CHAPTER 19

Reviving Strength Amidst Turbulence

The end of the Vietnam War allowed Secretaries Elliot Richardson, James Schlesinger, and Donald Rumsfeld to redirect the Department of Defense to counter the threat posed by Soviet increasing military power. They devoted their tenures to revive the power and prestige of the U.S. military. Despite the Nixon administration's policy of détente with the Soviet Union through high-level summitry and arms negotiations, the Soviet military threat had never seemed to loom larger than in 1973. Moscow achieved rough strategic parity with the United States, and Soviet conventional forces, always larger than NATO's, gained better quality. Congress, and much of the public expected the United States to enjoy a peace dividend after the Vietnam War. They argued for massive Pentagon budget cuts and reductions to U.S. military deployments abroad. All three defense secretaries sought to ensure that the military did not fall dangerously behind its Cold War adversary.

The main theater of the Cold War was central Europe, where hundreds of thousands of NATO and Warsaw Pact troops faced off and continually prepared for war even as détente lessened political tensions between the superpowers. The three secretaries realized that the burdens of Vietnam had gravely eroded the U.S. defense posture in Europe and the credibility of American forces as an effective fighting force had fallen precipitously by 1973. The vast resources that were poured into Southeast Asia had deprived U.S. forces in Europe of America's best military equipment and most ambitious officers. Drugs, indiscipline, criminality, and racial conflict rampant during the Vietnam War had sapped the military's morale. To meet the challenge, all three secretaries devoted most of their attention to providing the military with the resources and policies necessary to revive American power in Europe.

The Turbulence of Watergate

Assessing how effective Elliot Richardson might have been at addressing the era's challenge remains mostly speculation because Nixon moved him to the Justice Department as the Watergate investigation expanded. This move cut his tenure to a mere three-and-a-half-months—well before he had the chance to develop his policies. Richardson's 115-day tenure was therefore too brief for him to make lasting changes to DoD or national security policy beyond his limited attempts to prevent Congress from cutting the department's budget and overseas deployments.

Nixon's choice of James Schlesinger to succeed Richardson had as much to do with the belief he would be confirmed early by the Senate as it did with his reputation as an apolitical defense strategist. A more partisan pick would have threatened to turn confirmation into the type of caustic political battle Nixon hoped to avoid as he confronted Watergate investigators. Before his unanimous Senate confirmation, Schlesinger affirmed that he viewed leadership at the Pentagon as a nonpartisan post. During his tenure as secretary, he succeeded in keeping the Pentagon "an island of stability" amid the cascading domestic political crisis brought on by Watergate and searched for ways to revive and reorient a post-Vietnam military to better confront the Soviet Union.[1] Schlesinger even ensured that an increasingly beleaguered Nixon in his final days in office did not give the military improper orders.

Net Assessment, the Schlesinger Doctrine, and the High-Low Mix

Nixon's preoccupation with Watergate gave Schlesinger a rare advantage. He did not need to focus much on maintaining the president's favor, normally a critical factor to a defense secretary's success. Largely free to do what he wanted at the Pentagon, Schlesinger seized

control of national net assessments, challenged Central Intelligence Agency estimates of Soviet defense spending, changed U.S. strategic doctrine, and reoriented the purchase of weapon systems.

Schlesinger's success in moving Andrew Marshall and the national net assessment process from Kissinger's National Security Council to the Pentagon became a valuable resource for DoD and is one of his lasting legacies. Schlesinger tasked Marshall with discovering competitive advantages against what he considered a powerful but vulnerable adversary. Marshall's contention, which Schlesinger shared, was that the Soviet Union's military advantages achieved at great cost to the Soviet economy could be reversed if DoD invested wisely in weapon systems and personnel. Instead of relying on the systems analysis applied during the Vietnam War, with its statistical measures to explain complex human phenomena, Marshall and Schlesinger replaced it with broader net assessments that drew from a vast array of disciplines. This innovative approach yielded more precise qualitative analyses of the superpowers' relative strengths and weaknesses in key areas of the Cold War, including strategic weapons, naval capabilities, and the military balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Schlesinger bequeathed to his successors a robust analytical and diagnostic tool, the Office of Net Assessment, under Marshall's leadership, which last until Marshall's retirement in 2015.

