whether the strategic force levels are 2400, 2350, or 1760 is intellectual purism that is extraordinarily dangerous. The damage has been done [to Soviet-American relations] and now all that is left of détente is SALT” (391).

If only the Soviets felt the same way. To listen to Kissinger and the Soviets negotiating in 1974 and 1975 it is difficult to imagine that SALT I was signed only two years earlier – or ever, for that matter. Each misunderstanding produced a clarification, and each clarification in turn produced another misunderstanding. It is especially disturbing to see in these pages how little the Soviet leaders sometimes knew about their own systems and weapons: as Kissinger told Ford in late 1974, Brezhnev had been led to believe the myth that SALT was “designed to freeze [the] Soviets into a disadvantage,” while Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko had “only slightly better grasp of [the] technical issues involved” (251).

This was understatement. At one point, Kissinger was nonplussed when Gromyko asked him about whether the United States intended to station nuclear cruise missiles on the ocean floor. Of course, no such weapons existed, and there were no American plans to build them, but the Soviet leaders didn’t seem to know that. Kissinger could not even make sense of the question and sought clarity from Gromyko: “Do we want to put cruise missiles on the ocean floor? Crawling cruise missiles? We didn’t understand cruise missiles could be put on the ocean floor.” Gromyko only grumbled in response that the American arms control delegation had “no instructions” on the matter. He might as well have complained that they also had no instructions about basing nuclear weapons on Mars. (774) In a subsequent meeting with his own advisors, Kissinger remained mystified about the whole idea of stationing nuclear weapons on the seabed: “We hadn’t even conceived that anyone would want to” (781).

It is here that Defense Secretary Schlesinger and his allies introduced complications into Kissinger's negotiations with the Soviets. Schlesinger, like all American nuclear-age strategists, was trying to find a way out of the dead-end of Mutual Assured Destruction, a doctrine in which peace was kept by threats to engage in mutual nuclear suicide. Schlesinger and others reasoned that if limited scenarios for nuclear use could be found, escalation would seem more credible and that deterrence, paradoxically but inexorably, would be enhanced.

Schlesinger floated these and other ideas (including arming cruise missiles with conventional high explosives) while Kissinger was hip-deep in talks with Moscow. Kissinger saw Schlesinger's views not only as a complication in his negotiations with the Kremlin, he thought they were wrong-headed in their own right. When senior State Department advisor Helmut Sonnenfeld noted in mid-1975 that Schlesinger's "theory" about cruise missiles was that they could "keep nuclear wars limited to small exchanges," Kissinger – who in 1973 had already tried to lead a complete review of nuclear policy – retorted that it was "ludicrous to think that if the Soviets invaded Norway, all we would do is destroy the docks in Murmansk," and he described Schlesinger's approach as "a road to strategic disaster."³ (782)

As with Senator Jackson, Kissinger told the Soviets that these were personal attacks and not aimed at Moscow. When Schlesinger gave an interview advocating tactical nuclear use to stop a Soviet advance in Europe – i.e., when the Secretary of Defense reaffirmed NATO doctrine – Kissinger assured the Soviets: "It's as much directed at me as you....It will not happen again. I will put a stop to it" (599). But Kissinger was not entirely talking out of turn: the President himself was deeply unhappy with the Pentagon's obstinacy. In January 1976, Scowcroft (now the National Security Advisor) told Kissinger of a long National Security Council meeting that he "can only describe as surreal" from which the President walked out "angrier than I have ever seen him" (946-948).

The fundamental disconnect between the Soviet and American understandings of détente produced a clumsy dialogue in which the two sides had very little in common other than avoiding a disastrous strategic nuclear war. This, of course, was no small thing in itself. Even before the Cold War ended, there were signs of civil-military conflict in the USSR over the question of nuclear weapons and nuclear war, and it is telling that Brezhnev repeatedly assured Kissinger that the USSR had no interest in such a conflict with the United States. [At one point, Brezhnev assured Kissinger that when his predecessor Nikita Khrushchev blustered "we could hit a fly" with Soviet nuclear arms, "it didn't mean anything." Kissinger

³ Some of the materials concerning Nixon's unease about U.S. nuclear plans and Kissinger's nuclear review has been declassified and are available at the National Security Archive. See William Burr, "To Have the Only Option That of Killing 80 Million People is the Height of Immorality," The Nixon Administration, the SIOF, and the Search for Limited Nuclear Options, 1969-1974, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 173.

dryly responded: “With accuracy of 200 meters and a 1 megaton warhead, you’ll kill every fly. And you’ll give a nervous breakdown to every fly within 10 kilometers” (225)].

More interestingly, Brezhnev affirmed in his discussions with Kissinger that the Soviet Union flatly rejected nuclear war against the United States. Again, Brezhnev might not have been the sharpest intellect: during these meetings he played with toy cannons, and sometimes pretended to light his and other people’s documents on fire with his lighter. But he seemed determined – almost to the point of protesting too much – to assure Kissinger that the Kremlin’s civilian leaders were firmly in control of Soviet nuclear policies. At Vladivostok, as Ford tried to get Brezhnev to understand that he was taking positions on nuclear arms control which did “not necessarily accord with that of our military,” the Soviet leader implied he had troubles of his own. “The military always want more,” he said, and want “as much as they can get. I don’t think there are any holy people in the military” (342).

