The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s

Barbara Zanchetta analyzes the evolution of American-Soviet relations during the 1970s, from the rise of détente during the Nixon administration to the policy’s crisis and fall during the final years of the Carter presidency. This study traces lines of continuity among the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations and assesses its effects on the ongoing redefinition of America’s international role in the post-Vietnam era. Against the background of superpower cooperation in arms control, Dr. Zanchetta analyzes aspects of the global bipolar competition, including US-China relations, the turmoil in Iran and Afghanistan, and the crises in Angola and the Horn of Africa. In doing so, she unveils both the successful transformation of American international power during the 1970s and its long-term problematic legacy.

Barbara Zanchetta is a Researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs in Helsinki. She is also a Scholar at the Machiavelli Center for Cold War studies in Italy. She is the co-author of Transatlantic Relations since 1945: An Introduction (2012).
The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s

BARBARA ZANCHETTA
To my family
Contents

List of Images ix
Acknowledgments xi
Introduction 1

PART ONE. THE REMAKING OF AMERICAN GLOBAL POWER, 1969–1976

1 The Nixon Administration and a “Moment of Beginning” 19
2 The Diplomatic Revolution: The China Opening 35
3 An “Era of Negotiation” versus the “Supreme Test”: Nixon between SALT I and Vietnam 60
4 “Protect Me”: Nixon and the Shah of Iran 86
5 Détente Questioned: Domestic Challenges and International Crisis 116
6 The Ford (and Kissinger) Administration 142
7 Defending the Dual Track: SALT II, Angola, and the Crisis of Détente 158

PART TWO. RETHINKING THE FALL OF DÉTENTE, 1977–1980

8 The Carter Administration’s Ambitious Agenda 189
9 Initial Shift: The Horn of Africa 204
10 Re-Creating the Strategic Triangle: Normalization with China and SALT II 221
11 The Loss of Iran 243
Contents

12 Reaffirming Containment: The Carter Doctrine 271
Conclusion 293

Selected Bibliography 315
Index 325
List of Images

1. President Nixon on a speaker’s platform with the shah of Iran, October 21, 1969, White House south grounds

2. President Nixon and Henry Kissinger walking on the White House grounds after Cambodian Minister of National Defense Sirik Matak’s departure, August 10, 1971

3. President Nixon at the Ba Da Ling portion of the Great Wall, February 24, 1972, Beijing, China

4. Chinese leader Mao Zedong and President Nixon shaking hands near a doorway, February 29, 1972, Beijing, China

5. President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev signing an agreement between the United States and USSR on “Scientific and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy,” June 21, 1973, White House, East Room


7. President Nixon in the Oval Office during a meeting with Henry Kissinger and Gerald Ford, October 13, 1973

8. President Ford and his golden retriever Liberty, November 7, 1974, White House, Oval Office

9. President Ford and General Secretary Brezhnev sign a joint communiqué following talks on the limitation of strategic offensive arms, November 24, 1974, Vladivostok, USSR
List of Images

10 President Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (left), and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger (right) at a meeting to discuss the situation in South Vietnam, April 29, 1975, White House, Oval Office xxii

11 President Ford, as the Republican nominee, shakes hands with nomination foe Ronald Reagan on the closing night of the Republican National Convention, August 19, 1976, Kansas City xxiv

12 President Ford and Jimmy Carter meet at the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia to debate domestic policy during the first of the three Ford-Carter Debates, September 23, 1976 xxiv

13 President Carter, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, August 14, 1977, White House xxiii

14 President Carter and the shah of Iran, November 15, 1977, White House xxiii

15 President Carter and the shah of Iran toast at a state dinner (the “island of stability” toast), December 31, 1977, Tehran, Iran xxiv

16 President Carter, former President Nixon, and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping during a state dinner, January 29, 1979, White House xxiv

17 President Jimmy Carter and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping at the signing of the normalization of relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China, January 31, 1979, White House xxv