To contest what he viewed as Kissinger's flawed détente policies, Schlesinger drew heavily on Marshall. Schlesinger believed that détente had not persuaded the Soviets to reduce their defense spending, and he charged that the CIA had seriously underestimated the Soviet defense buildup and its burden on the Soviet economy. With Marshall as his point man, Schlesinger pressed the intelligence community to reconsider estimates about the Soviet Union because though Moscow had strengthened conventional and strategic forces relative to those of

the United States, it had come at great economic cost. The Soviet Union was therefore more threatening to the United States than Kissinger argued, and in the CIA's estimation, also more vulnerable. Although Schlesinger's forced resignation cut short his efforts to convince the CIA to reexamine its Soviet assessments, his crusade was picked up by Rumsfeld, who encouraged President Ford and Director of Central Intelligence George H. W. Bush to create a review of outside experts to reassess CIA intelligence on the Soviet strategic nuclear program. The dire assessment of the resulting Team B would become a rallying cry for critics of détente.

One of Schlesinger's lasting achievements was his readjustment of U.S. nuclear strategy that had been based on mutual assured destruction. He seized control of nuclear policy and promoted a change in doctrine heavily based on controlling nuclear escalation and providing a range of nuclear options below the level of massive retaliation. Schlesinger's public announcement in January 1974 of a change in targeting policy forced the White House to release NSDM 242, which introduced into nuclear planning the concept of limited nuclear war options The policy was dubbed the Schlesinger Doctrine by the press—much to the envy of Kissinger, who had long espoused the idea. In April, Schlesinger issued the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy and spent much of his remaining time in office pressing reluctant military planners to apply the doctrinal shift to war plans. Although technological limitations and military resistance precluded actual plans from satisfactorily reflecting the Schlesinger Doctrine, the Carter and Reagan administrations later built upon the secretary's efforts to improve the president's nuclear options in wars and crises.

Schlesinger was also a fierce and effective advocate for conventional and strategic weapon systems to counter the military threat posed by the Warsaw Pact. His unparalleled mastery of strategic matters enabled him to align each weapon system with his broader narrative

of the necessity to better confront a Soviet adversary that was heavily investing in defense. Despite a stagnant Defense budget, Schlesinger found ways to maintain a qualitative edge over the Soviets while also increasing the overall quantity of U.S. tanks, aircraft, and ships. His solution was in fielding a high-low mix of weapon systems, combining superior performance with economical procurement. If the service chiefs insisted on procuring only the most advanced weapon systems, they would be compelled to cut deeply into their overall force structure. For example, he insisted that a mix of expensive advanced F-15 fighters be combined with the low-cost, but still effective, F-16s.

Schlesinger faced serious resistance to procurement changes in the Navy but enlisted Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Zumwalt as a staunch ally in his unsuccessful fight to replace the *Nimitz*-class aircraft carrier with smaller-size carriers. The two small-carrier proponents, however, were incapable of overcoming an alliance of admirals and members of Congress committed to the *Nimitz* class. Schlesinger enjoyed more success in his battle with aviator admirals. He halted production of the expensive F-14 Tomcat aircraft, built solely for fleet defense, and forced the Navy to procure the less expensive, more versatile F/A-18 Hornet. For the Army, Schlesinger pressed for the development of the XM1 prototype, a tank more advanced than any Soviet counterpart, but also asked the Army to maintain enough older tanks to ensure the U.S. tank inventory did not fall dangerously low should it confront a vastly larger Soviet tank force. The resulting M1 Abrams tank, with Rumsfeld's input, would feature a turbine engine and a larger turret, and would become the mainstay of American armor for at least the next half-century.

