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Wilson returns 1974–76

You have to operate on the assumption that Great Britain is through.

Henry Kissinger to President Ford, October 1974¹

Introduction

Heath's final months in office were dominated by economic and social problems. Continuing trouble with the trade union movement had resulted in a three-day working week being enforced, and the ongoing oil embargo had led to the British public having to restrict their energy use. This set of circumstances had led to what one popular British newspaper would term as Heath's 'Long agony in No. 10'.² Following continuing struggles with the trade union movement, the prime minister decided to call a snap general election under the mantra of 'Who runs Britain?' The electorate gave Heath their answer and, in spite of winning the majority of the popular vote, Heath's Conservative Party failed to achieve a parliamentary majority. Instead, Harold Wilson's Labour Party had won the largest parliamentary contingent, securing him 301 out of a possible 635 seats. This, however, left him 17 seats short of an overall parliamentary majority, and Heath engaged in talks with the leader of the Liberal Party, Jeremy Thorpe, about the possibility of forming a coalition government. Following the inability of the two sides to reach an agreement, Heath was forced to resign as prime minister, and for the third time in a decade Harold Wilson was in office.³

For scholars studying US–UK relations, three distinct interpretations of Wilson's final governments have emerged. One interpretation suggests that the US–UK relationship continued to deteriorate in its relevance largely because

of Britain's declining significance as a military and political ally to the United States.⁴ Others have contradicted such arguments, insisting that Wilson's efforts to revive the 'special relationship' with Washington were indeed successful. To support this, these scholars point to the ongoing intelligence and nuclear relationship and also argue that the UK provided support and, more important still, exacted a degree of influence over the United States' wider Cold War policies.⁵ Other writers are more sceptical of this interpretation. While they accept that personal relations between elite figures improved, they question what discernible benefits this achieved for British interests; however, they do accept that elements of the special relationship were retained. As such, this period for US–UK relations was one where the special relationship waned politically but it retained its more practical elements.⁶

The vast majority of these accounts were written before access to large swaths of government documentation was permitted and by utilising this new material such arguments are in need of re-interpretation. Additionally, most accounts have largely marginalised British defence cuts within the broader context of US–UK relations and even works that have focused upon this require clarification.⁷ This chapter also challenges the idea that certain areas of US–UK cooperation, namely nuclear and intelligence cooperation, remained sacrosanct.⁸ To be sure, this cooperation did continue but existing accounts fail to illustrate that this was an area constantly used by US policy-makers as a means for exerting political leverage upon the Wilson government. Throughout 1974–76, the US threatened to cancel US–UK intelligence and nuclear cooperation in order to lessen the severity of Britain's defence cuts. As will be shown below, this coercive diplomacy, which had worked successfully against the Heath government, was to be rather less successful when applied against Harold Wilson.

Wilson's foreign policy

As shown previously, US–UK relations in Heath's final year of office were at a near crisis point, and a change of personnel was always likely to improve relations amongst political elites. Harold Wilson, however, was hardly the ideal candidate, given that during his interaction with Nixon in 1969–70 he had personally irritated the president. His appointment of John Freeman, an ardent critic of Nixon, as UK ambassador to Washington in 1968 was especially unwelcome.⁹ Personal characteristics aside, Wilson's insistence that Britain keep its accelerated plans for an East of Suez withdrawal, along with his unwillingness to offer a greater commitment to NATO, only vexed US policy-makers further.¹⁰ For Wilson, the fashion in which Washington ignored his efforts at

improving East–West relations and bringing a settlement to the Vietnam War hardly engendered a close relationship with Washington.¹¹

Wilson may not have had the greatest track record with Nixon but, given recent experiences with Heath, his election was welcomed by both Nixon and Kissinger.¹² The extent to which the president's relationship with Heath had deteriorated is perhaps best illustrated by Nixon's quip that his experiences with Heath had resulted in the improbable: he and Wilson were now 'good friends'.¹³ Wilson's return to office also marked a change in British foreign policy that would place a renewed emphasis upon the US–UK relationship. Heath's seemingly Euro-centric foreign policy was to be reversed and Wilson let it known that he would not be trying to create common political policies within the EEC. In fact, Wilson's renegotiation of the terms of Britain's EEC entry even questioned Britain's membership.¹⁴

Wilson's appointment of James Callaghan as foreign and commonwealth secretary, coupled with the prime minister's willingness to allow Callaghan a degree of freedom in conducting foreign policy that was not afforded during his earlier premierships, further signalled the Labour government's intention to move away from the European course that Heath had charted. Callaghan had opposed British membership of the EEC and believed Heath's European policies had been ill-conceived. On assuming the role as foreign and commonwealth secretary, he was not shy in putting forward his anti-EEC feelings and stated his intention to re-affirm the US–UK relationship.¹⁵

Such broad assessment must, however, be carefully defined because, despite the scepticism towards the EEC, Wilson and Callaghan did not wish for Britain to leave the Community. As noted elsewhere, the creation of policy-making institutions within the EEC framework received the backing of Wilson and Callaghan throughout the period.¹⁶ Indeed, the whole decision to renegotiate EEC entry was driven largely by internal Labour Party politics. The question of EEC membership had been a deeply divisive topic within the Labour Party and, following EEC membership in 1973, the issue continued to provoke bitter debate.¹⁷ However, the focus had now shifted to debating the terms of entry that Heath's government had secured which were seen by EEC sceptics, including Wilson and Callaghan, as being economically punitive. Wilson had, for instance, described the terms Heath had secured as 'utterly crippling' for the British economy.¹⁸ Therefore, the Labour Party manifesto of 1974 declared that it would renegotiate the terms of EEC membership and, if this was not achieved to the satisfaction of Wilson, Britain would withdraw from the EEC.¹⁹ The likelihood of this happening, however, was improbable. Firstly, Wilson was very unlikely to be tied to his manifesto pledges given his penchant for flexibly interpreting the meaning of such pledges. The prime minister also had no real intention of withdrawing from the EEC because he had reconciled that

membership was necessary for Britain's longer-term economic and political well-being. As one British official remarked correctly, 'The renegotiation was in fact largely a sham'.²⁰

Wilson's approach was therefore based upon twin pillars. He wanted to re-establish intimate relations with the US, with the hope that this would provide him with unique access and influence over US foreign policy. Concurrently, Wilson intended for Britain to remain in the EEC, as this would allow Britain to derive the economic benefits of EEC membership. In essence, the role Wilson had sought for Britain in the 1960s was to be largely transferred into the 1970s.²¹

The end of the 'Year of Europe'

On assuming office, Wilson quickly contacted Nixon and informed him that it was his intention to put US–UK relations on a sounder footing.²² 'The Labour government apparently wants to revive something closely akin to Britain's erstwhile "special relationship" with the United States,' the US ambassador reported from London.²³ In June 1974, Kissinger corroborated this assessment.²⁴

Such an overt attempt to re-affirm the US–UK relationship was appreciated at the highest levels of the US government, and Callaghan's appointment was also seen as a positive for US interests.²⁵ In a rather typical Machiavellian moment between Nixon and Kissinger, both men talked about how it was 'useful' that Wilson wanted to promote closer US–UK relations. Nixon, however, questioned whether Wilson would actually be able to deliver much of substance and mocked that: 'Harold is going to want to have some foreign policy – some little things for his bonnet and he may just start swinging a little weight around'.²⁶ Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger viewed Wilson's foreign policy as useful in safeguarding against French domination of the EEC and preventing it from pursuing an anti-American agenda. It would also ensure that the continuing Euro–Arab dialogue would not undermine US diplomacy in the Middle East.²⁷

Although Wilson had signalled an intention to re-emphasise the Atlantic relationship, this did little to alter the Nixon administration's attitude towards Western Europe or have a calming influence upon its actions. In particular, the matter of the Declaration of Principles had still not been resolved and the Nixon administration now pushed for its conclusion. Kissinger was determined to exploit US security guarantees towards Europe to accomplish this. As Kissinger explained in conversation with Schlesinger:

The Europeans have no strategy. We have to create the impression that to cross us is at least as dangerous as to cross the French. We can't let the

Europeans organise on an anti-American basis. We have a good opportunity now, with a new British government, and the Germans are weak ... If Europe gets the idea that unity prevents them from talking to us, they will withdraw more and more from NATO in the EC. We want to counter Europe by using NATO.²⁸

The question arises as to what Kissinger meant by using NATO to counter Europe. The answer to this soon became clear. During internal discussions in Washington, Kissinger concluded that the US should threaten to withdraw troops from Europe, because this would critically undermine their security in relation to the Warsaw Pact. This, in turn, would produce a more cooperative political attitude from the EEC towards the US.²⁹ All of this was coupled with a wider effort on Kissinger's part to influence members of the EEC by utilising American economic power.³⁰ On 15 March 1974, Nixon deployed this tactic publicly during a speech at the Executives Club in Chicago. Here, the president explained that he would not tolerate 'a situation where the nine countries of Europe gang up against the United States ... the United States which is their guarantee of security'. The president was even more explicit in outlining that the EEC could not 'have ... US participation and cooperation on the security front and then proceed to have confrontation and even hostility on the economic and political front'.³¹ Following the Washington Energy Conference, British officials feared that Nixon and Kissinger would start 'throwing their weight around' and, as shown earlier, this was the very 'lesson' that both Nixon and Kissinger had taken from the conference. Nixon's speech, therefore, was another example of the Nixon administration's determination to more robustly defend US interests in relation to the EEC.

What is of interest at this point is that Kissinger's private conversations in Washington reveal that Nixon was making rather empty threats. In reality, the president and Kissinger had little intention of reducing America's military commitment to Europe.³² As US internal assessments suggested, there were very few long-term methods available for punishing Western Europe that would not simultaneously damage US interests. Nevertheless, the US had been successful in manipulating British foreign policy decisions when Kissinger and Schlesinger had temporarily suspended intelligence and nuclear cooperation in 1973. In a similar fashion, US threats to withdraw their forces had a profound impact upon European policy-makers. As Kissinger noted gleefully, his bluff had not been called and the Europeans were 'pissing in their pants'. As Kissinger reported, 'The Germans have promised to have consultation with us before they take decisions. The British have gone even further.'³³ In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that, on 19 March 1974, the president gave a conciliatory speech on the subject of US-EEC relations.³⁴

What was meant by the British having 'gone even further' is unclear, but it probably referred to Callaghan's promise to Helmut Sonnenfeldt (15 March 1974) that Britain would engage bilaterally over the creation of the Declaration of Principles. This, Callaghan assured Sonnenfeldt, would be conducted without the knowledge of Britain's EEC partners.³⁵ By April 1974, this process was under way when the newly appointed British ambassador to Washington, Sir Peter Ramsbotham, met with Kissinger to discuss the declaration.³⁶ Perhaps this signalled a new level of exclusive interaction between US and UK officials. Certainly, the Wilson government could point to the fact that it had secured US–UK private discussions prior to a 'Big Five' discussion about the monetary and oil crises engulfing the Western powers.³⁷ US policy-makers would also make their British counterparts aware of their policy initiatives towards the ongoing SALT negotiations and the Middle East peace process.³⁸ All of this was undertaken, however, on the proviso that this information was to remain exclusively within the British government. Indeed, the US made it explicit that this information was not to be transmitted to Britain's EEC partners. Of course, the British were under no legal obligation to provide this information to their EEC allies. Nevertheless, as this illustrates, the US could have a profound impact upon Britain's interaction with the EEC.