18 President Jimmy Carter with General Secretary Brezhnev at the signing of the SALT II agreements, June 18, 1979, Vienna, Austria xxv
As with most books, this book was something very different at the start from the final result. As a student in Italy, I chose Nixon and Kissinger as the topic for my first thesis at the University of Urbino largely because of the controversy and polemic surrounding both figures. However, after visiting the US archives and reading the voluminous literature on the period, I still had not given myself a satisfactory explanation of why these two individuals – and the policy of US-Soviet détente they initiated in the early 1970s – were (and still are) so divisive, both in the United States and around the world. I became all the more intrigued and thus decided to expand my research on American foreign policy throughout the 1970s, which then evolved into my PhD topic at the University of Florence. As my work progressed, I started to ask myself repeatedly the same all-important question: did Nixon and Kissinger’s acclaimed, or disdained, policies really make a difference in the history of the Cold War and on the evolution of American foreign policy? Inevitably, the scope, thematic and chronological, of my research expanded seemingly endlessly – as some of my less supportive colleagues and professors, either jokingly or more seriously, admonished – to include an assessment of the crisis and fall of détente, and a link to the 1980s. The practical consequences were that I spent more and more time at various archives, read more and more books, and, ultimately, took much longer to complete this book than ever envisioned. The result of my efforts – The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s – is my attempt to answer the same reoccurring question: did Nixon and Kissinger’s policies really make a difference?
Acknowledgments

During the years it took to complete this book I moved to different institutions and countries, and I was fortunate to find encouragement and support everywhere I went. In Italy (where it all began), I am indebted to the research team at the University of Urbino, skillfully set up many years ago by Professor Max Guderzo. Special thanks to Maurizio Cremasco for his help and friendship at the earliest stages of my career, and to Massimiliano Cricco, Fiorella Favino, Eleonora Guasconi, Matteo Napolitano, and Andrea Pierotti for creating a wonderful and stimulating work environment for a young scholar. At the University of Florence, I would like to acknowledge the History of International Relations PhD team, and in particular Duccio Basosi, Matteo Gerlini, and Angela Romano, who at various moments provided precious input and criticism on my research.

In Italy, however, my greatest thank you goes to my two professors and mentors, Max Guderzo and Ennio Di Nolfo. Without their backing, guidance, and audacity (often diplomatically opposed by others) I could have never undertaken such a broad topic or had the courage to make bold claims, and then the perseverance to transform my findings into a book of this type. Thank you both very much, personally and professionally.

In Finland, I would like to thank the University of Tampere and the Academy of Finland for hosting me as a post-doctoral researcher. Special thanks to the History Department and to those – especially Touko Berry, Miia Ijas, and Katri Sieberg – who made the cultural (mostly climatic) clash (an Italian – from Rome – in Finland) interesting and amusing. At the Finnish Institute of International Affairs in Helsinki (yes, after the exotic province, I had to move back to a capital city) I would like to acknowledge the support of the former and current directors of the Institute, Raimo Vayrynen and Teija Tiilikainen, for embracing the – often not too popular – idea that history does matter for a better understanding of current affairs. Thanks also to my former and current colleagues at the Institute, especially my program directors Mika Aaltola and Matti Nojonen, and the Global Security/Transformation of the World Order research programs for creating a nice, friendly, and stimulating work environment. A special thank you to Hanna Ojanen – for her cooperation and friendship from our first meetings – and to my friends Liisa Kohonen and Noora Kotilainen, who endured more than others my complaints and frustrations (in those dark Finnish days) with encouragement, support, and humor. Those long days in the office would have been unbearable without you both! I would also like to express gratitude to my students, at the Universities of Tampere and of Helsinki, whose curiosity helped stimulate mine.
As a historian, the most important – and at times very exciting – part of my work is to see (and touch) original documents. The archivists at the US National Archives at College Park (in the days when the Nixon Presidential Materials were there) and at the Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter Presidential Libraries deserve a special thank you for their tolerance of a sometimes undisciplined Italian and, most importantly, for making my search for “the needle in stacks of hay” seem simple and easy. I would also like to express my gratitude for the financial assistance granted me by the Ford Library, which enabled me to prolong my stay in Ann Arbor.