Schlesinger astutely championed weapon systems that bolstered the U.S. strategic posture, even when he privately harbored reservations about their high costs. He understood that

his support would garner favor among the top military brass and that a defense secretary often must set aside the quest for the ideal in pursuit of the achievable. Schlesinger, though initially skeptical of the high cost of the Navy's Trident missile submarine program he inherited, came to recognize it as an essential pillar of U.S. deterrence. He was a convinced and skillful advocate of Trident with Congress and successfully defended the program from efforts to kill it. The development of the Trident ballistic missile submarines and their associated missile systems, Trident I (C4) and Trident II (D5), represented a significant leap in ensuring second-strike capabilities. These submarines, later designated the *Ohio*-class, could launch nuclear strikes from undetectable locations across the world's oceans and became the ultimate safeguard against any strategic first strike by an adversary well into the 21st century. Schlesinger sided with the Air Force's B-1 bomber program, despite its growing costs. Air Force generals aimed to replace the aging B-52 Stratofortress strategic bomber fleet with a faster, more advanced aircraft but faced strong opposition in Congress from those who questioned its utility. The program was canceled in the first year of the Carter administration. However, the Reagan administration later revived the program, and the resulting B-1B played key roles in combat missions during the 1990s and 2000s. Despite its capabilities, the B-1B Lancer never replaced the B-52 as a strategic bomber. Moreover, the stealth capabilities of the B-2 Spirit rendered the B-1B's strategic bombing role somewhat redundant.

The All-Volunteer Force and NATO Burden Sharing

New weapon systems alone could not propel an American military recovery. In 1973 the United States embarked on a new experiment in testing whether it could field an all-volunteer force large and disciplined enough to defeat the millions of Warsaw Pact conscripts deployed against it. While both Richardson and Schlesinger prioritized the AVF, they delegated much of the work to Deputy Secretary William Clements, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs William Brehm, and Secretary of the Army Bo Callaway. The Vietnam War had taken its toll on the Armed Forces. Drugs, racial tensions, and indiscipline had wracked the military. The Pentagon AVF team sought to remold the force's image, increase recruitment, and improve training. To reduce the still festering Vietnam-era tensions between society and the military, Schlesinger convinced President Ford to offer clemency to all draft dodgers and deserters. Ford issued a partial amnesty in September 1974. Many in Congress feared the AVF would be too costly, but Schlesinger vigorously argued it was worth the cost. If the military hoped to remain competitive in the labor market, he explained, it must provide recruits and service members sufficient economic incentives to join the military. Rumsfeld, who had championed the move to an all-volunteer force since his time in Congress, continued support of the AVF. From 1973 to January 1977, the AVF recruited more women and minorities. By 1977, women comprised 5.5 percent of active-duty military members, up from 1.9 percent in 1972. The number of African American soldiers grew from 144,000 to nearly 186,000 during this period, raising their representation from 12.8 percent to almost 24 percent in the Army. This expansion of roles for women and minorities not only helped to meet the AVF's recruitment targets but also diversified and strengthened the force. Despite these advances, women still faced significant limitations. They remained largely excluded from combat roles or support positions likely to engage in combat. By the time Ford left office, recruitment had begun to falter but, by handing

the next administration an increasingly capable force, Schlesinger and Rumsfeld had proven wrong those critics who had predicted the AVF's unfeasibility and imminent collapse.

The success of the AVF, despite early recruitment challenges, demonstrated that a volunteer military could effectively support Washington's NATO commitments. Schlesinger and Rumsfeld believed a robust U.S. military presence in Western Europe was crucial as NATO Allies were less inclined to increase their defense spending. While seeking to improve the American military's ability to confront the Soviets, Schlesinger's campaign to convince European allies to strengthen their militaries and enhance deterrence in an age of strategic nuclear parity presented a series of challenges. Improved NATO conventional forces would discourage the Soviet Union from launching a conventional attack out of a belief NATO would not risk Armageddon and turn the war nuclear. Schlesinger's arguments that allies should prepare for a protracted conventional war did not resonate well with most of his West European counterparts, especially after the 1973 oil crisis, when high oil prices and stagflation rendered real increases to West European defense spending impossible. With détente and West Germany's *Ostpolitik* promising to calm tensions with the East, West European voters were unwilling to allow their leaders to pour scarce resources into their militaries. Knowing that a long conventional war would be fought on their soil, European leaders were leery of any doctrinal shift away from massive nuclear retaliation to deter a Soviet invasion. Schlesinger had little success in his efforts to persuade allied militaries to spend more on defense.