Even though the Wilson government had managed to secure a level of interaction in US–UK relations which they believed had been missing under Heath, British officials still remained sceptical about the course of US policy. 'Despite the President and Dr. Kissinger's recent public criticism of Europe in general, Dr. Kissinger has gone out of his way to be friendly to HMG [Her Majesty's Government] since it took office,' Wilson was warned. This was occurring because Kissinger wanted to 'influence our policies at what he will judge to be a formative stage; and to ensure that we help steer Europe away from a course damaging to US interests'.³⁹ The US had singled out Britain 'for favourable mention' but the trouble existed that 'we may be unable to deliver what the US Administration expects of us'.⁴⁰ Several other senior British officials provided comparable advice and, given what was being stated privately in Washington, this advice does appear rather pertinent.⁴¹

Even in the face of such warnings, US–UK bilateral discussions continued as the 'Year of Europe' slowly petered out. The Declaration of Principles was eventually signed during the Ottawa conference (June 1974) but its eventual contents – as Kissinger lamented – were hardly the 'far reaching embodiment of shared purpose we had in mind'.⁴² Or as one unknown author argued in *Foreign Affairs*:

What the United States had envisioned as the 'Year of Europe', a period of imaginative updating and refurbishing of the NATO alliance, capped with a

new Atlantic Charter, has become instead the year in which Washington's relationship with its European partners has struck an all-time low.⁴³

Moreover, as one CIA brief explained in August 1974, the new Declaration of Principles would not guarantee when and if the EEC would ever act as a collective. As the brief neatly summarised: 'Since EC members retain the option to act independently on many issues, there is the even greater problem of unpredictability. The US can never be certain when, or if, the Nine will act collectively.'⁴⁴ Given this, it is hardly surprising that scholars refer to Kissinger's initiative as 'the year that never was'.⁴⁵

Discord in Cyprus

On 9 August 1974, Richard M. Nixon became the first man to resign the office of the presidency and Gerald R. Ford was thus sworn in as the 38th president of the US.⁴⁶ Facing the new president were a multitude of problems including Nixon's potential pardon, rising inflation and unemployment, and the continuing problems in Vietnam. Ford's top priority was hardly, then, the conduct of US–UK relations.⁴⁷ In spite of this, the new president was soon confronted with something approaching a crisis in US–UK relations, because of differences over the evolving situation in Cyprus.

The Cyprus crisis is important for understanding US–UK relations in the 1970s for a number of important reasons. It serves as a clear example of how the US undermined the policy objectives of the UK in trying to resolve the conflict. It further demonstrated that the US would pursue its own regional interests at the expense of the concerns of its British ally. If further proof were needed that the US–UK special relationship did not apply to all facets of US–UK interaction, then events during the Cyprus crisis would act as a timely reminder. As two scholars noted about the Suez crisis, 'For Europeans, "Suez" stood for the moment when they had been shocked into awareness of how ... inferior in power they were to the United States, and how dependent on that power [they were]'.⁴⁸ The Cyprus crisis demonstrated this fact once again.

On 15 July 1974, the Greek government inspired a military coup in Cyprus, which removed Archbishop Makarios and installed Nico Sampson as the new Cypriot leader which sparked an ethnic conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot populations.⁴⁹ Though US intelligence had noted that relations on the island were steadily worsening, for both the American and British intelligence community events in Cyprus came somewhat as a surprise.⁵⁰ For the British, events were worrisome on a number of levels, because as a guarantor power – established under the 1960 Zurich Accords – the British had a legal obligation

to uphold the status quo in Cyprus.⁵¹ More important still was the likely reaction of Turkey and Greece, because Cyprus was comprised of a mixed Turkish and Greek population. Nico Sampson was an ardent supporter of enosis, meaning he wanted Cyprus to accede to Greece, and his firebrand personality and history of political violence only increased the likelihood that the coup would lead to violence. In particular, the rights of Turkish Cypriots were likely to be targeted by Sampson, and Turkey threatened to intervene militarily if Turkish Cypriots came under attack. Greece responded by declaring that such Turkish action would be taken as a *casus belli*.⁵²

From the British perspective this was all rather troublesome for a number of interconnected reasons. First, they feared that such a conflagration would have damaging repercussions for NATO. As the British ambassador in Athens, Sir Robin Hooper, warned, a war between Turkey and Greece would challenge the entire 'credibility' of NATO. According to Hooper, at the very least a war would leave NATO's southern and eastern flanks seriously weakened.⁵³ Slightly less melodramatically, the FCO brief on the conflict outlined that ethnic violence in Cyprus had to stop in order to restore stability to NATO's position.⁵⁴

The other main anxiety for Wilson's government was the status of British sovereign bases on Cyprus, because they provided Britain with significant intelligence abilities. Most obviously, they provided an important listening post into the Middle East. Cyprus also acted as Britain's base into the Mediterranean, and had done so since the withdrawal from Egypt/Suez in 1956.⁵⁵ The maintenance of such facilities was, however, financially expensive, and contributed negatively to Britain's balance of payments. The Wilson government had therefore highlighted these bases for potential closure in its ongoing defence review. The possibility of conflict in Cyprus would only add further burden to sustaining such facilities.⁵⁶ Of course, less geopolitical matters were also in the forefront of British policy-makers' concerns. While more mundane, the most immediate problem facing Wilson was how to ensure the safe passage of British holidaymakers on the island.⁵⁷

In order to prevent a Turkish–Greek war, British officials concluded that they would have to remove Sampson and re-install Makarios as president. This, it was felt, would prevent a Turkish invasion of Cyprus, which would in turn avoid a wider conflagration, thus maintaining NATO's integrity and protecting Britain's sovereign bases.

Washington's thinking

On learning of the coup, Kissinger chaired a session of the WSAG.⁵⁸ Confusion reigned as to what had actually occurred in Cyprus, and it was still unclear as

to what had triggered the hostilities. US policy-makers, however, were deeply concerned about the probable actions of the USSR.⁵⁹ 'I think our first objective should be to prevent any kind of Soviet action. We must keep this as an internal affair and keep it from becoming internationalized,' Kissinger concluded.⁶⁰ The foremost worry of the US, then, was preventing the USSR from gaining any sort of advantage from the conflict. In keeping with the geopolitical vision of the Nixon–Ford administrations, events in Cyprus were of importance, because of the likely wider ramifications they could have upon the Cold War. One intelligence briefing on Cyprus captures this thinking rather well:

Cyprus is a foreign policy problem for the United States because strife between the Greek Cypriots and Turk Cypriots brings Greece and Turkey into military confrontation unhinging NATO's southern flank; because Cyprus's crises are invariably raised in the Security Council; and because such crises have the potential to complicate our evolving relations with the Soviets and affect the atmosphere in which the United States and the Soviet Union deal with the Arab/Israeli conflict.⁶¹

A second WSAG was convened on 16 July 1974 and again – despite the uncertainty regarding the details of the coup – the clear consensus was that the US had to prevent Soviet intervention.⁶² The British idea of returning Makarios to power was met with both consternation and trepidation in US policy-making circles, because it was believed that this would only encourage Makarios loyalists to continue fighting, which would lead to a situation where they would then seek military aid from any source willing to provide it: i.e. the USSR.⁶³ Moreover, Makarios was considered by Washington to be a communist sympathiser. His return to power, then, was not viewed as something which the US should be actively seeking to achieve. Kissinger was explicit in articulating this thinking during the WSAG meeting:

As I assess the situation, for us the best outcome would be a Clerides government. I just don't understand why the Turks would want to bring Makarios back. I don't think [the Turks] understand our analysis of the situation. Somebody has to go to London and explain our position.⁶⁴

Kissinger then explained to the WSAG that the US would seek to utilise its influence with Turkey to make this point clear.⁶⁵

From the outset of the crisis British and American objectives clearly differed. Claims from Callaghan that 'our two countries were agreed on broad objectives, we differed on procedures and tactics' thus appear less convincing.⁶⁶ US policy-makers viewed the coup predominantly as a potential opportunity for

Soviet aggrandisement. Returning Makarios to power was never an objective of US policy either. More importantly from the perspective of US–UK relations was that the US secretary of state was actively charting a policy in direct opposition to that of London and would over the course of the next weeks pursue a diplomatic course that undercut British efforts at implementing both a ceasefire and a lasting political solution.

As the violence continued in Cyprus, Turkish and Greek representatives convened in London and, under the auspices of British chairmanship, the terms of a possible ceasefire were negotiated. At the conference, Callaghan declared that the ‘ideal solution’ was to see Makarios return to power and, in order to achieve this, Callaghan suggested that military intervention may be required.⁶⁷ Such thinking was anathema to US objectives. First, the return of Makarios was not an ambition of the US, and the idea of utilising military force against a NATO member only soured US opinion further. Given recent American experiences in Vietnam, coupled with Nixon’s domestic woes, one can appreciate why such a suggestion was met with incredulity. Kissinger therefore proposed that he would ‘work for a compromise in which neither Makarios or the other guy take over’, reasoning that this would prevent Soviet intervention in the conflict.⁶⁸

Determined to ensure that the London conference did not reach any firm decisions without US representation, Kissinger had despatched Joseph Sisco, the under-secretary of state for political affairs, as his envoy. On 18 July, Sisco reported back to Washington that Callaghan was still supporting the restoration of Makarios, and that he had still not ruled out the possibility of utilising force to achieve this objective.⁶⁹ Kissinger remained sceptical as to whether such rhetoric was really indicative of likely British action.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, as Washington continued to analyse likely British motives, the ceasefire negotiations were stalling. By 19 July, it was apparent that Callaghan’s intermediary efforts had failed to break the Turkish–Greek impasse.⁷¹ Consequently, Turkey took a more direct approach in protecting their interests.

Invasion and coup

In the early hours of 20 July 1974, Turkey launched an invasion of Cyprus. The Greeks responded by placing their military on high alert, and prepared for hostilities on their northern border with Turkey.⁷² Only direct threats from Washington to permanently withdraw all military aid from Greece prevented further Greek action.⁷³ The evolving situation was deemed so serious by Washington that discussion took place as to whether the ruling Greek junta should be overthrown by some US-sponsored covert action. James Schlesinger,

in particular, was keen to pursue such a path. In contrast, Kissinger was rather more circumspect, and was reluctant to follow such a course. 'I don't like overthrowing governments,' Kissinger retorted. As Kissinger then explained, 'I'm not sure the Greek government will last out the week, anyway. It seems to me there is no way it will survive.'⁷⁴

Events in Greece would prove Kissinger's assessment correct, as the Greek military junta's Cypriot adventure led to a collapse of its authority. Subsequently, the ruling junta was replaced by the former leader, Constantine Karamanlis.⁷⁵ Such a turn of events was hardly welcomed in Washington. Kissinger's reluctance from the outset of the conflict to 'rake the Greeks' was dictated by a concern that a Greek government sympathetic to Moscow would attain power, and Karamanlis was deemed to hold such sympathies.⁷⁶ The British, on the other hand, were troubled by such events for different reasons. British efforts at finding a peaceful solution had been for naught, and Turkish action had endangered British sovereign bases in Cyprus. It also raised the spectre of a wider war between Turkey and Greece that would undermine NATO.

