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Cold War Effects over Words and Meanings

Communism in U.S. Foreign Policy during the 1970's

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Abstract

Gli Stati Uniti uscirono dal secondo conflitto mondiale come potenza egemone del mondo libero. L'alleanza con l'Unione Sovietica, che si era formata per combattere il comune nemico nazista, si trasformò in breve tempo in un antagonismo ideologico e geopolitico che portò il nuovo ordine mondiale ad essere diviso come un campo da gioco nel quale si contrapponevano due schieramenti. L'attitudine imperialista di entrambe le superpotenze irrigidì i rispettivi sistemi di alleanze dando vita a due blocchi contrapposti e chiusi che si fronteggiavano per ampliare la loro sfera di influenza anche nei paesi che stavano intraprendendo quel percorso di indipendenza che l'imperialismo aveva loro precluso. Il nuovo blocco filo-statunitense era tenuto insieme da programmi di finanziamento, come il piano Marshall, e da un progetto di integrazione dei mercati, il GATT, che avrebbe portato progressivamente all'abolizione delle barriere commerciali fra i paesi coinvolti. Inoltre gli Stati Uniti avevano assicurato il loro piano di recupero economico ad un sistema per la sicurezza collettiva che comprendeva gli stati che facevano parte del piano Marshall, insieme al Canada e agli USA stessi, la NATO. Il nuovo ordine mondiale consentì agli Stati Uniti di porsi a capo di una rete di interdipendenze che garantiva loro una posizione impareggiabile rispetto a qualsiasi altra nazione del blocco occidentale e allo stesso tempo forniva loro il ruolo di protettore della sicurezza e della libertà internazionale. La necessità di stabilire una contrapposizione netta tra il sistema statunitense a quello sovietico portò ad un'exasperazione delle differenze ideologiche e all'uso di una retorica prepotente che indicava chiaramente il comunismo come nemico giurato del mondo libero, quindi del blocco occidentale.

Le riforme del dopoguerra portarono ad un accentramento di responsabilità e poteri nelle mani del presidente, conferendo al suo ruolo un rilievo e un'importanza senza uguali nella storia statunitense. Il presidente iniziò a ricoprire da quel momento una posizione di ineguagliato predominio che caratterizzò tutta la Guerra Fredda. Senza una retorica presidenziale così forte e incisiva e senza il contributo dei mass media che la amplificasse, lo scontro bipolare non si sarebbe sviluppato nel modo che conosciamo. In

particolar modo, la contrapposizione tra comunismo e capitalismo fu allo stesso tempo rappresentazione e ragione dello scontro fra le superpotenze, al di là delle ulteriori differenze che sussistevano fra le due sul piano sistemico e militare.

Con il presente lavoro si vuole tracciare e descrivere il cambiamento che si è verificato nell'uso e nel significato delle parole chiave che hanno caratterizzato la retorica della Guerra Fredda durante gli anni Settanta, in particolare della parola *comunismo*. Il periodo della Distensione fu infatti caratterizzato da uno svuotamento del significato di questo termine che era stato uno dei pilastri della retorica e della politica estera statunitense durante i primi decenni della Guerra Fredda.

A partire dalla fine degli anni Quaranta, attraverso alcune riforme dell'apparato amministrativo e l'approvazione di leggi che miravano ad eliminare qualsiasi potenziale rischio di intrusione e di spionaggio da parte dei comunisti, venne costituito uno stato di sicurezza nazionale. Questo comportò un aumento delle spese per il riarmo militare e la sicurezza, un livello di segretezza più alto nella pubblica amministrazione e un regime di censura per tutti i cittadini. Alla fine del decennio il documento riservato NSC-68 indirizzava la politica estera statunitense verso una lotta al comunismo in ogni luogo con lo scopo di contenerlo.

Negli anni Cinquanta il maccartismo si lanciò contro la minaccia interna del comunismo, mentre il riarmo e la minaccia di una rappresaglia massiva superiore a qualsiasi attacco ricevuto dovevano servire da deterrente contro qualsiasi attacco nemico. L'abbondanza e il benessere di questo decennio stabilizzarono l'egemonia statunitense anche grazie alla diffusione del modello culturale americano e all'esportazione dei suoi prodotti e del suo stile di vita. I rapporti fra le due superpotenze furono distaccati e privi di qualsiasi comunicazione, mentre al gigante Sovietico a capo del blocco comunista si erano affiancate nel 1949 la Cina e nel 1959 Cuba, divenute entrambe comuniste.