Although disappointed by NATO Allies' reluctance to improve their militaries, Schlesinger helped prevent a catastrophic withdrawal of American forces from Europe. Many in Congress argued that with the U.S. nuclear umbrella protecting NATO, the United States need not station a large number of troops there, especially if NATO members refused to address the

Warsaw Pact's substantial conventional advantage. Withdrawal, they argued, might force European allies to invest more in their own defenses. Schlesinger countered that the Soviet threat, though grave, was not insurmountable. Rather than convince the Europeans to invest more in their militaries, American withdrawal would cause allies to view any conventional defense as futile. Schlesinger maintained that if the United States unilaterally withdrew forces from Europe, it would undermine Mutual Balance Force Reduction talks in Vienna, Washington's best bargaining chip with the Soviets to get them to reduce their own forces in Central Europe.

The Budget in an Era of Stagflation

The extent to which Schlesinger and Rumsfeld influenced the outcomes of budget battles is not easy to quantify. Schlesinger made compelling intellectual cases but lacked personal warmth or political skill to cajole or persuade Congress. He had difficulty disguising his disdain with members who seemed more concerned with the economic interests of their districts or how their stances might play in their next election than they were with the nation's security. Still, Schlesinger clearly and persistently articulated the damage that budget cuts would cause to the U.S. military, which helped to stave off severe cuts. Schlesinger's efforts were thwarted by high inflation, which transformed modest budget increases into inflation-adjusted losses.

When Ford became president, Schlesinger failed to see that to have influence within the new administration he would need a good relationship with the president and White House. He no longer had the luxury of independence from presidential and White House control that Watergate had given him. Schlesinger failed spectacularly from the outset, infuriating the normally genial Ford by telling reporters of his earlier scheme to make sure any orders from Nixon or the White House were vetted and potentially canceled by him. This public revelation

infuriated Ford, who saw Schlesinger as someone undermining presidential authority. The President's desire to project an image of calm and foreign policy continuity to allies and adversaries after the first resignation of a president in American history prevented him from promptly dismissing Schlesinger. Schlesinger's budgetary efforts may have been more successful if he had demonstrated greater deference to members of Congress and the presidents he served.

Better attuned to congressional and presidential sensibilities, Rumsfeld recognized the importance of engaging members of the newly created House and Senate budget committees early in the budget cycle. He also benefited from both political parties' efforts to position themselves as supporters of a strong military before the 1976 presidential election. Unlike Schlesinger, Rumsfeld enjoyed Ford's unwavering support in his effort to alert Congress to the disturbing trends and the growing danger of the Soviet military buildup. The mounting skepticism in Congress and among the public about détente's effectiveness bolstered Rumsfeld's position, allowing him to achieve the first post-Vietnam inflation-adjusted budget increases for DoD.

Schlesinger's Struggles with Kissinger

For all his success in initiating and maintaining long-lasting defense policy shifts, Schlesinger was a far less successful interagency negotiator than many of his predecessors or successors. The reasons were Schlesinger's personality and Henry Kissinger's inordinately powerful presence in the Nixon and Ford administrations. Increasingly absorbed by Watergate, Nixon turned Kissinger into the first official dual-hatted as secretary of state and national security adviser in September 1973. Because of his role in opening relations with China,

extracting the United States from Vietnam, and achieving détente with the Soviet Union, By 1973, Kissinger's domestic popularity and international prestige surpassed that of any other member of the administration, including President Nixon. Under the Watergate-weakened and distracted Nixon, and then under Gerald Ford—a relative foreign policy novice—Kissinger held preeminent influence over national security policy. He led the NSC and State Department bureaucracies and dominated interagency groups.