Following the Turkish invasion, Callaghan again offered the auspices of the British government to broker a peace settlement.⁷⁷ After a further round of diplomatic negotiations, which produced UN Security Council Resolution 353, Callaghan called for peace negotiations on neutral territory. After much wrangling over location and participation, it was finally settled that Geneva would act as the venue, and negotiations would commence on 24 July 1974. This conference was designed to broker the terms of a ceasefire and another conference, scheduled to begin on 8 August 1974, would attempt to produce a lasting political settlement.⁷⁸

At the conference, Callaghan stuck to his original intention of restoring Makarios to power. He also outlined that Cyprus should be administered on a bi-federal basis.⁷⁹ Such a policy did not have the backing of the US and, following their briefing of the Turkish on this point, they too announced that they would not support this. The Turkish also insisted that in order for them to begin negotiations on a lasting political settlement the north-eastern third of Cyprus would have to be ceded to their authority.⁸⁰

With such diametrically opposed positions, the Geneva peace conference turned into a somewhat rancorous affair. Nevertheless, Callaghan managed to establish terms for a ceasefire agreement which included the halting of all offensive activities and an agreement that phased withdrawal of all military forces from Cyprus would begin. Following the successful adherence to this, a second conference would convene to work out how a buffer zone between the two sides would be created.⁸¹ In London, the prime minister was especially pleased with Callaghan's efforts, and believed that it afforded the opportunity for the British to create a lasting political settlement in Cyprus. As Wilson

noted to Callaghan, 'We have the chance to create a more stable Cyprus, better relations between Greece and Turkey, and (for the first time ever) an alliance in NATO consisting of fully democratic states'.⁸²

Callaghan was rather less confident than his boss and remained suspicious of Turkish ambitions. He suspected that the Turkish would use the period between the conferences to gain more territory in Cyprus that would be of strategic value.⁸³ He therefore informed Washington that if the Turkish undertook further military measures then Britain would respond in kind.⁸⁴ Wilson supported Callaghan by providing a demonstrable sign of Britain's seriousness – he reinforced Britain's sovereign bases on Cyprus.⁸⁵

Geneva: Part II

As the second Geneva talks convened, British officials in the FCO were deeply pessimistic about finding a lasting settlement. One noted that the exercise was a 'dead duck' and, in the assessments of senior FCO officials, Callaghan's stated objective that Cyprus should be administered on a bi-federal basis was simply unrealistic. The return of Makarios was also felt to be implausible.⁸⁶ Events would prove such pessimism accurate, because British interlocutors were confronted with deadlock at the talks. The Turkish demanded that Cyprus be administered on a bi-regional basis and that, to achieve this, a population transfer on the island – that separated Turkish and Greek Cypriots – would have to take place. Clerides, the acting president of Cyprus, requested that he be allowed 24 hours to consider this Turkish proposal. This, however, was rejected by the Turkish delegation. The conference therefore collapsed without any settlement being reached. Less than two hours after the conference had finished the Turkish made further military moves, seizing approximately 35 per cent of the island. This included the port city of Famagusta. However, Famagusta contained few Turkish Cypriots, thus undermining the Turkish argument that all of their military moves were designed solely to protect Turkish Cypriots.⁸⁷

Callaghan was infuriated with such action, believing that the Turkish had been negotiating in bad faith and felt he had been vindicated in arguing that Turkey was seeking military-strategic aggrandisement.⁸⁸ President Ford was now faced with the first foreign policy crisis of his administration, because Callaghan had suggested that Britain would respond militarily to further Turkish actions. For the US, this situation was an incredible one. The possibility of a UK–Turkish war, which would likely descend into a wider Greek–Turkish conflict, appeared to now be a real possibility. Ford, barely 24 hours into his presidency, was confronted with the possibility of three NATO members being at war with one another! However, as with earlier British threats of military

intervention, the US did not believe them to be credible. 'One of the stupidest thing[s] I have heard,' Kissinger told Ford. The president evidently concurred and ordered Kissinger to 'calm down our British friends a bit'.⁸⁹

In London, Wilson convened a meeting to discuss the possible ways in which Britain should react to Turkish moves. As Callaghan noted, Britain's 'real' interests in Cyprus – the sovereign bases – had been left alone by the Turkish military. He explained further that British military intervention was unlikely to succeed without full US support. This, as Callaghan informed the prime minister, was unlikely to be forthcoming. Kissinger's efforts to calm the British had worked. As Wilson understood, without US backing the British were unlikely to be able to easily remove the Turkish military. More importantly, the Turkish had not infringed upon Britain's sovereign bases, and Wilson concluded that military action would not be undertaken.⁹⁰

British indignation towards Turkey was met with little sympathy in Washington, and Callaghan's inability to find a peaceful solution to the crisis was met with scorn.⁹¹ 'In this business you are paid by your results, and [Callaghan] didn't deliver a damn thing,' Kissinger complained.⁹² Kissinger, while far from happy about Turkish actions, did not believe that a military response was required. Ultimately, Turkey's strategic importance to the US meant any military response was unpalatable. A reading of Kissinger's memoirs makes it quite apparent that he believed Turkey was of considerable strategic importance to the US.⁹³ At the time, Kissinger was rather less articulate in making this same point. 'Whether Turkey occupied a third of Cyprus or not did not affect US interests,' Kissinger informed the president.⁹⁴ In sum, Kissinger was not prepared to sacrifice Turkey as an important regional ally to ensure a bi-federal peace settlement in Cyprus. Rather, in Kissinger's assessment, a bi-regional solution, where Turkey controlled one portion of Cyprus and Greece the other, was acceptable.⁹⁵

Washington's analysis of the Cyprus crisis was therefore driven largely by overarching Cold War considerations. Events in Vietnam, the rise of Eurocommunism, and the emergence of communist influence across Africa all contributed to Kissinger believing that another Soviet advancement could occur in Cyprus. Divorced from such geopolitical considerations, Kissinger was concerned about the impact of Watergate on America's international standing. He believed that Watergate was undermining US foreign policy, and he suspected that the USSR would exploit the president's domestic troubles for their own aggrandisement.⁹⁶ Kissinger also suspected that the advance of North Vietnamese forces once again could be explained by the domestic situation in Washington.⁹⁷ It is within this context, then, that events must be viewed. This, however, is not to suggest that Kissinger was supporting Turkish military action. Contrary to the claims of some authors, Kissinger was against Turkish

military action from the outset of the crisis, and he had worked laboriously, if ultimately ineffectively, to prevent the escalation of hostilities.⁹⁸ Once the Turkish had gained a foothold on the island, Kissinger was opposed to further military action. As Kissinger made clear to the president on 10 August 1974, the US could not support any unilateral military action in the first 48 hours of Ford's new presidency. As such, Kissinger warned Ankara against taking further military action.⁹⁹

For US–UK relations the episode had demonstrated a number of important points. It reiterated the fact that the special relationship between the two countries was largely limited to specific areas, such as intelligence or nuclear cooperation, and was becoming a lot narrower in its scope. When US interests were perceived to conflict with those of the United Kingdom, then the United States was prepared to fully pursue its aims with little concern for London's ambitions. Again then, the disparity in power within the US–UK relationship was evident. Wilson and Callaghan both sought a close relationship with Washington so as to influence its policies. On this occasion, the absence of influence was apparent.

Détente and economic decline

This chapter now turns its attention to Britain's economic plight, and the ramifications it had for Britain's defence posture. By doing so, one can trace a systematic shift in US–UK relations, in that the UK came to be viewed as a less useful ally by the US. It also illustrates that Wilson's efforts at restoring closer US–UK interaction were largely ineffective, because of such defence cuts. From here, areas of international diplomacy which sought to push forward the process of détente, such as the CSCE and MBFR, are also reviewed in this section. This again allows for a broader assessment of the relationship to be provided and counterbalances the impression that US–UK relations were constantly beset by acrimony.

Wilson assumed power at the time when Britain had come to be regarded as the 'sick man of Europe'.¹⁰⁰ Heath's mismanagement of the economy, coupled with the inflationary pressures generated by the oil embargo, had led to an unsupportable budget deficit. To combat this, public expenditure cutbacks had been enacted in Anthony Barbour's budgets of 1973–74 in order to reduce Britain's borrowing requirements.¹⁰¹ Britain's defence budget, however, remained largely unaffected by such cutbacks until December 1973, when it was announced that defence would incur a cut of £178 million.¹⁰² Such was the seriousness of these economic problems that the likes of Lord Rothschild – who headed up Heath's economic think tank – were predicting that the

UK would be one of the poorest countries in Europe by 1985, unless serious defence cuts were enacted.¹⁰³

Given this, Wilson inherited a situation where defence expenditure was to be reduced, but internal party politics within the Labour government also encouraged the new prime minister to look for defence spending reductions. At the Labour Party conference of October 1973, there had been vociferous demands for defence expenditure to be reduced, and £1,000 million had been suggested as the figure that a new Labour government should be looking to reduce Britain's defence expenditure by.¹⁰⁴ Wilson, while privately scornful of such thinking, did accede somewhat to these demands in the Labour Party manifesto of February 1974.¹⁰⁵ As it outlined, a new Labour government would seek to find savings of 'several hundred million pounds per annum' in the defence budget.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, on assuming office, the chancellor of the exchequer Denis Healey cut an additional £50 million from defence expenditure in his first budget. This, however, was only an interim solution, and Wilson ordered a full defence review to be undertaken. This, as Wilson warned, could result in reductions 'amounting to hundreds of millions of pounds'.¹⁰⁷

Washington observed Wilson's defence policy closely, and was none too pleased by what it believed were the 'soft' policy choices being made in London.¹⁰⁸ From the military-strategic perspective, American officialdom did not wish to see Britain lessen its pre-existing commitments, and senior US policy-makers – including Nixon, Kissinger, Haig and Schlesinger – lamented Britain's global military decline. Yet during their time in office, they had been unable to prevent this decline, and had little success in convincing London to reverse its East of Suez policy or contribute more heavily to NATO. Nevertheless, this had been viewed as the limit of Britain's military downsizing. Now it appeared, from Washington's perspective, as if further large-scale military cutbacks were to be enacted by the new Labour government, which would have the likely effect of increasing the military burden upon the US.

Further to this, in Kissinger's assessment, such policies acted as another example of the European states trying to 'cop out' of the Cold War.¹⁰⁹ By this it was implied that with the onset of détente and improved superpower relations, NATO members would wrongly conclude that the Soviet threat no longer existed, and could reduce their defence commitments accordingly. Along with this, US officials were also concerned that British defence expenditure cuts would have more practical effects on US–UK cooperation. Most obviously, the worries of the US surrounded the issue of whether Wilson would endorse the decisions made by the Heath government to upgrade Polaris and retain intelligence posts in Cyprus.¹¹⁰

Washington, therefore, sought to convince their British allies that they should not embark on another round of deep defence cuts. Thus, during a

meeting between Kissinger and John Hunt, the US secretary of state outlined his concerns. Hunt assured Kissinger that rumours referring to substantial defence cuts were unsubstantiated, and that Wilson was committed to the upgrading of Polaris and to retaining Britain's existing NATO commitments.¹¹¹ American elites remained sceptical of such assurances and this can be partly explained by the low opinion that prominent US policy-makers, including Ford and Kissinger, had of Wilson and his government. Kissinger regarded Wilson as a 'greasy sort of man' and 'Healey is a shit who can't be trusted' was his even more scathing verdict of the British chancellor of the exchequer.¹¹²

Significant concerns surrounded the suitability of Roy Mason as defence secretary, especially in regard to whether or not he would be able to function independently from his former boss, Denis Healey. The US ambassador in London, Walter Annenberg, warned Washington that Healey would be able to cajole Mason into making substantial reductions in the British defence budget.¹¹³ It was also felt that Healey's first budget was indicative of things to follow in the future. Earl Sohm, the chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy in London, predicted that once Wilson had assured his position as prime minister, more significant cuts would follow.¹¹⁴ The turn of events would prove this assessment correct. The general election of October 1974 solidified Wilson's authority somewhat, and both he and Healey could now begin to tackle Britain's budget deficit. It took no great leap of faith, then, to think that Britain's defence budget would once again be coming under severe scrutiny, and that cutbacks would follow in the near future.¹¹⁵