Con gli anni Sessanta, la necessità di espandere il proprio controllo portò le due superpotenze a supportare fazioni opposte che si fronteggiavano in conflitti inizialmente marginali, ma che si rivelarono molto più impegnativi del previsto. L'esempio più

rilevante fra questi fu di certo il Vietnam, che portò gli Stati Uniti a combattere contro le forze comuniste nordvietnamite e in favore del Vietnam del Sud una delle guerre più lunghe e sanguinose della storia statunitense. Lo scetticismo di Eisenhower riguardo la possibilità di una coesistenza pacifica venne sostituito con la risposta flessibile del giovane John F. Kennedy, ma la Crisi dei missili di Cuba portò USA e URSS sull'orlo di una guerra nucleare.

In seguito a questa crisi si riallacciarono le comunicazioni fra i capi di stato dei due paesi, che insieme dovevano anche fronteggiare il rischio che altri paesi concorrenti potessero sviluppare a loro volta degli arsenali nucleari. Rispettivamente nel 1963 e 1968 gli USA e l'URSS firmarono due trattati che impedivano lo svolgimento di test nucleari nell'atmosfera e la proliferazione degli armamenti nucleari in paesi in cui non fossero già presenti. Iniziò così un riavvicinamento fra le superpotenze che portò, fra la fine degli anni Sessanta e per tutto il decennio successivo, ad un periodo di distensione nei rapporti fra i due paesi.

Gli anni Sessanta rappresentarono anche il periodo delle proteste e dell'incertezza: i diritti che erano stati riconosciuti agli afroamericani quasi dieci anni prima, divennero effettivi durante i due mandati di Johnson, e il 1968 vide i movimenti di protesta assumere una portata internazionale. Negli USA in particolare, erano indirizzati contro la guerra in Vietnam, e costituivano un punto cruciale nello sviluppo della Nuova Sinistra che aveva abbandonato il maccartismo e chiedeva il riavvicinamento del governo al popolo americano. I movimenti sociali del '68, facendo propri alcuni temi e parole chiave del discorso politico della Guerra Fredda, contribuirono a modificare la retorica statunitense, già provata dall'offensiva del Tet subita in Vietnam e dalla crescente minaccia comunista che mostrava i muscoli, reprimendo con i carri armati la Primavera di Praga.

La presidenza Nixon segnò un forte cambiamento nelle relazioni fra i due blocchi, pur mantenendo una certa continuità con le amministrazioni precedenti: venne adottata una politica di *détente* nei confronti dell'Unione Sovietica e si riaprirono i rapporti interrotti ormai da tempo con la Repubblica Popolare Cinese. L'apice della distensione si raggiunse nel 1972, con la prima visita presidenziale a Mosca, durante la quale vennero

firmati diversi accordi per la limitazione del numero degli armamenti strategici, e a Pechino per la prima volta dopo la creazione della Repubblica Popolare Cinese, avvenuta nel 1949. La nuova “era di negoziazione” iniziata da Nixon e la *realpolitik* del suo consigliere per la sicurezza nazionale, Henry Kissinger, si accompagnarono ad una retorica meno aggressiva e ideologizzata, che andava di pari passo con la necessità di instaurare un dialogo e di rivolgersi all’altro in modo diretto. L’obiettivo di lasciare da parte l’antagonismo e di iniziare una nuova cooperazione con l’Unione Sovietica rese inutile, ridondante e controproducente ricorrere a quelle etichette che erano state utilizzate nel primo periodo della Guerra Fredda per distanziarsi da quello che era rappresentato come il nemico giurato del blocco filo-statunitense. Anche la Repubblica Popolare Cinese non era più la “Cina comunista” o la “Cina rossa”. E’ possibile quindi verificare che il termine “comunismo” venne usato solo 8 volte nei discorsi e nelle comunicazioni ufficiali di Nixon, a fronte delle 178 di Eisenhower, 80 di Kennedy e 81 di Johnson. Subentrato alla presidenza dopo le dimissioni di Nixon, Ford dimise il termine *détente*, ma non si riferì mai al comunismo nelle comunicazioni ufficiali, ad eccezione di una sessione di domande e risposte, quando fu sollecitato sull’argomento. Considerando anche il breve periodo in carica del presidente Ford, la sua scarsa esperienza in politica estera, e il fatto che Kissinger mantenne il controllo della stessa durante il suo mandato, si è ritenuto opportuno escludere dalla presente analisi la retorica di questo periodo, in quanto il contributo che potrebbe apportare alla presente ricerca sarebbe minimo rispetto a quello dei presidenti Nixon e Carter.