Schlesinger's interagency disadvantages meant he needed a supportive deputy. Texas oilman William Clements, however, was not that person. Clements had been appointed before Schlesinger's arrival at the Pentagon and enjoyed an independent power base in the Republican Party. The deputy secretary had a far better rapport with Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger than with Schlesinger whose efforts to get rid of Clements only made him appear petty to Ford. When the two attended interagency meetings together, they frequently offered conflicting recommendations, and Kissinger routinely sought to exploit tensions between them in meetings and phone calls. Schlesinger found his already serious interagency disadvantages further amplified by Clements.

Crises of 1973–1974: The Arab-Israeli War and Cyprus Crisis

Schlesinger's interagency disadvantages became obvious in the first major crisis of his tenure. In the response to the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973, Schlesinger became badly out of step with White House policy. He sparred repeatedly with Kissinger over how much aid to give to the Israelis and how to do so. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to assure an Israeli victory on the battlefield without humiliating the Arabs, thereby positioning Washington to act as an honest broker between the Middle East combatants. Early in the crisis, Schlesinger doubted whether aid

to the Israelis was in America's best interest, even speculating initially whether the Israelis had started the war. He called Kissinger's scheme to covertly aid the Israelis using charter planes preposterous and infeasible. During the first week of fighting, the defense secretary argued that the Israelis exaggerated their losses and shortages to ensure American support and resupply. Believing that open U.S. support of Israel would drive the Arabs into the Soviet camp, he favored a more even-handed approach. Washington, he feared, risked losing Saudi Arabia if the United States sided with Israel. Kissinger disagreed. Although Kissinger had initially thought the Israelis would quickly repel Egyptian and Syrian forces, he became convinced after several days of fighting that the Israeli military situation was indeed precarious and only the rapid delivery of U.S. weapons and munitions could stave off disaster. A peace favorable to U.S. interests, Kissinger reasoned, was only possible after Israeli military success—albeit a limited one. The United States could not allow its regional ally to be humiliated by Soviet-supplied states.

Relations between the secretary of defense and secretary of state deteriorated throughout the crisis. Kissinger accused Schlesinger of sabotaging efforts to keep Israel supplied. After it became apparent the Israelis could lose the war without U.S. military aid, Nixon intervened, ordering a massive airlift that allowed the Israelis to turn the tide of battle in their favor. Not wanting the Israelis to turn the reversal into a rout, Kissinger began his shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East to negotiate a series of disengagement and withdrawal agreements while preventing Soviet meddling.

After the cease-fire had taken hold, Israel requested large weapon shipments from Washington. In this case, Schlesinger and Clements supported Nixon and Kissinger's strategy to link U.S. arms deliveries with evidence of Israeli diplomatic flexibility. The first disengagement agreements augured success for that strategy, but in 1975, when Ford tried to pressure Israel into

a policy reassessment by postponing some arms shipments, Congress overrode him and deprived Kissinger of his diplomatic leverage. Schlesinger's meetings with Israeli officials were never good, but they became adversarial. Defense officials became particularly incensed when the Israelis bypassed them and made arms requests to Congress or the NSC staff. Massive U.S. shipments to Israel, in Schlesinger's view, were neither militarily justifiable nor wise, but he ultimately proved unable to stop them.

During the Cyprus crisis in July and August 1974, Schlesinger acted mostly in a supporting role for Kissinger, who managed the crisis through the final days of Watergate and the beginning of the Ford presidency. Schlesinger prevented the conflict involving Greece and Turkey—both NATO Allies—from spiraling out of control. When the Greek military government fell after the division of Cyprus, Schlesinger supported the new Greek democracy, realizing that it had to be hostile to American interests to achieve initial legitimacy. The Greeks withdrew from NATO's military command, and Schlesinger counseled patience. Ankara reacted angrily to a U.S. congressionally imposed embargo on military aid. Ford, Schlesinger, and Kissinger failed to maneuver around what they considered foolish and shortsighted impositions, which resulted in Turkey closing critical U.S. facilities and barring American military forces from conducting non-NATO activities from Turkish bases.