Throughout the winter of 1974, the US maintained a keen interest in British debates about possible defence cutbacks. Washington repeated its earlier position that it did not wish to see any substantial defence reductions undertaken by the British government. More specifically, the Ford administration articulated clearly that it believed the British government should maintain several key areas of its defence commitment, which included the Polaris upgrade, the retention of Britain's presence in Cyprus, and the continuation of the US-UK Diego Garcia commitments.¹¹⁶ Such suggestions appeared not to have resonated in London, because reports soon arrived in Washington that suggested that Wilson was 'agonising' over whether to continue with the Polaris upgrade. Additionally, Kissinger was informed that the British sovereign bases in Cyprus were set to be disbanded.¹¹⁷

Evidently, US diplomacy had failed to achieve the desired outcome from the British government, so Kissinger set about taking a more rigorous approach with his British allies. He first despatched a cable to Callaghan where he warned a British withdrawal from Cyprus would 'undermine our overall position in the Mediterranean'.¹¹⁸ Kissinger, along with Schlesinger and the CIA director, William Colby, took an even sterner tone with John Hunt during a meeting in

Washington. Apparently, Kissinger's explanation that the US did not want the British to close their bases in Cyprus was laced with a series of expletives. Given that America's relationship with Turkey was strained because of the Cyprus crisis, and the US Congress was threatening to halt all military assistance to Turkey (this was achieved in January 1975), the British presence in Cyprus took on a greater degree of importance. Indeed, Britain's intelligence facilities in Cyprus assumed extra significance when US posts in Turkey were shut down in retaliation to the Congress's termination of military aid.¹¹⁹

Following Washington's warnings, debate continued in Wilson's government regarding the scope of defence cuts, and after much wrangling Mason announced the preliminary results of the defence review to the House of Commons on 4 December 1974.¹²⁰ In retrospect, Mason claimed that the defence review 'preserved our core defensive interests in Europe and fully maintained the integrity of NATO' and at the time he was equally confident.¹²¹ Wilson, in a number of his public speeches, was just as self-congratulatory, yet in private he was rather more reticent about the likely American reaction.¹²² Thus, Wilson reported to his Cabinet that in the opinion of the Ford administration, defence cuts had reached 'the limit of what is tolerable'. In confidential correspondence with his chancellor of the exchequer, Wilson was even more forthright in expressing the same sentiment.¹²³

Wilson was correct to be apprehensive about the reaction of the US given that even before the latest defence review had been completed, key US policy-makers were privately bemoaning the likely results. 'You have to operate on the assumption that Great Britain is through', was Kissinger's candid judgement.¹²⁴ The results of the defence review only soured Kissinger's opinion further.¹²⁵ Other influential US policy-makers were equally irritated with the British defence review. The US could 'no longer expect Britain to pull any weight,' Schlesinger allegedly stated.¹²⁶ Alexander Haig, now the supreme commander of allied forces in Europe, believed that the defence review was not 'reassuring'. As Haig articulated to Ford, the British had become 'spongy'.¹²⁷ Clearly this was not meant as a term of endearment. Indeed, under Haig's direction, NATO responded rather sourly, with a public spokesman complaining that British defence cuts were 'hard to swallow and there is no doubt that they will do some damage'.¹²⁸

Not all US officials were as critical as the aforementioned. The US ambassador to the UK, Elliot Richardson, gave a rather more positive appraisal of the defence review: 'Britain and NATO have come away from the defence review rather better than initially might have been expected. Nothing vital has been lost, and the ingredients for a continued, meaningful British contribution to Western defense are still present'.¹²⁹ Such opinion was in the minority, however, and Ford's two most influential officials for foreign and security affairs,

Kissinger and Schlesinger, agreed that the defence review had done significant damage to Britain's standing with America. Additionally, US officials perceived the British defence review to have harmed US interests on several fronts. For example, the decision to reduce the scope of British bases in Cyprus and Malta was seen to have undermined America's ability to gather intelligence in the region. British actions were also seen to have undermined US efforts at promoting burden-sharing, and US attempts at negotiating an MBFR agreement with the USSR were deemed to have also been dealt a blow.¹³⁰

Such evidence could lead one to conclude that US–UK relations were critically undermined by Wilson's defence review. Nevertheless, on closer inspection it is remarkable just how little impact the defence review of March 1975 actually had upon existing US–UK cooperation. As US policy-makers concluded, the types of cooperation undertaken with the UK – especially in the nuclear and intelligence realms – still benefitted the US. As the US Embassy in London noted, to cancel such mutually beneficial cooperation would only have a “‘cut off your nose to spite your face” quality’ about them.¹³¹ Given the international environment, it becomes clearer as to why the Ford administration was unwilling to terminate mutually beneficial arrangements with a friendly country. The likes of Kissinger, Schlesinger and perhaps even Ford believed that the US was experiencing a period of power decline, and the events unfolding in Vietnam acted as a timely reminder of the limits of American power. US concerns abounded over the future stability of countries such as Greece, Italy and Portugal, and the spectre of ‘Euro-communism’ was – from the perspective of the Ford government – a very real danger to American interests in Europe. Moreover, in terms of proportion of GDP, Britain still remained the largest contributor to NATO. Wilson continued with the Polaris upgrade and gave in to US demands to retain intelligence posts in Cyprus. To put it simply, allies for the US in 1975 were in short supply. Terminating military cooperation with a country which, even given the latest round of defence cuts, still promoted US interests made little sense from the perspective of the Ford White House.¹³²

Britain's economic difficulties in this period were the backdrop behind all of these other events. Economic recession, stagflation and an ever-growing deficit were the driving forces behind Wilson's need to reduce public expenditure. Moreover, the policies undertaken by the Wilson government to solve Britain's economic problems were to have an impact on US–UK relations. Most obvious were the defence cuts enacted to help reduce Britain's public expenditure. Besides, there was the broader concern in Washington about the economic policies pursued by Wilson's government. For instance, the president complained to the US ambassador designate for the UK, Elliot Richardson, about the Wilson government and ordered Richardson to ‘get close’ to the unions in the UK, so

they would not follow 'disastrous' policies. In other words, Ford was asking his ambassador to involve himself in the domestic affairs of the UK.¹³³

Throughout 1975, the president continued to take an interest in the British economy, and was vocal in chastising the policies pursued in London. Ford admonished Wilson's economic policies during one interview with the magazine *Fortune*:

If that growth in transfer payments continues, we can't have the same economic system by the year 2000 that we have now. I don't think that we are over the cliff, but it is something we have to stop now. As more people get on those transfer payments they become a political force and the programs are sort of self-perpetuating. In my opinion, the best example of how the matter can get out of hand is the situation in Great Britain today. They just don't seem to be able to stop the momentum.¹³⁴

This was followed by a speech in San Francisco on 4 April 1975, where again Ford labelled the UK as a prime example of a government that mismanaged its economy. These comments raised eyebrows in London, and Peter Ramsbotham lodged a complaint with the Ford administration and was granted an apology, along with a promise that the president would not publicly talk about Britain's economic problems in such a fashion again.¹³⁵ In spite of such promises, in October 1975 Ford once again spoke candidly about Britain's economic problems, with the *New York Times* reporting that Ford had said that a 'horrible example of a government that spends itself sick was Britain's with its Labour Government and its Welfare State'.¹³⁶ If the public statements were causing disquiet in British circles then one can only imagine what would have been made of the private comments being made in Washington. Kissinger, in one remark to President Ford, was particularly scathing, stating: 'Britain is a tragedy – it has sunk to begging, borrowing, stealing until North Sea oil comes in ... That Britain has become such a scrounger is a disgrace.'¹³⁷ Even if one allows that Kissinger may have been talking in a moment of exasperation, the fact remains that Ford's other advisers were just as critical; for example, US Treasury Secretary William Simon, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Arthur Burns, and Ford's special adviser on economics, Alan Greenspan, all lambasted the British government's economic policies.¹³⁸

This low opinion of Britain became obvious during President Ford's tour of Europe in May 1975. Kissinger advised that Wilson was a 'marginal' figure and as such Ford was best spending 'a lot of time' with the West German chancellor, Helmut Schmidt.¹³⁹ In practical terms, how much time the president spent with foreign leaders had little effect upon US–UK bilateral cooperation. Nonetheless, if the defence cutbacks are viewed in conjunction with Britain's

economic troubles, it becomes clear that the Ford administration viewed Wilson's government as an increasingly less reliable ally for promoting US interests.

Due to Britain's continuing economic problems, rumours soon began circulating that further defence cuts were forthcoming and Ford was kept informed of these developments.¹⁴⁰ This advice was well founded because Healey was arguing that further public expenditure cutbacks were required to control Britain's expanding borrowing requirements and this would likely involve bigger cutbacks in defence expenditure.¹⁴¹ America's reaction to these proposed defence cuts was even more belligerent than that exhibited earlier in the year. At the Helsinki conference (July 1975), Ford articulated American displeasure about further British defence cutbacks.¹⁴² Schlesinger was less diplomatic and employed rather bellicose tactics in an effort to convince the Wilson government to maintain its defence spending, when he threatened to permanently terminate US–UK nuclear and intelligence cooperation if substantial defence cuts were made. Mason reported Schlesinger as follows to the prime minister:

If the British Government were to make further cuts in defence expenditure, the US government would have to re-consider its bilateral arrangements with us [Britain] on the exchange of communications and intelligence information and on assistance in respect of nuclear weapons, including specifically our POLARIS force and the improvement of its missiles.¹⁴³

Following Schlesinger's warning, it was Kissinger's turn to convey the Ford administration's displeasure and he did so in conversation with James Callaghan. Whilst demonstrating a significantly more subtle approach than Schlesinger had with Mason, he articulated much the same point: US–UK security collaboration would be re-assessed if a further round of UK defence cuts was enacted.¹⁴⁴

If this type of diplomacy was supposed to cause Wilson to rethink his defence policies then it appears to have failed. In fact the prime minister blithely dismissed these warnings and informed Mason that he should have told Schlesinger 'to get stuffed'.¹⁴⁵ Wilson also doubted whether the president or Kissinger 'would have supported this kind of pressure on us'.¹⁴⁶ Callaghan questioned this assessment, believing Ford would support Schlesinger if he suspended US–UK intelligence collaboration and, from his conversations with Kissinger, it was clear that the Ford administration was generally unhappy about further British defence cuts.¹⁴⁷ Healey, meanwhile, advised Wilson that Schlesinger's remarks should be considered, but the fundamental objective had to remain getting the economy 'right'. In Healey's assessment, this would require 'major reductions in public expenditure' and defence could not be

exempt, given that 'desirable features of other public expenditure programmes were having to be foregone'.¹⁴⁸

Of all the advice given to Wilson, it was Callaghan's that most accurately portrayed US opinion. To be sure, Wilson's thinking was not illogical given that Schlesinger's public differences with the president and Kissinger gave a clear impression of a divided administration.¹⁴⁹ However, while Wilson may have doubted that Ford and Kissinger would have supported Schlesinger, the fact was that they had actually sanctioned his actions.¹⁵⁰ This, though, was all a moot point from the perspective of the Wilson government and, in the final assessment, Schlesinger's threats and Kissinger's more subtle suggestions were ignored. On 24 June 1975, Mason announced that further defence cuts were to be expected in the near future.¹⁵¹ Interestingly, US pressure had been unable to prevent a further round of defence cuts, and threats to cancel intelligence or nuclear cooperation had, on this occasion, been futile.