Quando fu eletto presidente, il Democratico Jimmy Carter era considerato un *outsider*, aveva una scarsa esperienza dell’establishment di Washington e in diversi ambiti che riguardavano il suo futuro ruolo di presidente degli Stati Uniti. Prendendo le distanze dalla retorica degli anni precedenti, Carter volle spostare al centro della politica estera statunitense i diritti umani, sostituendo alla lotta al comunismo una causa che non si rivelò efficace nel riunire gli americani in una causa comune. Carter infatti non riuscì nel suo intento di adattare la politica estera alla difesa dei diritti umani, e a seguire una traiettoria lineare per i suoi obiettivi. L’influenza del segretario di Stato Cyrus Vance sulle decisioni di Carter era contrastata da quella più forte del consigliere per la

sicurezza nazionale, Zbigniew Brzezinski: i due principali consiglieri di Carter per la politica estera avevano caratteri e visioni opposti. Questo portò il presidente ad adottare una politica zigzagante, difficilmente trasparente e spesso in contraddizione con le sue stesse idee. A metà del suo mandato, Carter invertì la rotta, mettendo da parte il suo interesse verso i diritti umani, e portando avanti da un lato le trattative con l'Unione Sovietica per rafforzare la distensione, e dall'altro guerre per procura in Africa contro le truppe sovietiche e cubane che combattevano con i movimenti di liberazione nazionale filo-comunisti.

Con l'irrigidimento delle posizioni statunitensi e l'invasione dell'Afghanistan del dicembre 1979, la *détente* andò in frantumi e la retorica americana tornò a rafforzarsi e ad usare la lotta al comunismo come leva per fare presa sull'elettorato nazionale. Tuttavia il termine *comunismo* non veniva più usato in riferimento all'Unione Sovietica, o in opposizione a *diritti umani*, come durante i primi anni del suo mandato, piuttosto come un movimento, un evento storico che apparteneva più al passato che al presente. In particolare durante l'ultimo anno della sua presidenza, Carter utilizzò la parola *comunismo* insieme a *socialismo*, durante sessioni di domande e risposte e incontri con la gente: nonostante fosse ancora una parola chiave nella retorica e nella politica statunitense, il significato di *comunismo* era stato eroso dalla deideologizzazione subita in quegli anni, che lo aveva trasformato in un contenitore senza un significato completo. Le parole chiave della retorica della Guerra Fredda assunsero con la presidenza Carter uno scarso valore, che sarebbero poi state arricchite e sostituite con significati diversi dalla retorica di Ronald Reagan, durante gli anni Ottanta.

Il percorso che l'uso e il significato del termine *comunismo* seguì durante la Guerra Fredda fu emblematici, in quanto aveva ricoperto un ruolo fondamentale durante le fasi iniziali del confronto bipolare ed era diventato meno rilevante durante la distensione. Il ritorno di determinate parole chiave nella politica estera statunitense durante gli anni Ottanta richiederebbe di condurre ulteriori indagini e studi per verificare quali siano stati le ragioni e gli effetti che i fenomeni politici e culturali di quegli anni ebbero sulle strutture e sui significati che esse ricoprivano nella politica statunitense e sugli eventuali sviluppi che possono avere portato sulla realtà di oggi.

Introduction

The objective of this dissertation is to give account of the evolution of the meaning of the concept of *communism* in the U.S. foreign policy during the 1970s.

As a matter of fact, as in no other conflicts, rhetoric played a central role during the Cold War, which has been defined- unique in its genre- a “war of ideas”.¹ This was due not only the strength of the rhetoric that characterized it, but also to the amount of the public speeches and declarations that had never been so high before.² This dissertation aims at proving the importance of some words in the American policymaking, thanks to their connotation, which was based on their perception from the American public.

The first chapter will deal with the concept and with the history of Communism in the Soviet Union since its beginning until Brezhnev’s ascent to power, the second will give account of the role of Communism in the U.S. foreign policy since the 1947 to 1968. The third chapter will be about the geopolitical developments that took place in the “Communist world” during the 1970s, and finally the fourth and fifth chapters will include the analysis of the rhetoric of the presidents Nixon and Carter, as well as some considerations about the role and use of the word communism during their time in office.

The purpose of this investigation is to demonstrate that during the 1970s the most important words that were used in the U.S. policymaking during the Cold War were progressively emptied of their meaning, therefore allowing a further shift in their connotation during the 1980s, as a consequence of the revitalization of a bombastic rhetoric by Ronald Reagan.

¹ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (London: Belknap, 2011), p.2

² *Ibid.*, p.15

Periodization

As the existence of many studies and books evidences³, the years between 1969 and 1980 constitute a time of extraordinary relevance in world history. It has been named *détente*, and it corresponds to a period of time characterized by the relaxation of the bipolar confrontation. It is possible to see *Détente* as a process, rather than an interval between two dates, because it emerged slowly and became evident by the end of the 1960s, and it ended with the resurgence of the confrontation, which reached a climax with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, on Christmas day of 1979. Therefore, it is possible to see it as a development, as it is possible to conclude analyzing the works of many authors, for example, Romero names the chapter of his book *Storia della Guerra Fredda* about *détente* as “Apogeo e disfatta della distensione”, in which both terms indicate the steps of a process and not a punctual periodization.⁴ Similarly, Hanhimäki and Westad named the chapters 15 and 16 of *The Cold War* respectively as “The Rise of *Détente*” and “The Fall of *Détente*”, marking the trajectory of the American-Soviet relations from the end of the 1960s to the invasion of Afghanistan.⁵ Since the aim of this work is to find the discontinuities that characterized the period of time between 1969 and 1981, the term *détente* will be used even if the relations between the superpowers sometimes happened to be more conflictive than relaxed.