During the Arab-Israeli War and Cyprus crisis, Kissinger sometimes assumed authority ordinarily held only by American presidents. When challenged, he often claimed that he had the president's concurrence or that he would seek his approval later. During the Arab-Israeli War, Kissinger—not the President—authorized a nuclear alert to deter the Soviet Union from deploying troops to Egypt. During the Cyprus crisis, as Watergate reached its climax, Kissinger did not coordinate policy to give the President options—he chose the policy course himself and

later informed Nixon, then at the "western White House" in San Clemente, California. Becoming president in the middle of the Cyprus crisis, Ford mostly allowed Kissinger to manage its resolution. During both crises, Schlesinger often found himself out of the loop and forced to implement policy that he disagreed with—policy that was set by Kissinger.

The Fall of Saigon, the *Mayaguez* Incident, and Angola

In 1975, Southeast Asia reemerged as a crisis area that further strained Schlesinger's relationship with Ford. South Vietnam's swift collapse caught Washington by surprise. Schlesinger thought U.S. intelligence had assessed North Vietnam's capabilities accurately but failed to detect the dry rot in Saigon's forces. After the South Vietnamese had suffered major defeats, Schlesinger realized the situation was hopeless. Ford and Kissinger became frustrated at Schlesinger's frequent demands for a rapid evacuation of all remaining American forces from Vietnam. An overly precipitous withdrawal, they feared, might incite greater panic among the South Vietnamese, make them feel betrayed, or perhaps even cause them to turn their weapons on the remaining Americans. Once the final evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon was ordered at the end of April, Ford and Kissinger unfairly directed their frustration with the ensuing chaos and communication glitches at Schlesinger and the Pentagon.

Just weeks after the American withdrawal from Vietnam, Schlesinger's standing with Ford further declined because of his role in the response to the Khmer Rouge's May 1975 capture of the U.S. merchant ship *Mayaguez* and its crew. Kissinger initially recommended retaliatory and punitive B-52 strikes against the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia to send a message that the United States had not lost its willingness to use force in defense of its citizens and interests. Schlesinger, however, supported by Clements and then-Chief of Staff Rumsfeld,

warned that the bombers lacked the precision of carrier-based aircraft and risked killing the captured U.S. merchant crew as well as many civilians—thereby reminding Congress and the public of the Vietnam-era bombings. Ford relented and ordered four precision-bombing sorties on the Cambodians but concluded that Schlesinger had deliberately defied his orders. The President did not believe Schlesinger's denials.

Schlesinger had no desire for the U.S. military to find itself again mired in a peripheral conflict against communists in the jungles or bush of the developing world. In summer 1975, Kissinger and the 40 Committee authorized a covert program in Angola to support two anti-communist factions against a Marxist group backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba. Schlesinger prevented direct DoD involvement. Ford and Kissinger, backed by Clements, dismissed Schlesinger's doubts about the wisdom of supporting National Liberation Front of Angola leader Holden Roberto. The United States found itself unofficially partnered with the apartheid government of South Africa in supporting Peoples' Movement for the Liberation of Angola opponents. Soviet aid, a massive deployment of Cuban combat troops, and a well-organized MLPA doomed the American covert program. Rather than allow the administration to escalate the effort, Congress cut off funding in January 1976. Rumsfeld followed his predecessor in rejecting the Pentagon's involvement in Angola. Neither he nor Schlesinger were prepared to allow U.S. military forces to help bail out Kissinger's faltering covert program.