The US secretary of defense made a scheduled visit to London in September 1975, and it was here that Schlesinger again made his opposition to defence cuts known. He told Mason that the March 1975 defence review should be a 'one time' process and he made similar arguments to Wilson and Healey.¹⁵² The chancellor responded by making it known that public expenditure related to the 'social services' was going to be cut, thus meaning it was rather self-evident that the defence budget would also be reduced.¹⁵³ Wilson was not as blunt with Schlesinger, informing him that, 'There was no need to expect any major changes in our defence expenditure'.¹⁵⁴ In spite of such assurances, Wilson had been careful not to make any specific promises about upholding Britain's defence expenditure and, given the economic and political realities which confronted the prime minister, this was a wise decision. Britain's deepening recession and increasing borrowing levels meant that public expenditure was going to be reduced further, and it was, therefore, a case of how substantial, rather than if, defence cuts would be implemented.¹⁵⁵

How public expenditure would be cut was being rigorously debated in London. Healey sought to introduce an aggressive programme of tax increases and public expenditure cutbacks, which was dubbed the 'civil formula'. The civil formula was not accepted in its entirety; however, on 13 November 1975, the Cabinet gave its approval for public expenditure cutbacks of £3,750 million. One hundred million pounds of this total was designated to come from the defence budget up to Financial Year (FY) 1979–80. The Treasury, however, demanded a further reduction from the defence budget throughout the winter of 1975. Such demands were made because Healey had only managed to find some £2,600 million in savings, leaving a shortfall of £1,150 million from the agreed £3,750 million target. It was therefore evident that there would be increased pressure to reduce the size of the defence budget. As it turned out, it

did not take long for these calls to materialise as Healey called for the defence budget to be slashed by an additional £550 million.¹⁵⁶

Healey's demands encountered immediate opposition from Roy Mason, who argued that such cutbacks would terminally damage Britain's relationship with the US. John Hunt lent his support to Mason's appeals, advancing a similar argument which resonated with the prime minister. Wilson therefore rejected Healey's demands, and asked the various Cabinet ministers to re-submit their budget proposals with increased savings.¹⁵⁷

Kissinger decided that he had to strengthen the resolve of Wilson against those arguing for substantial defence cutbacks, and thus despatched a scathing cable to London. 'I am sure that you are aware that America's long-term relations with the UK will inevitably have to take into account Britain's standing as a partner in our common security exercise,' Kissinger ominously warned.¹⁵⁸ While not specifically stating so, it is reasonable to suggest that Kissinger was referring to US-UK nuclear and intelligence cooperation. Kissinger, following Schlesinger's earlier path, invoked the possible re-assessment of the US-UK nuclear and intelligence relationship as a means of convincing Wilson that a substantial reduction in Britain's defence expenditure should not be undertaken.

Kissinger's actions, however, were largely irrelevant in deciding the final outcome of the defence reductions debate. Throughout the whole of the deliberations, it is evident just how little credibility Wilson gave to US threats.¹⁵⁹ As Wilson had learned in the 1960s, bellicose US diplomacy could not actually force his government into maintaining defence commitments which he was determined to scrap.¹⁶⁰ More importantly, Wilson was not prepared to accept Healey's suggestion that defence expenditure should be so radically reduced. As a trained economist himself, Wilson had always been sceptical of the Treasury's advice, and he remained unconvinced by the balance that Healey's civil formula approach was trying to strike between tax increases and public expenditure cutbacks. In Wilson's estimation, Healey was focusing too much on public expenditure cutbacks and not enough on ways to bolster the economy, in order to raise tax receipts, or enact new means of taxation. Added to this, Wilson still believed that Britain could not reduce its defence expenditure by the sums Healey was demanding because he desired to safeguard certain projects, such as the Polaris update, in order to, as he saw it, retain influence with Washington. One particularly ill-tempered retort to his Cabinet colleagues demanding defence expenditure be more significantly reduced than military spending 'was more important than school meals, or social security for Irishmen with 18 children' captures this thinking rather well.¹⁶¹ Thus, in the series of Cabinet debates that followed, Wilson skilfully managed to ensure that defence's contribution to the overall public expenditure cutbacks fell from an

initially 'scored' agreement of £225 million, to £193 million.¹⁶² This was 5.5 per cent of the total public expenditure cutbacks of £3,750 million. Perhaps more importantly from Wilson's perspective was the fact that the figure the defence budget had been reduced by was less than half the figure Healey had been seeking.

The majority of the defence cutbacks involved manpower reductions, extending the duration of defence projects and delaying infrastructure programmes.¹⁶³ The major defence projects, such as the Polaris upgrade and the Harrier jet programme, continued and the intelligence posts in Cyprus were also retained. In Washington, the announced British defence cuts were being analysed closely and, in the final analysis, they were deemed not to have been as bad as was initially feared. Whilst private complaints in Washington ensued, rather less bellicosity was exhibited in bilateral contact with British officials. Perhaps given that the Ford administration had itself decided to cut its own defence expenditure in October 1975, lecturing the British on their own efforts was seen as less than wise.¹⁶⁴

Finding a CSCE agreement

As shown earlier, Heath's government had been sceptical as to how the CSCE and MBFR would benefit the UK. At their most melodramatic, the British regarded both sets of negotiations as having the potential to critically undermine European security. For US–UK relations, the negotiations had been a point of disagreement and Wilson's return to office did little to alter this. Shortly after returning to power, Wilson had read an article in the *Economist* about the CSCE which sparked his interest in the subject and he therefore ordered a full review of British policy towards the CSCE.¹⁶⁵ After receiving various opinions on the CSCE, Wilson decided that any summit designed to conclude the CSCE should not be agreed to without first obtaining major concessions from the USSR.¹⁶⁶

This line of thinking was at variance with that of Washington. As shown earlier, the Nixon administration had initially wished to delay progress on the CSCE as a means of enacting leverage upon other areas of US–Soviet diplomacy. By the middle of 1972, agreements on subjects such as SALT and a Berlin Treaty had been reached and movement on CSCE was now sought. Now, US policy sought a swift resolution to the ongoing CSCE to ensure that nothing of real substance was reached in this multilateral negotiation. Accordingly, the visit of Nixon to Moscow in June 1974 was envisaged as a cut-off point. In sum, once the summit was over, the US wanted the CSCE to be promptly settled.¹⁶⁷

What divided British and American policy were fundamentally different ideas about both what the CSCE could achieve and what could reasonably be expected to be extracted from the USSR in exchange for agreeing to the CSCE. For instance, the issue of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), which included things such as the right of free movement throughout Europe, was one example of British and American policy being deeply divided.¹⁶⁸ Wilson's government sought tangible concessions from the USSR in these areas as the British believed these would be granted because the USSR was determined that the CSCE would act as a substitute treaty for ratifying Europe's post-World War II borders. This thinking was based on information garnered from Soviet and American sources that indicated that Brezhnev was personally determined to hold a CSCE summit. British policy-makers thus concluded that there existed a potential to extrapolate Soviet concessions for agreeing to such a summit.¹⁶⁹

US thinking differed from this. It must be recalled that from the outset of the process the CSCE was never seen solely as something that would benefit US interests on its own. Rather, the CSCE was useful in so much as it allowed the US to apply leverage upon other areas of US–Soviet interaction. As a result of this, CBMs were viewed as peripheral factors, and what really mattered for the US was getting Soviet movement on issues deemed more important to US interests. In particular, Washington wanted progress on SALT II and MBFR. However, as US policy-makers were aware, events in the Middle East had damaged détente and made it less likely that the Soviets would offer the US an agreement which they could realistically be expected to agree to. Events were proving such conclusions correct given that SALT II was becoming mired in technical debates and MBFR discussions had progressed little. As Helmut Sonnenfeldt succinctly summarised for Kissinger, negotiations had moved at a 'snail's pace'.¹⁷⁰

In order to garner a more responsive attitude from Moscow, Kissinger informed Nixon that he was 'holding up' progress on the CSCE until after the Moscow summit. This, as Kissinger explained, would give the US leverage over the USSR because they wanted to conclude the CSCE at a summit meeting. Refusing to move towards this would encourage the Soviets to be more forthcoming in both the SALT and MBFR discussions.¹⁷¹ Indeed, this belief was not without foundation given Soviet interlocutors had intimated that progress in SALT and MBFR was directly linked to the condition that the US agreed to hold a CSCE summit.¹⁷² Therefore, a CSCE summit was something that could be offered to the Soviets as a means of ensuring progress in areas deemed more important to the US.¹⁷³ Kissinger explained this policy approach candidly to Schlesinger: 'What can we do to keep the Soviet Union happy? We have MBFR, but that may be premature. CSCE is cheap. The Germans or French will probably give it away anyway and we should beat them.'¹⁷⁴ By August 1974, this had

become official US policy, and consequently the CSCE and MBFR were explicitly linked and a conclusion to the CSCE at a summit would be agreed to only as a means of producing movement on MBFR.¹⁷⁵

Earlier in the year, Kissinger had indicated to the Soviets that a CSCE would be concluded in the near future.¹⁷⁶ In the communiqué following the Moscow summit of June 1974, this private assurance was given a public endorsement.¹⁷⁷ For US–UK relations, this was to create further disagreement. Kissinger had provided Wilson with prior notice that the US would, at the conclusion of the Moscow summit, announce its intention to hold a CSCE summit.¹⁷⁸ The British informed Kissinger that they were not averse to settling the CSCE quickly, but they doubted whether Kissinger's timeframe was realistic.¹⁷⁹ Certainly, the negotiations at the CSCE were complicated and intricate. Less kindly, William Hyland noted that the CSCE had a 'Talmudic nature' which featured 'esoteric debates'.¹⁸⁰ It was certainly the case that the CSCE involved over 30 countries which were seeking to find agreement on a wide range of issues.¹⁸¹ Completing the CSCE according to Kissinger's timetable was, if one wishes to be charitable, a rather ambitious objective.