The analysis will deal particularly with the Nixon and Carter presidencies, while the time during which Ford was in office will be kept out of it. This choice is grounded on the fact that the Ford administration did not last more than a year and a half, and this period of time was too short to allow the implementation of any concrete foreign policy. Besides, Ford is, still to the present day, the only president who has never been elected from a general election, but was appointed vice president when Agnew resigned

³ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1994)
 Jussi Hanhimäki, Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: a History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), ch. 15-16
 Jeremy Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2003)
 Melvin P. Leffler, Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: vol.2, Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009)
 Leopoldo Nuti, *The Crisis of Détente in Europe* (London, Routledge, 2009)

⁴ Federico Romero, *Storia della Guerra Fredda* (Torino: Einaudi, 2009), pp.224-281

⁵ Hanhimäki, pp.481-552

for being involved in the Watergate scandal.⁶ During the time Ford was in office, “Kissinger’s own “empire” (...) remained by and large intact throughout the presidential transition”⁷, not only because of his position in the establishment, but also because Ford was not experienced, neither much keen on foreign policy.⁸ Furthermore, Ford never referred to “communism” during any of his speeches, but only in question-and-answer sessions, which discloses the little relevance the study of his contribution to this investigation could bring.

⁶ Garthoff, p.459

⁷ Hanhimäki, p.362

⁸ Ibid., p.362

Chapter 1 **Communism**

Given its historical trails, legacies, interpretations and executions, finding an accurate and all-embracing meaning to communism is quite difficult. Besides the common beliefs and grounds, the implementation of that ideology has been so contradictory, that it is possible to say that “the communism of another communist becomes anticommunism for another communist, and this situation does not seem to be going to change”.⁹

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines *communism* as “a theory advocating elimination of private property”, or as a system where goods are property of the collectivity and are shared among the people. *Communism*- capitalized, instead, is to be understood firstly as a “doctrine based on revolutionary Marxian socialism and Marxism-Leninism that was the official ideology of the USSR”, secondly as a “totalitarian system” lead by a single party that owns and controls all the means of production, thirdly “a final stage of society in Marxist theory” in which private property has been abolished and equally divided among the citizens, and finally as a collective noun for “communist systems”.¹⁰

Even if the origins of the communist thinking can be traced far before 1848, its was the interpretation that Marx and Engels gave of it the one which influenced this doctrine for all the 20th century.¹¹ After the Russian Revolution of 1917, this word was soon associated with the dominant All-Russian Communist Party of the Bolsheviks¹², and with the Marxist-Leninist position.¹³ This identification with the USSR, established in 1922, stongly influenced the characterization the Cold War as a was of ideas, to the point that the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, has been often considered as the end-symbolic, at least- of the conflict.

⁹ Robert Service, *Compagni!* (Bari: Laterza, 2011), p.18

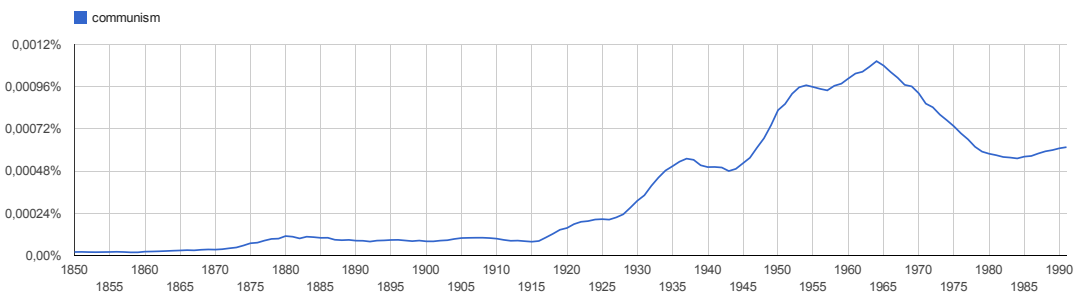
¹⁰ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communism> (2/8/2013)