Brezhnev’s awkward assurances masked the fact that the Soviet military was in fact getting pretty much everything it wanted. Starting in the late 1960s, Brezhnev bought the loyalty of the marshals by letting them go on a military buying spree, including major strategic nuclear modernizations. As Politburo advisor Georgii Arbatov later admitted, the Soviets ended up undermining their own efforts:

The thought of restraint, of moderation in military affairs, was absolutely alien to us. Possibly it was even our deeply rooted inferiority complex that constantly drove us to catch up with the United States in nuclear arms...During those years we were enthusiastically arming ourselves, like binging drunks, without any apparent political need....We, in essence, became participants in the “dismantling” of détente, actually helping the enemies of détente in the USA and other NATO countries to start the second “cold war.”⁴

No matter how gamely Kissinger and Ford would try to walk the avuncular Brezhnev through the eye-glazing details of strategic nuclear systems (as they tried, with little success, to do at Vladivostok), there was no way the Americans could change either the constellation of political forces in the Kremlin, or dispel the Soviet sense, illusory though it may have been, that events were finally going their way (354).

Although Ford finally banished the word “détente” from the White House, he needn’t have bothered. By 1976, détente was more an American wish than an international fact.

Nowhere is the barely veiled Soviet contempt for American weakness more evident than in negotiations over events in the Middle East, and especially in Africa. At least in the Middle East the Americans had a partner, however problematic, in Israel. In Africa, by contrast, the Soviets acted with a virtually complete disregard for American objections.

⁴ Georgii Arbatov, *Zatianuvsheesia vyzdorovlenie* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1991), 237-238, 241.

Chronologically, this volume depicts Soviet-American interactions in the wake of the Yom Kippur alert of 1973. Kissinger repeatedly complained in the ensuing year that the Soviets were dealing with the Arabs behind America's back, an accusation (as Kissinger noted) that apparently touched a nerve with Soviet leaders. "I deny even a mild form of encouragement" to Egypt to attack Israel, Brezhnev huffily told Kissinger a year after the crisis. (213, 221) The Soviets professed a certain helplessness in dealing with the "divided" Arabs, even as Gromyko admitted to Kissinger that he had spoken to Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yassir Arafat five times. "See!" Kissinger interjected. "Separate endeavors! I've never talked to him" (507).

Africa, however, provided the arena in which the Soviets finally dispensed with any pretense of caring what the American thoughts about anything outside of core Soviet-American issues like nuclear arms. Kissinger was appalled at the degree to which the Soviets and Cubans were involved in African affairs, and once again, the Soviet approach was to affect ignorance and helplessness about the region. When Kissinger noted the flood of Soviet arms into Somalia in 1975, for example, Gromyko listened and then asked: "Are you sure?" – as if the Secretary were merely guessing. (565)

In Angola, the Soviet attitude turned from disingenuousness to outright dismissal. Kissinger asked Ford to warn the Soviets that while America had no direct interests in southern Africa, "if one external power becomes active and pursues unilateral interests, others are bound to take notice" (865). In late 1975, Ford met with Dobrynin, and got a rude brush-off from the Soviet Ambassador. "Angola is a long way away," Dobrynin said, and noted the President might do better if he "had some proposal other than 'you just shouldn't do this'" (869). Little wonder that Kissinger later described Dobrynin – whom he otherwise clearly regarded as a friend – as "cocky" on the whole subject. (891)

Dobrynin had every reason to be cocky. As he later explained in his memoirs:

I happened to be present at several meetings of the Politburo dealing with Angola, Somalia, and Ethiopia, and I can report that American complaints were not even seriously considered. The Politburo simply did not see them as a legitimate American concern and [they were] not a major factor in our relations with Washington.⁵

Dobrynin also claimed that Soviet powerlessness wasn't completely feigned, and that the Cubans, like the Vietnamese before them, "systematically blocked any rational discussion of other problems that were really of key importance to both of us."⁶ While that may have an element of truth in it, it is also clear that Moscow was singularly uninterested in Washington's views on an area where the revolutionary tide seemed to be in favor of communism.

⁵ Dobrynin, 405.

⁶ Dobrynin, 136.

Kissinger finally told Brezhnev point-blank in a 1975 meeting in Moscow that it was “intolerable” to the United States “that a country in the Western Hemisphere [Cuba] should launch a virtual invasion of Africa” (923). Brezhnev tried to derail Kissinger by asking if he meant to threaten war. When Kissinger noted that was not his intention but that the situation could become “dangerous,” Brezhnev then simply pled ignorance about the whole matter – again, not the most unbelievable assertion – and suggested moving back to SALT.

In 1975, during a fruitless meeting in Vienna, Kissinger told his Soviet counterparts not to mistake his body language. “When I nod,” the Secretary said, “it means I’ve understood, not that I agree” (576). Given Soviet attitudes on everything from arms to Angola, there was not much else that he could do.