Causing further frustration to Kissinger's ambition of settling the CSCE quickly was the actions of the British CSCE delegation which, according to one US observer, enjoyed debating complicated technical matters.¹⁸² As the year progressed, the British delegation continued to debate the finer points of what the final CSCE agreement would include with their Soviet counterparts which left the clear impression that the talks were rapidly reaching a stalemate.¹⁸³ Such a situation angered Washington. In the opinion of Scowcroft, there was 'little to commend' in Britain's CSCE approach; Kissinger, therefore, attempted to break this impasse.¹⁸⁴ How this would be achieved presented an obvious problem. Trying to enforce US views on the Western negotiators was likely to create a rift amongst the Western alliance, and risk a repetition of US–European troubles witnessed throughout 1973. More dangerously, a fractured negotiating stance would provide the USSR with an opportunity to exploit this weakness. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the US, the negotiations could not just be allowed to continue at their current rate for the above-mentioned reasons. This predicament was neatly summarised by Arthur Hartman, the assistant secretary of state for European affairs:

The issue then is how to nudge the Allies along toward a more precise and realistic definition of objectives in Basket III and toward an agreed fallback position on CBMs without pressing them so hard we would risk a new US–European confrontation, but in a way that this autumn we would be in a position to show the Soviets that we have made a strong effort to bring CSCE to a conclusion.¹⁸⁵

Kissinger consequently injected himself into this and encouraged the US delegation to hasten the rate of the negotiations. In his assessment, this would be achieved by the West largely accepting the terms of the agreements already reached, and by the British dropping their demands concerning CBMs. As a result, the US delegation insisted that 'we understand and support the Allied wish for progress in the Basket III area, although realistically we must not set our sights too high'.¹⁸⁶ Such an attitude, however, was met with consternation by the British delegation. In London, it was met with equal incredulity. Callaghan wanted something 'concrete' on Basket III before agreeing to the Soviet demand to settle the CSCE at a summit.¹⁸⁷

British inflexibility was again met with little sympathy in Washington. Accordingly, Kissinger instructed his delegation to support the 'Finnish compromise', which meant that the Soviets would give some concessions over the issue of 'freer exchanges'. Crucially, however, this would be monitored by an internal regulatory apparatus, rather than by an outside body. Thus, Soviet sovereignty would not be violated by having to accept outside observers in their state, and would enhance the likelihood that the USSR would accept this condition.¹⁸⁸

A divided West

As negotiations continued, Callaghan and Kissinger – during a meeting in July 1974 – took the opportunity to explain their respective approaches to the CSCE. Kissinger pressed Callaghan to accept that the CSCE should be concluded at a summit, and further suggested that the USSR could not be expected to accept Britain's preferred level of CBMs. Callaghan remained unconvinced by Kissinger's line of reasoning. Instead he argued that the West should be pushing for greater concessions from the USSR, and would achieve them as long as the West remained resolute in its demands. At the end of the discussion it was evident that little agreement between the two sides existed. This said, it was agreed that it was essential for the Western bloc to unify its own negotiating position and only once these internal differences had been settled could a final CSCE be concluded.¹⁸⁹ Reaching this point, however, was going to be an obviously difficult task.

Given that Kissinger had failed to convince the British to alter their position, the contents of Basket III remained the principal sticking point in the negotiations. In December 1974, this impasse appeared to have been potentially broken. During Brezhnev's visit to Paris, the French, acting on behalf of the entire Western bloc, found agreement on the contents of Basket III. Following this, the Austrian delegation at the CSCE negotiation in Geneva was used to

table the Soviet–French agreement. As a part of the agreement, the French had agreed to the Soviet demand that the CSCE should be concluded at an international summit.¹⁹⁰

As seen above, a major summit to conclude the CSCE was something that both the US and British governments had not wanted to agree to without the Soviets offering something significant in return. French agreement to do this angered Ford and Kissinger with both reasoning that French actions had undermined the Western negotiating position, but, more importantly, it meant that the US could not extract concessions from the USSR in other areas of their diplomacy.¹⁹¹ British officials were divided in their assessments of French behaviour. Crispin Tickell (the FCO's head of western organisations department and therefore responsible for the CSCE negotiations) informed Ronald Spiers, the US chargé d'affaires in London, that the French had not broken with the agreed Western position.¹⁹² Tickell, however, was in the minority.

Michael Alexander, the chief negotiator for the British at the CSCE negotiations, agreed with the American opinion that French actions had undermined the entire Western negotiating position. Moreover, the chances for obtaining further CBMs now that the 'carrot' of a CSCE summit had been agreed to seemed remote. In London, Callaghan held a similar viewpoint.¹⁹³ French actions had a profound impact upon British policy towards the CSCE. Now that the summit had been agreed to, it was deemed unwise to deviate from this position because it would likely ostracise Britain and present an image of them being particularly belligerent. Moreover, British policy-makers figured that British opposition to a summit was not going to prevent it from occurring now it had been publicly agreed to. Thus, British policy-makers deemed that it was imperative to finalise the terms of Basket III and to quickly move to a summit so that the final CSCE agreement could be signed.

French actions should have brought US and UK policy closer together, as both countries understood that reaching an agreed Western position was required. British policy-makers believed that their complaints involving CBMs would have to be watered down (the very thing the US had been requesting throughout the past year), in order for an agreement to be reached in time for the summit.¹⁹⁴ As such, when Callaghan met with Kissinger in January 1975, he informed him that 'we won't get out of line with you' over the CSCE.¹⁹⁵ However, the reversal in British policy was unwelcome. Kissinger now argued that the summit should not be held unless the Soviets agreed to include further CBMs in Basket III. Ironically, the very thing the British had originally been arguing for now had Kissinger's support!¹⁹⁶

How then is this curious shift in US policy explained? Ultimately it comes down to Kissinger's overarching concern to obtain possible leverage over other areas of Soviet policy via the CSCE, and agreeing to a summit to settle the CSCE

was seen as a trump card for influencing Soviet policy. Although the summit had been scheduled, little movement in Soviet foreign policy had been forthcoming. Kissinger, noting that the West had agreed to the summit, believed that the US may as well attempt to extract concessions on the contents of the CSCE. As Kissinger explained in conversation with President Ford, Brezhnev personally attached great significance to agreeing to a CSCE at a summit. Therefore, if the West could delay the summit by refusing to agree terms on CBMs, this would harm Brezhnev's position within the ruling elite of the USSR and could result in him accepting these demands in order for the summit to take place.¹⁹⁷ However, as Kissinger realised, the US could hardly make demands about CBMs, given they had to this point barely mentioned them in US–Soviet negotiations. Thus, other countries which had made an issue of CBMs should act as America's proxies; hence, the US secretary of state sought to convince the British that they should act as the American stalking horse.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, Kissinger ordered the US delegation at the CSCE to encourage their allied counterparts to stand firm against Soviet demands.¹⁹⁹

This last-minute diplomacy by Kissinger was successful in extracting several concessions from the USSR. For instance, the USSR agreed that Europe's borders could only be altered via peaceful means, in accordance with international law. As Kissinger convincingly argued:

American influence had helped to confine the recognition of borders to an obligation not to change them by force, which was a mere duplication of the UN Charter. Since no European country had the capacity to bring about a forcible change or a policy to that effect, the formal renunciation was hardly a Soviet gain. Even this limited recognition of legitimacy was vitiated by a statement of principles which preceded it ... It declared that the signatory states consider that their frontiers can be changed, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement.²⁰⁰

Nevertheless, Kissinger failed to achieve the level of leverage in other areas of US–Soviet relations that he wanted. For instance, there was little movement over SALT II and MBFR. Consequently, as a tool of leverage over Soviet foreign policy, the CSCE failed to produce the type of result which Kissinger had envisaged was likely.

Helsinki was chosen as the location for the signing of the CSCE documents, and negotiations on the content of the CSCE continued until the actual date of the summit (30 July – 1 August 1975). Yet, following last-minute wrangling on the substance of the CSCE, the 'Helsinki Accords' were eventually signed on 1 August 1975.²⁰¹ For Kissinger, he doubted whether the CSCE would mollify Soviet behaviour and worried that it would only encourage 'communist

inroads' throughout Europe.²⁰² Worse still for the president, the signing of the accords became a political liability, with the *New York Times* parodying Winston Churchill when it opined that 'Never have so many fought for so little'.²⁰³ Other media outlets were equally scornful.²⁰⁴ Former government officials, such as George Ball, and the Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn attacked Ford's decision to attend the summit. Large and vocal elements within the Republican Party were equally critical, and this fuelled the challenge to Ford's presidency from the right of the party. As Ford would soon discover during his election campaign, the signing of the accords would prove to be a domestic burden that provided ammunition for his political opponents.²⁰⁵

Likewise, Harold Wilson faced vitriolic attacks from his political opponents, and Margaret Thatcher, the then leader of the opposition Conservative Party, vehemently attacked the CSCE and the entire process of détente.²⁰⁶ Certainly, some elements of the popular British press agreed with her stance. The *Daily Express*, for instance, believed that if Wilson believed the 'guff' he had spoken at Helsinki then he should be prevented from 'going out alone' in the future.²⁰⁷ But, as Thatcher accepted, her opinions placed her largely as the 'odd woman out'.²⁰⁸ In the main, the British public appeared to be embracing improved East–West relations and the signing of the CSCE was somewhat of a political boost for Wilson's leadership.²⁰⁹

MBFR

In both Washington and London, the MBFR had been seen as a rather more significant aspect of East–West relations. It is worth reflecting on how British and American policy had evolved. First, Wilson's return to power marked a subtle change in British policy towards MBFR. Most obvious was the fact that British enthusiasm for MBFR grew throughout this period which can be attributed largely to Britain's continuing economic problems. Simply, MBFR presented an opportunity for Britain to reduce its defence commitments in a multilateral format that would not undermine Western security. Nevertheless, British officials remained sceptical of US motives towards MBFR. In particular, the British were concerned that an MBFR agreement would be agreed regardless of NATO's concerns, and therefore severely damage British security interests.²¹⁰

Perhaps the British were correct to be suspicious given that we now know that Nixon had suggested that the MBFR should be settled on a bilateral basis between the US and USSR. Kissinger persuaded Nixon against such a course of action, citing that it would create innumerable problems for the US within NATO.²¹¹ But, following the US–Soviet summit (June 1974), it was

Kissinger that was now suggesting that MBFR should be settled bilaterally because he was growing impatient with its lack of progress.²¹² Kissinger's entire détente strategy was also coming under increasing pressure, both domestically and from within the administration. MBFR, therefore, was becoming an issue of growing significance for US–Soviet relations, and as such Kissinger now suggested it should be conducted bilaterally with the USSR. 'If we get serious about MBFR, we should do it like SALT – give them proposals through your channel before surfacing them,' Kissinger advised Ford.²¹³

Kissinger's suggested approach, however, was being challenged within Washington. Helmut Sonnenfeldt had consistently advised that US intentions vis-à-vis MBFR should be made abundantly clear to US allies and continued to argue this.²¹⁴ Sonnenfeldt could hardly act as a bureaucratic rival to Kissinger, but James Schlesinger certainly could and he was also not convinced that moving so quickly over MBFR suited US interests. He also remained sceptical about whether settling MBFR bilaterally with the Soviets was the preferable route to take. As Schlesinger reminded the president during one National Security Council meeting:

Our objectives on MBFR have been two. First, to improve security in Western Europe. This has led us to concentrate on getting out the tank army. And we have agreed not to be stampeded into movement that does not serve our ultimate objective of improved security. Second, we want to get the Allies to do more. If we place limits on Western forces, we cannot get them to increase their manpower and budgetary support. It is important not to undermine these basic objectives by accepting some short term possible deal held out by the Soviets.²¹⁵

Following this conflicting advice, the president ordered that US MBFR proposals should be given to the British and West Germans before other NATO members.²¹⁶ This was done largely because it was hoped that by engaging with the British at this early stage they would be able to mollify their likely resistance towards MBFR in forthcoming NATO meetings.²¹⁷ Regardless of this preferential treatment, US policy-makers were confident that they would obtain British support for their policies because Britain's economic woes would increase their desire to reduce military spending.²¹⁸

The Ford administration continued to push for agreement within NATO about the contents of an MBFR settlement, and thus proposed that 1,000 nuclear warheads, 54 nuclear capable F-4 aircraft and 36 Pershing surface-to-surface missile launchers should be removed from Europe. This would be the fundamental basis from which NATO would negotiate an MBFR settlement with the Warsaw Pact.²¹⁹ The US was correct in its earlier thinking

that the British would present the sternest challenge to its MBFR proposals. Within NATO, British officials pressed their American counterparts on both the substance of their proposals and the logic that supported them. According to one report, Callaghan had 'cornered' Kissinger at a NATO conference and had proceeded to list a whole series of complaints over the US's MBFR proposals.²²⁰

British officials had spent the opening months of 1975 opposing the US's MBFR proposals. However, by May this stance had completely altered, and London notified Washington that it would negotiate for an MBFR along the lines the US had proposed in January 1975.²²¹ Elliot Richardson gave further impetus to this, confirming that the British would genuinely seek an MBFR agreement.²²² This change in policy is best explained by Britain's economic difficulties. As predicted by US policy-makers in 1974, the MBFR afforded the British the opportunity to reduce their defence commitments within a multilateral framework, and would thus reduce the risk of damaging Britain's security interests within Europe.