¹¹ Service, p.30

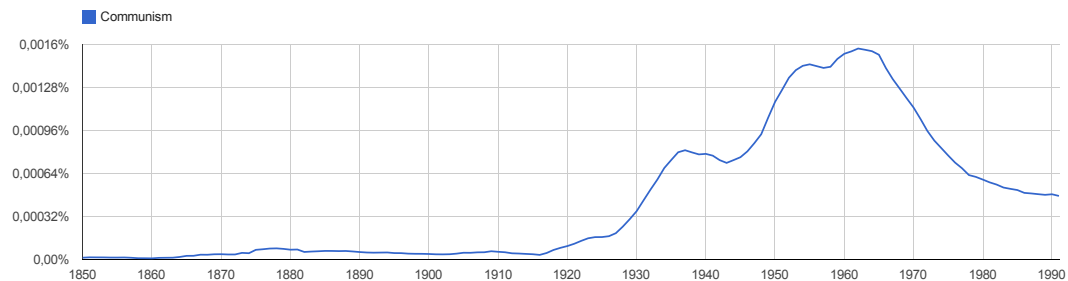
¹² Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London, Fontana Press, 1988), pp.73-75

¹³ Service, p.31

As this graph shows, in the American books corpus of Google's tool Ngram Viewer¹⁴, the appearance of the word communism in the American literature had an increasing trend that begun in the mid-19th century, reached its climax in between 1950 and 1963, and swiftly faded during the 1970s, assessing around a stable value until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.



Source: Ngram Viewer by Google



Source: Ngram Viewer by Google

In the following chapter will be given reason of the philosophical and historical basis for Communism and its Soviet declination during the 20th century, as a basic acknowledgment of the communist reality to better understand its American perception.

¹⁴ For further informations about Google Ngram Viewer, see <http://books.google.com/ngrams/info> (8/2/2013)

The Manifesto of the Communist party

The pamphlet *Manifesto of the Communist Party* was written and published by Marx and Engels in 1848, and is still considered the foundation of the modern interpretation of communism, that inspired the creation of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc of the Cold War.

The book starts with the famous announce that

“A spectre is haunting Europe — the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.”

By depicting history as a continuous struggle between social classes, Marx and Engels predicted the end of the capitalism as imminent. In fact, the working class would have rebelled against its exploitation by the bourgeoisie, and established itself as the ruling class. The underpaid work of the proletariat allowed the owners of the means of production- namely, the bourgeoisie- to accumulate wealth, creating a gap between them and the workers, which was becoming increasingly unbearable. The natural and only solution to this situation, for Marx and Engels, was the establishment of the proletariat as a class, which would have overthrown the bourgeois domination and acquired the power. Consequently, the proletariat would have dispossessed the owners of their private property and statalized the means of production, in order to prevent the private capitalization of the working-class work.¹⁵

Together with the bourgeoisie, the preexisting culture and mindsets would have been abolished, since they represented a way to exert control over people’s life, behaviour and social relations. Besides, they belonged to a former structure and could not represent it any more: “communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis”.¹⁶

¹⁵ Carl Marx and Friederich Engels (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1971), p.76

¹⁶ Ibid., p.87

Then, the proletarian ruling of society would have allowed the termination of any class divide and the creation of a society in which, contrarily than in the

“old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”¹⁷

In fact, for Marx and Engels, it was the inequality in the wealth distribution that had allowed the creation of private property and made the bourgeoisie more and more powerful over the working class. Instead, the establishment of communism would have eliminated all the social divisions, making the “free development of each” as “the condition for the free development of all.”¹⁸

In their pamphlet, Marx and Engels forecasted that the proletarian takeover was about to take place in a country where the industrialization had reached an advantaged stage, and where the self-consciousness of the proletariat and of its struggle was strong, like Germany. However, they addressed to the “Communists of the whole world”, encouraging them to unite and rebel against the ruling class to set all the proletarians of the world free.

Despite their previsions, the revolts that took place precisely in 1848 were not as successful as they had foretold. Both Marx and Engels took part in the revolt against the Prussian army, but after the rebellion was repressed, they had to escape to London.¹⁹ They took part in the creation of the First International (International Workingmen’s Association) in 1864, an organization that had the aim of coordinate the communist parties, trade unions and left-wing parties worldwide. But after the counter-revolutionary forces repressed the attempt of government by the French working class of the Paris Commune, the International was forced to move to New York to avoid the manhunt for the organizers of the revolt. Marx and Engels, who remained in London,

¹⁷ Ibid., p.90

¹⁸ Ibidem

¹⁹ Service, p.34

lost their influence on the International and dedicated their work to create and strengthen the communist parties throughout Europe.²⁰

The authors of the Manifesto worked all their life to refine and complete their work, but they were not able to elaborate a perfect and viable solution for the implementation of their theorization. Therefore, their ideas would have been subject to codification and further elaboration in the next decades.²¹

The Soviet Union

Despite Marx and Engel's expectation, communism did not entrench in Germany, where industrialization was at a very advantaged stage, but in Russia, a rural economy where people lived in very poor conditions under an autocratic government, without social organizations and with a strict censorship. Since the end of the 19th century, the czar forced the industrialization and modernization of the country, in order to exert a wider control over his people.²² It would require a World War and a Russian civil war, though, to turn the communist tendencies inside the country into a transnational movement inspired by the marxist interpretation and that longed for contaminating the rest of the world.²³