This volume of FRUS, like the entire series itself, is a remarkable achievement. It is not only a collection of historical importance, but a continuing demonstration of an American commitment to document openly its own foreign policies. It is difficult to imagine any other country doing this in such a systematic way; Russian and Chinese revelations have been remarkable, but they are uneven and hardly subject to the kind of process and open scrutiny that characterize FRUS.

I will not presume to tell the editors or their advisors what should be included in other volumes, not least because of the problem of ‘not knowing what I do not know.’ However, I will suggest some areas where I would hope to see more materials or where I would have found amplification helpful.

First, the absence of documents exchanged between the State and Defense departments is frustrating. There were clearly huge battles between Kissinger, the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs over the direction of U.S. policy and especially on SALT, but they are only alluded to or referenced indirectly here. Surely there are materials in which Kissinger or his deputies corresponded directly with other parts of the national security bureaucracy; if this volume can include Kissinger’s tussles with Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz over wheat sales, it seems reasonable to include similar communications (insofar as is possible) between Kissinger and Schlesinger over whose position on cruise missiles would prevail in talks with Moscow.

Second, as with most *FRUS* volumes, the division between chronology and subject matter is somewhat jarring. I am fully aware that I am not the first reader to observe this, and I’m not sure I have a solution. Policymakers, of course, are never considerate enough to divide their actual discussions into neatly divided boxes, and nothing can be done about the difficulties of trying to categorize meetings in which the principals range from the Middle East to nuclear weapons.

I realize that *FRUS* has already devoted an entire edition to SALT II, but I wonder if nuclear arms issues nonetheless could have been broken out of this volume. During the period covered in this edition, the SALT process essentially fell apart, a reality that is hard to miss even in the miasma of technical details that characterized this final stage of arms

negotiations. Kissinger was obviously wrestling with a Pentagon that was determined to dissent from State's approach, even if it meant fast-balling the President himself – this was the source of Ford's fury at the aforementioned NSC meeting – and for those of us who agree with Kissinger's view that arms control was the center of whatever "détente" was, this volume seems to be missing an important part of State's story as the SALT process crashed and burned.

Finally, there is the problem that any volume dedicated to U.S. foreign policy in this period will face: the story of American diplomacy is unavoidably the story of Henry Kissinger's views. No American Secretary of State has ever concentrated as much power in his or her hands as Kissinger did, even to the point of melding the positions of National Security Advisor and Cabinet secretary. Nonetheless, I was tantalized by the rumbles from State's bureaucracy that appear here, and wished I could have pursued some of the views of the officials below Kissinger in the bureaucracy.

The Policy Planning Staff (PPS), for example, was united (or so it seems) in a belief that the Soviets were "getting the better end of the deal" from détente, but we only find reference to this in a 1975 communication from PPS staff member Thomas Thornton to his boss, Winston Lord. (856) Perhaps I am giving in to my instincts as former Sovietologist, but I would have been fascinated to read further in order to know if this constituted some sort of rebellion among the PPS about Kissinger's own policy.

In the end, however, it is unseemly to find too much fault with any volume of *FRUS*, since the level of detail requires editorial decisions of immense historical and literary complexity. And it is important to note that it is itself a remarkable feat that this edition's editors and researchers have taken a period in U.S. diplomatic history that most people do not think about very much – note the paucity of volumes about the foreign policy of the Ford Administration in general, rather than about Kissinger's activities – and presented it as a compelling read with the force of a historical novel. Gerald Ford was a beloved American figure, but I would argue that the short months of his presidency, like the mid-1970s themselves, are not remembered with any particular affection by the Americans who lived through them.

For this reason, I am particularly interested to see the coming volumes of *FRUS* on the Reagan administration. No unbiased observer could read only the pages of this volume and reach the conclusion that within a decade, the Americans would again firmly be in control of the international agenda, NATO would again be a solid anti-Soviet alliance, and that the Soviet Union itself would be negotiating itself out of continual foreign and domestic crises.

This volume also serves to remind us that diplomacy is not about ideal choices but about realistic alternatives, and that by 1975, the United States was in a dire fix that neither Ford nor Kissinger created but that both had to endure. For critics who now believe that U.S. foreign policy is now in the worst condition it's ever been and that the U.S. has hit a low position in the world from which it cannot recover, this volume should be required reading. There is no better reminder of the privileged position the United States occupies in 2013 than to return, even if only on paper, for a visit to the dismal and depressing world of 1974.

Tom Nichols is a Professor in the National Security Affairs Department at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, and a senior associate of the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs. He is also an adjunct at Harvard Extension School, and was a Fellow in the Project on Managing the Atom at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He was personal staff for defense and security affairs in the United States Senate to the late Senator John Heinz of Pennsylvania. He holds a Ph.D. from Georgetown, and the Certificate of the Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union at Columbia. His most recent book is *No Use: Nuclear Weapons and U.S. National Security*, to be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in December 2013.

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