In spite of Britain's new-found enthusiasm, the MBFR process remained painfully slow in achieving anything of substance and it also continued to be a source for US–UK disagreement.²²³ British officials complained that the US no longer seemed interested in substantively negotiating the contents of MBFR, and this was hardly an unfair assessment given that the Ford administration came to view MBFR as an increasingly meaningless exercise which was unlikely to benefit US interests.²²⁴ Ford, for instance, complained that the only accomplishment his MBFR approach had achieved was to give an impression that he was seeking to 'de-nuclearise' Europe which had only managed to raise the ire of the NATO alliance. Kissinger had reached a similar conclusion.²²⁵ It was apparent that, by the latter part of 1975, the Ford administration had effectively lost interest in reaching a substantive MBFR agreement in the near future.

This loss of interest can be explained because of an intermixing of strategic and domestic political factors: US–Soviet diplomacy was stalling in a number of areas, internationally the entire détente project appeared to be collapsing, SALT II had become mired in technical debate with little likelihood of further progress, the Paris Peace Agreement collapsed in April 1975 when North Vietnam captured Saigon, and the USSR appeared to be advancing in Africa. The CSCE summit in July–August 1975 had also not resulted in any discernible shifts in Soviet foreign policy.²²⁶ Domestically, the continuation of détente was coming under severe attack. Henry 'Scoop' Jackson, the likely Democratic nominee for president, vocally admonished Ford's foreign and defence policies. With Jackson's encouragement, domestic critics of détente became more vocal in the ensuing years. Jimmy Carter's campaign for the presidency also accused the Ford administration of pursuing a weak foreign policy towards the USSR.

For the president, then, the continuation of détente was becoming a prominent political issue that was hurting his chances of winning the 1976 presidential election. Such was the fear of appearing to be pursuing a 'weak' foreign policy, Ford had forbidden the word 'détente' being used to describe his foreign policy during his campaign for the presidency.²²⁷

Within the administration itself the challenge to détente was just as great, with Schlesinger leading the charge for a new foreign policy approach. Indeed, he would openly challenge official US policy aims in SALT II, and argued that the US should seek much tougher terms than those sought by Kissinger. Schlesinger would find himself fired as secretary of defense in November 1975, but his successor, Donald Rumsfeld, argued along similar lines.²²⁸ Moreover, events in Asia, Africa and Southern Europe appeared to undermine the argument that détente was producing a more amenable foreign policy from the USSR. It appeared as if both superpowers were coming to the conclusion that détente would not provide them with what they wanted. In the case of the US, it could not prevent the Soviet arms build-up, nor obtain Soviet assistance in extracting itself from Indochina. For the Soviet Union, détente would not provide the anti-Chinese alliance it sought, or the economic assistance it required.²²⁹

Coupled with all of this was Henry Kissinger's dwindling influence on the course of US foreign policy. Kissinger's position within the administration as the chief architect and implementer of US foreign policy was being undermined by both changing international and domestic circumstances. While he had been largely unaffected by the scandal of Watergate, he was now becoming embroiled with similar controversies as the Church Committee (the Congressional inquiry into the CIA) began to reveal Kissinger's association with the more controversial activities of the agency. As the most visible member of the Ford administration associated with the détente project, such revelations were damaging to Kissinger's reputation and standing within the administration. Coupled with this, the challenge from the right of the Republican Party began to make Kissinger a political liability for the president. Ronald Reagan attacked the administration's détente policies and based this as his challenge against Ford as the Republican nominee for the presidency.²³⁰

Ford was not immune to these pressures, and he began to rely less upon Kissinger's policy advice.²³¹ Thus, when Kissinger lost his position as national security adviser in November 1975 (something Ford had never been comfortable with, and had been advised to change at the outset of his presidency),²³² it signalled that the president was now determined to chart a more independent and perhaps alternative course in foreign affairs.²³³ The likes of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney offered this alternative, advising the president to take a much sterner approach in their diplomacy with the USSR.²³⁴ As John

Lewis Gaddis – the eminent historian of the Cold War – has noted, ‘whatever “thaw” had occurred in the Cold War now seemed to be ending’.²³⁵ Given this, projects closely associated with détente, such as SALT II or MBFR, became less significant for the Ford administration.²³⁶ It is of little surprise then that MBFR failed to substantively advance during the final year of the Ford administration.

Conclusion

During Wilson’s final premiership, he had sought to repair the relationship with Washington and from here ensure that relations remained as close as possible in order to influence Britain’s superpower ally. In some ways, Wilson was highly successful in that he managed to improve personal relations with the key policy-makers in Washington and, at least in the public arena, the impression of a close and harmonious relationship was presented.²³⁷ Along with this, the areas traditionally seen as the most ‘special’ in the US–UK relationship continued under his government. Finally, as witnessed during both the CSCE and MBFR negotiations, US–UK negotiations, if not always in agreement, showcased that a significant amount of interaction, discussion and cooperation continued between the two sides.

Yet, underneath the surface, US–UK disagreement was never far away and it even threatened to impact upon the intelligence and nuclear relationship. As such, a constant feature of the relationship was the coercive diplomacy employed by Washington against its British ally. Threats to curtail, limit, or even permanently cancel, nuclear and intelligence cooperation with London were made periodically by Washington in order to persuade London not to enact sweeping defence budget cuts which would harm perceived US interests. Wilson, having been well versed in experiencing the more belligerent policies of Washington during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, was able to largely ignore the threats emanating from across the Atlantic. Indeed, Wilson, unlike his predecessor Edward Heath, had judged, quite correctly as it would turn out, that Washington would not act upon its threats because, in the final analysis, this cooperation benefitted the United States. As Wilson well understood, even an ally that was of declining utility remained, nonetheless, useful.

Notes

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- 9 Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), pp. 380–1.
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- 15 Bernard Donoghue, *Prime Minister: The Conduct of Policy Under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), p. 86; Kavanagh and Seldon, *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister*, pp. 103–5; James Callaghan Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, United Kingdom (hereafter: JCP). Also see the contents of MS Callaghan, Box 42, JCP. Further on this see: Michael Palliser, BDOHP, p. 31; Juliet Campbell, *ibid.*, p. 29; Rodric Braithwaite, *ibid.*, p. 15; Nicholas Henderson, *Mandarin: The Diaries of Nicholas Henderson* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), pp. 59–60, 62–6, 72–3.
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- 17 Patrick Bell, *The Labour Party in Opposition 1970–1974* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 75–88.
- 18 David McKie and Dennis Barker, 'We're In but Without the Fireworks', *Guardian*, 1 January 1973.
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- 29 Memorandum of Conversation, 11 March 1974, File: March 11, 1974, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Joint Chiefs, NSAMC Box 3, GFL.
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- 31 Question and Answer Session at the Executives Club of Chicago, 15 March 1974, in *Public Papers of the President, Richard Nixon, 1974*, p. 276.
- 32 Memorandum of Conversation, 11 March 1974, File: March 11, 1974, Kissinger, Schlesinger, Joint Chiefs, NSAMC, Box 3, GFL.
- 33 Both quotes within: Memorandum of Conversation, 19 March 1974, File: March 19, 1974, Kissinger, Schlesinger, NSAMC, Box 3, GFL.
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- 35 TNA: PREM 16/419 Draft Record of a Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Mr Helmut Sonnenfeldt, 15 March 1974.

- 36 TNA: FCO 82/471 Henry Kissinger to James Callaghan, 13 April 1974; TNA: FCO 82/471 Callaghan to Washington, 24 April 1974.
- 37 TNA: FCO 82/442 Record of Conversation between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Dr Henry Kissinger, 8 July 1974.
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- 92 Minutes of a Meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group, 14 August 1974, *ibid.*, Doc. 131, p. 435.
- 93 Kissinger, *YOR*, pp. 192, 225.
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- 97 Werth, *31 Days*, pp. 135–6.
- 98 Andreas Constandios, *America, Britain and the Cyprus Crisis: Calculated Conspiracy or Foreign Policy Failure?* (London: AuthorHouse, 2009); O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*; Aldrich, *GCHQ*, p. 326.

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- 102 See: *Hansard*, 17 December 1973, Vol. 866, column 967.
- 103 David Harris, 'Poor Man of Europe "by 1985"', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 September 1973.
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- 116 Ziegler, *Wilson*, p. 459.

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- 122 Speech for Glasgow Keir Hardie House, 1 March 1975, File: 16 December 1974–7 April 1975, MS Wilson c. 1263, Prime Minister's Speeches, HWP.
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- 141 Edward Pearce, *Denis Healey: A Life in our Times* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), pp. 428–50.
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- 143 TNA: PREM 16/733 R. M. [Roy Mason] to the Prime Minister, 19 June 1975.
- 144 TNA: PREM 16/733 Background Notes: The Monterey Warning, undated (circa 23 September 1975).
- 145 TNA: PREM 16/733 Handwritten note written by Wilson on RM [Mason] to the Prime Minister, 19 June 1975.
- 146 TNA: PREM 16/733 R. H. Wright to J. F. Mayne, 23 June 1975.
- 147 TNA: PREM 16/733 James Callaghan to the Prime Minister, 22 July 1975. It is within this document that reference is made to the 1973 suspension of US–UK intelligence

- cooperation. Evidently both the prime minister and Callaghan were aware of the precedent set by Kissinger and Schlesinger.
- 148 TNA: PREM 16/733 DWH to the Prime Minister, 23 June 1975.
- 149 Ford believed that Schlesinger was insubordinate and had a habit of 'talking down' to him. As he told one journalist, 'He was the one that I was not comfortable with ... He was a talented guy, but we just didn't fit.' Thomas M. DeFrank, *Write it When I'm Gone: Remarkable Off-the-Record Conversations with Gerald R. Ford* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007), p. 97.
- 150 Telcon: Secretary Schlesinger–Secretary Kissinger, 14 June 1975, HAKTELCONS.
- 151 The US Embassy in London reported Mason's announcement. See: From AmEmbassy London to SecState Washington DC, 25 June 1975, Document Number: 1975LONDON09764, from: <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=106620&dt=1822&dl=823> (Accessed 8 September 2009).
- 152 TNA: PREM 16/733 Meeting between the Defence Secretary and the Hon. James R. Schlesinger, United States Secretary of Defense, in the Ministry of Defence, 24 September 1975; TNA: PREM 16/733 Note of a Meeting over Lunch between the Prime Minister and the United States Secretary of Defense at Chequers, 27 September 1975; TNA: PREM 16/733 Note of a Meeting held in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Room, 24 September 1975.
- 153 TNA: PREM 16/733 Note of a Meeting held in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Room, 24 September 1975.
- 154 TNA: PREM 16/733 Note of a Meeting over Lunch between the Prime Minister and the United States Secretary of Defense at Chequers, 27 September 1975.
- 155 This was the very same point that the US Embassy in London warned Washington about. See: From AmEmbassy London to SecState Washington DC, 21 September 1975, Document Number: 1975LONDON14337, from: <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/createpdf?rid=163320&dt=1822&dl=823> (Accessed 14 August 2009).
- 156 Denis Healey, *The Time Of My Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), p. 400; Mason, *Paying the Price*, pp. 138–9; TNA: CAB 128/57/18 Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 13 November 1975; TNA: PREM 16/330 John Hunt to the Prime Minister, 28 November 1975; TNA: PREM 16/330 T. F. Brenchley to the Prime Minister, 2 December 1975.
- 157 Donoghue, *With Harold Wilson*, p. 561; TNA: PREM 16/330 T. F. Brenchley to the Prime Minister, 2 December 1975; TNA: PREM 16/330 John Hunt to the Prime Minister, 28 November 1975; TNA: PREM 16/330 T. F. Brenchley to the Prime Minister, 2 December 1975.
- 158 From SecState WashDC [Kissinger] to AmEmbassy London, December 1975, Tel. 289664, File: United Kingdom State Department Telegrams From Secstate NODIS (4), National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 15, GFL.
- 159 The Cabinet discussions can be followed throughout: TNA: CAB 128/57/54; TNA: CAB 128/58/1; TNA: CAB 128/57/25.
- 160 John Dumbrell, 'The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government: Vietnam, the Pound and East of Suez', *Journal of American Studies*, 30:2 (1996), 211–31.
- 161 The quote is referenced within Donoghue, *With Harold Wilson*, p. 594. On Wilson's dislike of the Treasury see: Peter Hennessy, *The Prime Minister: The Office and Its*