In 1917, taking advantage of the power vacuum left by the czar, who had abdicated in late February, and of the weakness of the provisional government that was instated afterwards, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, also known as Lenin, led the bolshevik faction of the Soviet communist movement to take the power announcing that the time for the socialist²⁴ revolution had arrived.²⁵ Lenin created the first state in the world constituted as socialist, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) in 1917, meaning that it constituted the temporary step before the implementation of a communist

²⁰ Ibid., p.36

²¹ Ibid., p.45

²² Ibid., p.59-60

²³ Silvio Pons, *La rivoluzione globale: storia del comunismo internazionale, 1917-1991* (Torino: Einaudi, 2012), p. 13

²⁴ In this case, socialism has to be understood as an intermediate step on the path for achieving communism.

²⁵ Service, p.88

state. He also believed that the proletarian uprising needed to be encouraged by a party that would have guided the working class in their pursuit, through the dictatorship of the proletariat, to the establishment of communism. In 1922, after five years of civil war, the RSFSR, with the additional territories that were part of the Russian empire, became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). Besides, Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy, a mixed economy which admitted the presence of small capitalistic enterprises while the state owned the banks, and managed the foreign trade and the biggest industries. Moreover, Lenin claimed for the Red Army the international role of helping the uprising of the communist parties in the other European countries.²⁶

It was with the death of Lenin and the ascent to power of Stalin that the Soviet leaders started to be sacralized. The spectacular images of Lenin's body taken in the mausoleum on the Red Square in Moscow, where he was (and still is) put on display, were just the beginning of the devotion for his figure and for the Communist doctrine. From that moment on, the veneration of Lenin and the codification of Marxism-Leninism became the founding principles of the nation and would be used to legitimize the actions of the Soviet Union.²⁷ In 1928, Stalin substituted the NEP with a five-year plan for production, in 1936 he issued a new constitution, in which the role of the party was defined, and which allowed the freedom of religion.

For Stalin, after the October Revolution, the objective of communism was to spread to the whole world²⁸, following Lenin's imperialistic design abroad. Domestically, Stalin kept a constant state of alert against any possible enemy and traitor and persecuted and purged anybody who might have been considered a risk for the nation. This state of vigilance was boosted by Stalin's disturbed personality, but was also in line with Lenin's domestic policy, since both leaders persecuted any opposition to the regime with the forced labor camps. The former leader had ordered that the labor camps which had been active during the czarist period would be renovated, while Stalin instated the camps and disposed the renovation of those of the Third Reich in the new satellite

²⁶ Pons, p.30

²⁷ Ibid., p.58-59

²⁸ Service, p.226

countries of Western Europe after the end of World War II. Any opposition to the regime or the belonging to social groups potentially dangerous (social classes, religious groups, intellectuals) was punished with forced labor camps, and after 1945, even those soldiers who had been prisoners of the German Army-contravening to the law that prohibited to surrender to them- were punished in the same way.²⁹

In 1939, the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of non-aggression between their countries. But in 1941, when the German forces invaded the USSR, Stalin entered the Alliance with the United Kingdom, against Hitler. Together with Churchill and Roosevelt, Stalin became one of “the Big Three” and was named Person of the Year twice by the Time magazine, in 1940 and 1943.³⁰ This new role of the Soviet Union allowed it to be included in the American Land-Lease program, but the good relationship with the Western leaders did not lasted long.

By the end of World War II, the communist power had widely increased with respect to the leverage it had before the war. The power vacuums that had been created by the war in many European countries supported Stalin’s plan to enlarge the Soviet sphere of influence, surrounding the USSR with weak countries under its control to protect it from any potential attack.³¹ He believed that after the ongoing war there would have been no need to impose the Soviet rule over the countries around the URSS, but that would have sided with it, since all the political and social options for the new governments were reduced to the choice between the communist and capitalist systems.³² Consequently, the whole world would have been divided in two factions, transposing the national class struggle into a global dimension, where each side was at war with the other for exerting its influence over Europe and Asia, and might eventually go to war against each other.³³