Détente under Fire and the Halloween Massacre

Schlesinger was convinced that Kissinger's policy of détente with Moscow benefited only the Soviet Union. Many critics of détente felt the same way and viewed Schlesinger as their ally within the administration. Schlesinger warned Congress and the presidents he served of a

serious strategic threat to American intercontinental ballistic missile silos from the buildup of the Soviet nuclear force. The problem would only get more acute in the 1980s, when the Soviets deployed multiple independent reentry vehicle fitted ICBMs with larger payloads and more total throw weight than their U.S. counterparts. The Soviets first strike could destroy hardened Minuteman silos but U.S. missiles could not wreak similar damage. A U.S. president might face the bleak choice of either surrendering or escalating to massive retaliation. To give the president more options while enhancing American deterrence, Schlesinger insisted that equal aggregates for MIRV throw weight and central systems were the most important elements in SALT negotiations. Schlesinger worried that a Watergate ensnared president would try to gain a quick SALT agreement by conceding too much. The danger passed, but Schlesinger had even greater challenges with Nixon's successor. Ford failed to grasp that what the defense secretary wanted was not equality in the number of reentry vehicles but equality in the throw weight of reentry vehicles carried by MIRVed missiles. Schlesinger educated him tactlessly, often like a particularly pedantic professor lecturing a struggling student. Schlesinger supported the November 1974 Vladivostok Accords, assuming a comprehensive agreement covering throw-weight limitations would follow the accords in 1977. But obstacles later emerged, and no such follow-up occurred. Domestic attacks against SALT and détente intensified. Interagency debate bogged down, ostensibly over complex technical issues such as what range limitations on air- and sea-launched cruise missiles should be traded for constraints on Soviet Backfire bombers. Kissinger complained to Clements about DoD's obstructionism who confirmed that Schlesinger was indeed trying to undermine his efforts.

The political pressure confronting Ford in the fall of 1975, combined with his frustration with Schlesinger, persuaded the President to reshuffle his cabinet in early November 1975, in

what became known as the Halloween Massacre. Then White House Chief of Staff Rumsfeld, a longtime political ally and friend of the President, along with his deputy, Dick Cheney, recommended a major shakeup of the administration. Rumsfeld became defense secretary and Cheney replaced him as chief of staff. Kissinger lost the National Security Advisor position but remained secretary of state. Although Rumsfeld continued most of Schlesinger's policies, he did so with greater political and bureaucratic acumen. Rumsfeld ended any chances for a SALT II agreement during the Ford presidency by torpedoing SALT negotiating options as unacceptable. To Rumsfeld, no agreement was better than a bad agreement. With domestic support for détente ebbing, Ford reluctantly agreed.

Leading the Pentagon during a turbulent election year, Rumsfeld successfully put Kissinger on the defensive, pressing Ford to adopt a more hawkish stance toward the Soviet Union and to support a dramatic increase in defense spending. Aware of the problems Clements had caused Schlesinger, Rumsfeld decided to put Robert Ellsworth in a second deputy position authorized by Congress and tasked him with attending interagency meetings rather than Clements.

Through their policies and allocation of resources, Schlesinger, Rumsfeld, and to a lesser extent Richardson, reoriented the Pentagon to confront the Soviet Union rather than fight on the Cold War's periphery. By the end of the Ford administration, the U.S. military had been substantially revived from its post-Vietnam nadir. Less competent stewards might have succumbed to the era's challenges and allowed the chaos then engulfing the White House and the political divisions splitting the nation to spread to the Pentagon. Their work with Congress prevented a drastic cut in defense spending, which would have further diminished U.S. military capability and credibility beyond the impacts of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal. Without

their efforts, the North Atlantic Alliance might have been seriously weakened by a withdrawal of American forces; the All-Volunteer Force would have faltered; and NATO's Southern Flank might have been torn asunder in a conflict between two NATO Allies. Schlesinger's and Rumsfeld's opposition to DoD involvement in Angola combined with congressional opposition to ensure that U.S. forces would not be dragged into a proxy conflict in southern Africa. In many respects what Schlesinger and Rumsfeld helped to prevent was as important as their achievements of maintaining the military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union, redirecting U.S. nuclear war fighting strategy, and encouraging the Pentagon and the U.S. armed forces to put the legacy of Vietnam behind them.

Endnotes

1. Schlesinger interview, 7 Feb 1991, OSD/HO, 4.