At Cambridge University Press, I was extremely fortunate to work with Eric Crahan, who first saw my proposal and helped me understand that, eventually, I could turn my manuscript into this book. Since his departure, I am very grateful for the support of my editor Robert Dreesen, his assistants, and all those at Cambridge who worked to edit and produce my book. I would also like to thank the reviewers, whose comments and suggestions greatly helped improve my manuscript.

A number of friends outside the academic world helped and supported my long journey into the making of this book. A special mention goes to Alain Wallart and his family in Les Saisies, France. I originally went up to those beautiful mountains to learn French and, in addition to doing that with great fun (thanks to Alain’s patience and skill), also found refuge in a perfect setting to work on the early stages of this manuscript. Yes, now it is finally done. Another special thank you goes to two very exceptional people, Ed and Renata Louie, who, throughout these years, made my many trips to Washington possible (and much more pleasant) by offering me their home, their friendship, and their love.

Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to deeply thank my family. My parents – Alberta and Francesco – who have always supported, encouraged, and guided me through the various stages of my life and career. Without them, I would have never made it through this and other difficult journeys. Grazie di tutto mami e papi, vi voglio tanto bene. And my husband Jussi, who always (and in this case also) gives me the strength to follow my dreams and ambitions, in spite of all kinds of difficulties, and helps me believe that I can achieve what I want. Here, the book is finally finished and it is also thanks to you (will you read it now?!). Kiitos minun iso rakas.
Figure 1 President Nixon on a speaker's platform with the shah of Iran, October 21, 1969, White House south grounds, White House Photo Office, Courtesy of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.
Figure 3  President Nixon at the Ba Da Ling portion of the Great Wall, February 24, 1972, Beijing, China, White House Photo Office, Courtesy of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
FIGURE 4 Chinese leader Mao Zedong and President Nixon shaking hands near a doorway, February 29, 1972, Beijing, China, Source unknown, Courtesy of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

Figure 6 President Nixon conversing with Leonid Brezhnev, June 23, 1973, La Casa Pacifica Library, San Clemente, California, White House Photo Office, Courtesy of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

Figure 7 President Nixon in the Oval Office during a meeting with Henry Kissinger and Gerald Ford, October 13, 1973, White House Photo Office, Courtesy of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

xix
Figure 8  President Ford and his golden retriever Liberty, November 7, 1974, White House, Oval Office, White House Photographs, Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library
Figure 9 President Ford and General Secretary Brezhnev sign a joint communique following talks on the limitation of strategic offensive arms, November 24, 1974, Vladivostok, USSR, White House Photographs, Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library

Figure 10 President Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (left), and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger (right) at a meeting to discuss the situation in South Vietnam, April 29, 1975, White House, Oval Office, White House Photographs, Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library
Figure 11: President Ford, as the Republican nominee, shakes hands with nomination foe Ronald Reagan on the closing night of the Republican National Convention, August 19, 1976, Kansas City, White House Photographs, Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library.

Figure 12: President Ford and Jimmy Carter meet at the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia to debate domestic policy during the first of the three Ford-Carter Debates, September 23, 1976, White House Photographs, Courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library.
Figure 13 President Carter, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, August 14, 1977, White House, White House Photographs Collection, Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library

Figure 14 President Carter and the shah of Iran, November 15, 1977, White House, White House Photographs Collection, Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library
**Figure 15** President Carter and the shah of Iran toast at a state dinner (the “island of stability” toast), December 31, 1977, Tehran, Iran, White House Photographs Collection, Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library

**Figure 16** President Carter, former President Nixon, and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping during a state dinner, January 29, 1979, White House, White House Photographs Collection, Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library
Figure 17  President Jimmy Carter and Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping at the signing of the normalization of relations between the United States and the People’s Republic of China, January 31, 1979, White House, White House Photographs Collection, Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library

Figure 18  President Jimmy Carter with General Secretary Brezhnev at the signing of the SALT II agreements, June 18, 1979, Vienna, Austria, White House Photographs Collection, Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Library