²⁹ Ibid., p.233-239

³⁰ Ibid., p.276

³¹ Romero, p.22

³² Service, p.280-88

³³ Romero, p.29

The inaction of Roosevelt and Truman in front of the expansion of the Soviet influence in Eastern Europe by the end of the war, was for Stalin an implied authorization to consolidate his sphere of influence. As a consequence of the American dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviets felt the need to implement a massive rearmament plan which included an atomic buildup. Between 1946 and 1947, the mistrust between the United States and the Soviet Union increased, and both started to show their intention to widen their control in Europe.³⁴ Stalin's domestic and foreign policy stiffened, reinstating the regime of terror and planning to conform the Eastern Europe governments that were under the Soviet influence to its model.³⁵ However, the fears for a potential Third World War with the devastating consequences that might have brought the use of the weapons of which each country disposed, was restraining Stalin and president Truman from any open clash. In the 1950s, the closest point to a direct conflict was reached with the Korean war (1950-1953), launched to reunify the country after the division at the 38th parallel -established after the Second World War-, and stopped before to reach an open clash between the ONU forces led by the U.S. and the Communist forces of the Soviet Union and China. The two opponents found an agreement and reinstated the former border, but this conflict was extremely emblematic, because it was stopped by the fear for war.³⁶

Stalin speeded the bolstering of the communist parties in the Eastern Europe countries, sending advisors and instructors.³⁷ In fact, for him, the power of the Soviet Union would have brought these countries to communism even without a proletarian revolution. In each of them, the Soviets took control of the crucial departments and of the national forces, so to have a tight authority over them, and made of these countries the "periphery of the Soviet empire".³⁸

The launch of the Marshall plan and the American attempt to include the Czechoslovakia among the countries that would have benefited of it, brought the

³⁴ Service, p.295

³⁵ Ibid., p.286

³⁶ Ibid., p.306, Romero, p.82-92

³⁷ Service, p.311-12

³⁸ Pons, p.199

alliance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to the definitive breaking point.³⁹ Stalin reacted to the American invitation of the Czechoslovakian leaders to assist to the presentation of the plan by imposing an “imperial cape”⁴⁰ over its sphere of influence. Stalin answered to the American economic help plan, with the creation of the Cominform, the Communist Information Bureau, that included every communist party of the Soviet area of influence, plus those of France and Italy. This organization had the purpose to coordinate and make uniform all of these parties, allowing Stalin to exert a wider control on them, and contributing to integrate them in the Soviet satellite system.⁴¹ This process was called *stalinization*.⁴²

As an effect of the homogenization process, the countries that were part of the communist bloc shared many -but, of course, not all- characteristics: in each of them there was only one legal party (that followed the stalinist version of the marxist-leninist doctrine) led by a dictator, and to this political power were subjected the print and the courts. All the communist states- except Yugoslavia, which was expelled from the Kominform in 1948 because its leader, Tito, used to interfere in matters which were under the control of Moscow- were devoted to the Soviet Union and declined its model into their reality. The state dispossessed whole productive sectors and a centralized plan was introduced for the industrial sector, while workers were incited to work for the common good, with the promise of a glorious future in which communism would have become real.⁴³ In many cases, the adoption of the Soviet model brought to the worsening of life conditions with reference to the pre-war period, but sometimes the pursuit of the collective good in the public interest brought to a generalized improvement of the basic necessities, since the cost of food and housing was kept low.⁴⁴ Despite the very different domestic conditions of each country involved in the process, the imposition of the communist system equalized their activities and provoked similar domestic reactions and uniformed their structure. Like a sort of “historical amnesia”,

³⁹ Service, p.301

⁴⁰ “cappa imperiale” in Pons, p.215

⁴¹ Service, p.301

⁴² Mario Del Pero, *Kissinger e l'ascesa dei neoconservatori* (Bari, Laterza 2006), p.56

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.378

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.377

this often meant also the inability to detect the failures of the system and act the needed changes to avoid the mistakes to which the communist path had led before.⁴⁵

In the last years of his life, Stalin pursued a policy of terror among the leaders of the party, having many of them killed and exerting a big control over the others, with a view to his succession.⁴⁶ When he died, in March 1953, a troika was organized to lead the country, with Malenkov, Berija and Khrushchev in chief. The revolutions that took place in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and East Berlin that same year required the Soviet intervention, revealing the high risk of instability of the regime.⁴⁷ To avoid a collapse of the system, the troika needed to take the distance from Stalin's policies, but it could not afford to lose control, therefore the possibility for drastic changes was limited. Quite soon Berija was arrested and executed without a process, since he was considered a threat for the party, and a violent chief that spread the terror without a reason. Consequently, Khrushchev became the first secretary of the Communist party, while Malenkov became premier. The dispute between the two leaders about the role of the nuclear policy in the confrontation with the capitalistic world turned in favor of Khrushchev, who became the only leader of the country. His leadership was characterized by the "destalinization" and the "peaceful coexistence".