- Holders since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 362. Wilson had studied at the University of Oxford where he had obtained a 1st class degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics. At the age of only 21 Wilson was appointed as a Lecturer in Economic History at New College, Oxford University. It was here that Wilson would establish a reputation as a highly talented economist. On Wilson's education see Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 59; Ziegler, *Wilson*, p. 24.
- 162 TNA: CAB 128/57/54 Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 9 December 1975; TNA: CAB 128/57/25 Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 11 December 1975; TNA: CAB 128/58/1 Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 15 January 1976.
- 163 TNA: PREM 16/330 John Hunt to the Prime Minister, 28 November 1975.
- 164 President Ford to Harold Wilson, October 1975, MS Wilson, c. 1592: Messages to and from Heads of State, HWP.
- 165 TNA: PREM 16/391 HW [Harold Wilson] to Lord Bridges, 1 June 1974.
- 166 TNA: PREM 16/391 Callaghan to Washington, 2 May 1974.
- 167 Memorandum of Conversation, 31 May 1974, File: May 31, 1974 Nixon, Kissinger, Alexander Haig, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversations, 1973–1977, Box 4, GFL.
- 168 Davy, 'Helsinki Myths', 1–22. The CSCE was negotiating various and interrelated aspects of East–West interaction. Subsequently, the conference agenda was divided into what was termed 'baskets'. Basket I was to deal with questions related to the security of Europe. Basket II dealt with questions of economic and scientific cooperation. Basket III related to cooperation in the humanitarian field. Thus CBMs were contained within Basket III and were proving to be the biggest obstacle to East–West agreement.
- 169 Bennett and Hamilton (eds.), *DBPO: CSCE*, p. xxvi. Also see: TNA: PREM 16/391 Translation of a Message from Mr Brezhnev, delivered to the Prime Minister by the Soviet Ambassador in London, 10 June 1974; TNA: FCO 28/2451 Meeting with Mr William Hyland, Head of INR, State Department, 29 April 1974, filed by Malcolm Makinstosh, 30 April 1974.
- 170 For the quote see: Memorandum for the Secretary from Helmut Sonnenfeldt, 31 May 1974, National Security Council Files: Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Europe, Box 69, NPMP. Also see: Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger, 26 March 1974, NSC Files: Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Europe–USSR, Box 76, NPMP; Hanhimäki, *Flawed*, pp. 359–81; Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 759.
- 171 On Washington's thinking see: Memorandum of Conversation, 31 May 1974, File: May 31, 1974 Nixon, Kissinger, Alexander Haig, NSAMC, Box 4, GFL; Memorandum of Conversation, 18 March 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 190, pp. 557–61; Backchannel Message from the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs [Scowcroft] to Secretary of State Kissinger in Jerusalem, 6 May 1974, *ibid.*, Doc. 202, p. 617.
- 172 Brezhnev Note to the President, 8 June 1974, National Security Council Files: Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Box 71, NPMP; Memorandum of a Conversation, 15 April 1974, National Security Council Files: Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Europe–USSR, Box 82, NPMP; Memorandum of Conversation, 24 October 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 258, pp. 749–55.

- 173 US policy had previously sought to obtain Soviet agreement on MBFR prior to the conclusion of any CSCE. National Security Decision Memorandum 162, undated (circa April 1972), *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 89, p. 271.
- 174 Memorandum of Conversation, 31 May 1974, *ibid.*, Doc. 190, p. 633.
- 175 Minutes of a Verification Panel Meeting, 1 August 1974, *ibid.*, Doc. 349, p. 1021.
- 176 Memorandum of Conversation, 25 March 1974, National Security Council Files, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files–Europe–USSR, Box 76, NPMP.
- 177 Bennett and Hamilton (eds.), *DBPO: CSCE*, p. xxvi.
- 178 TNA: PREM 16/391 Extract from PM's Talks with Dr Kissinger, 8 June 1974.
- 179 TNA: FCO 21/1284 Ramsbotham to the FCO, 15 April 1974; TNA: FCO 82/446 A. A. Acland to Mr Tickell, 26 September 1974.
- 180 Hyland, *Mortal Rivals*, pp. 116–17. Hyland was appointed in 1969 as a member of the National Security Council. In 1973 he was appointed as the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and in November 1975 he would serve as the Deputy National Security Adviser under Brent Scowcroft until the end of the Ford presidency.
- 181 Davy, 'Helsinki Myths', 1–22.
- 182 Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger from William Hyland, 8 January 1974, National Security Council Files: Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files, Box 68, NPMP.
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- 184 Backchannel Message from the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs [Scowcroft] to Secretary of State Kissinger in Jerusalem, 6 May 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 202, p. 617; Memorandum of Conversation, 11 April 1974, *ibid.*, Doc. 199, pp. 606–7; Sonnenfeldt and Hartman to Secretary Kissinger, attached within Secretary of State [Kissinger] to Ambassador in Jerusalem, Tel. State 107929, May 1974, National Security Council Files: Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Europe, Box 69, NPMP; Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger from Jan M. Lodal and Helmut Sonnenfeldt, 31 May 1974, *ibid.*
- 185 Action Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs [Hartman] to the Counsellor of the Department of State [Sonnenfeldt], 19 July 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 236, p. 700.
- 186 Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission in Geneva, 8 June 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 210, pp. 638–9; Bennett and Hamilton (eds.), *DBPO: CSCE*, pp. xxvi.
- 187 Telegram from the Mission in Geneva to the Department of State, 23 July 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 238, pp. 706–7; Sir E. Peck to Mr Callaghan, 4 July 1974, in Bennett and Hamilton (eds.), *DBPO: CSCE*, Doc. 89, p. 306; TNA: FCO 30/2481 Community Briefing on Visit by Herr Genscher to Dorneywood on Saturday 15 June, 19 June 1974.
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- 189 Memorandum of Conversation, 7 July 1974, *ibid.*, Doc. 234, pp. 695–8.
- 190 Romano, *Détente in Europe*, pp. 199–200.
- 191 Memorandum of Conversation, 9 December 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 266, p. 782.
- 192 From AmEmbassy London to SecState Washington, December 1974, Tel. London 15934, File: United Kingdom State Department To SECSTATE EXDIS (1), National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 16, GFL.
- 193 Michael Alexander, BDOHP, pp. 14–16.
- 194 For reports of British demands on CBMs being less stringent see: Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, attached to Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft from George Springsteen, 14 January 1975, File: Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1974 WH (1), National Security Adviser NSC Europe, Canada and Ocean Affairs Staff Files 1974–1977, Box 44, GFL.
- 195 Memorandum of Conversation, 30 January 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 269, p. 788.
- 196 Memorandum of Conversation, 26 May 1975, File: May 26, 1975 Ford–Kissinger, NSAMC, Box 12, GFL.
- 197 *Ibid.*
- 198 Memorandum of Conversation, 7 May 1975, File: May 7, 1975, Ford, Kissinger, UK Prime Minister Wilson, Foreign Secretary Callaghan, NSAMC, Box 11, GFL.
- 199 Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger from Mr Clift, 16 May 1975, File: Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1974 WH (3), National Security Adviser NSC Europe, Canada and Ocean Affairs Staff Files 1974–1977, Box 44, GFL.
- 200 Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 759.
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- 202 Stephen Kieninger, 'Transformation of Status Quo', in Bange and Niedhart (eds.), *Helsinki 1975*, p. 78.
- 203 Editorial, *The New York Times*, 21 July 1975.
- 204 News Report, NBC News, 2 August 1975, Tape F380, GFL.
- 205 George Ball, 'Capitulation at Helsinki', *The Atlantic Community Quarterly*, 3:3 (1975), 286–8; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 'The Big Losers in World War III', *The Atlantic Community Quarterly*, 13:3 (1975), 293–5; Del Pero, *Eccentric Realist*, pp. 110–44.
- 206 Speech to Chelsea Conservative Club, 26 July 1975, available at: www.margarethatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=102750 (Accessed 21 September 2009).
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- 208 Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 353.
- 209 Pimlott, *Wilson*, p. 703.
- 210 TNA: FCO 82/584 Note of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States, 30 July 1975; Editorial Note, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 231, p. 685.

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- 215 Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting, 23 January 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976, European Security*, Vol. XXXIX, Doc. 355, p. 1047.
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- 222 From AmEmbassy London to SecState Washington, June 1975, Tel. London 8715, *ibid.*
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- 230 John Prados, *Presidents' Secret Wars: CIA and Pentagon Covert Operations From World War II Through The Persian Gulf* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996, revised edition), pp. 326–56; Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, pp. 259–72; Cannon, *Time and Chance*, pp. 405–8; Randall B. Woods, *Shadow Warrior: William Egan Colby and the CIA* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), pp. 437–63.
- 231 Van Atta, *Melvin Laird*, pp. 483–92.
- 232 George H. Bush, as the Republican Party National Chairman, had given such advice to Ford on 8 August 1974, the day prior to Nixon's resignation as president. See: George Bush, *All the Best: My Life in Letters and Other Writings* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), pp. 193–4. On Ford's scepticism of Kissinger holding the position of National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, see: DeFrank, *Write It When I'm Gone*, p. 91.
- 233 Kissinger, *YOR*, pp. 834–45. It should be remembered that Kissinger's replacement, Brent Scowcroft, was a close associate of his. However, Anatoly Dobrynin noted that once Scowcroft had been appointed, he was 'more open' and less reserved now that he had been released from 'Kissinger's constant control'. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 351. On Scowcroft's role in the Ford administration, see: David F. Schmitz, *Brent Scowcroft: Internationalism and Post-Vietnam War American Foreign Policy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp. 42–60.
- 234 Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown*, pp. 222–32; Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), pp. 72–94. Rumsfeld took over as Ford's chief of staff from Alexander Haig soon into Ford's term. Cheney served initially as Ford's deputy chief of staff and, following Rumsfeld's promotion to defense secretary, he assumed the role of chief of staff.
- 235 John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), p. 184.
- 236 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 207–87.
- 237 See for example Ford's speech welcoming Wilson to the White House in January 1975: The American Presidency Project, 'Remarks of Welcome to Prime Minister Harold Wilson of the United Kingdom', 30 January 1975 available at: www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5260 (Accessed 11 January 2013).