In 1956, during a "secret speech" at the presidium Khrushchev denounced- omitting and reducing the number of the victims of the repression- the crimes of Stalin's regime. Khrushchev's speech caused a big fracture among the communist parties of the world: his criticism was perceived as a personal attack against the former leader, rather than against his actions.⁴⁸ Stalin was still respected and revered by his people, and Khrushchev's rejection of his belief that the war between East and West was the shift of the class struggle to the international level, put the second in an alternative position to the first.⁴⁹ Therefore, many heads of the communist parties worldwide had to choose

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.369

⁴⁶ Service, p.286

⁴⁷ Pons, p.266

⁴⁸ Service, p.391

⁴⁹ Romero, p.105

whether to line up with Stalin- like Mao Tse Tung did- or with Khrushchev- like Palmiro Togliatti, leader of one of the most influential of all Europe, the PCI, did.⁵⁰ In those satellite countries where the devotion to Stalin was the only legitimation for the despotic governments that had been established for the sake of Communism and without any election, Khrushchev's speech revealed to be very dangerous, since it had a deep impact and destabilizing consequences. In 1956, the Polish workers went on strike for their work conditions, asking for free elections and to put an end to the Soviet domination. Similarly, in Hungary the leaders of the communist party were forced to leave because the people did not trusted them any more, but in November the Soviet forces had to intervene to crush the revolt.⁵¹

Since 1954-55, Khrushchev changed the Soviet approach to the Cold War, endorsing the idea that a nuclear war should be avoided, then he dropped the military expenses and focused big part of the military budget to the development of intercontinental nuclear missiles. At the same time, acknowledging the risks that a nuclear war might have entailed, Khrushchev adopted the approach of "peaceful coexistence" that Stalin had abandoned since the end of the 1920s.⁵² This policy was directed at avoiding any potential reason for clash, and Khrushchev implemented it by taking part in international summits between head of states and visiting presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, respectively in Camp David in 1959, and in Wien in 1961.⁵³ However, these meetings did not represent the prelude of a rapprochement, rather were inconclusive meetings that were used to give the idea that the international relations were still in a good estate.⁵⁴

In the meantime, Khrushchev turned his attention to fortify the network of Soviet alliances, trying to get back in touch with Tito, after the former breakup, and looking for new friendships that might have enlarged the Soviet control over the emerging Third

⁵⁰ Pons, p.275

⁵¹ Ibid., p.275

⁵² Ibid., p.268

⁵³ Service, p.394

⁵⁴ Romero, p.107

World.⁵⁵ The Soviets widened their influence and moved in support of the anti-imperialistic struggles in the former colonies: the stage of the confrontation between the superpowers enlarged and each became more strong in its position and more determined to win the war for control. The Cold War was assuming a global dimension, thanks to and because of the fight between the U.S. and the USSR, which were revealing once more their imperialistic attitude.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.106-111

Chapter II

Communism and U.S. foreign policy(1947-1968)

After the economic crisis of 1929, no big government policy had been as successful as the involvement in the World War II for the United States. In fact, “the alliance between business and military”-like Charles Wilson, the president of General Motors said- had allowed a full recovery for the country and set up the basis for the economic boom of the 1950s.⁵⁶ Besides, Truman decided to take advantage of from the resurgence of the Soviet military industry and benefit from the gains that the domestic military production had purchased, by presenting the USSR as an “immediate threat” for the national security.

The relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, that had fought together against the common Nazi enemy during the World War II, “began to crumble almost the day when the peace was signed”, and a climate of confrontation arose, influencing the postwar reconstruction and the international relations.⁵⁷

In 1946, Winston Churchill in a famous speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, had claimed that a Iron Curtain was dividing Europe. Meanwhile, Stalin was menacing the Old Continent with his imperialistic intentions⁵⁸, occurrence which was confirmed by the American diplomat George Kennan in a long telegram from the Soviet Union at the beginning of the year.⁵⁹ In 1947, Truman asked the Congress to finance and intervene militarily against the “terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists” in Greece and Turkey, in a speech which would be acknowledged as “Truman doctrine”.⁶⁰ The new American foreign policy was now focused on resisting

⁵⁶ Howard Zinn, *A people's history* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2003), p.425

⁵⁷ “Nata per combattere un nemico comune e non fondata sugli interessi, dei valori o una storia comuni, la loro alleanza del periodo bellico cominciò a sgretolarsi quasi il giorno stesso in cui fu dichiarata la pace.” in Foner Eric, *Storia della libertà americana* (Donzelli, Roma, 1998), p.332

⁵⁸ Arnaldo Testi, *Il secolo degli Stati Uniti* (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2008), p.161

⁵⁹ Foner, p.332

⁶⁰ Harry S. Truman: "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846>. (8/2/2013)

and holding back the Soviet menace with any means possible: the strategy of *containment*.⁶¹

The United States emerged from the Second World War as the leading country of the free world, and set up a new international structure, which would have boosted the American economy and set it in a leading position, while supporting the European allies to reconstruct and recovery from the war. The new order secured by financing programs, like the Marshall plan, and a project of market integration among these countries, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which would have led progressively to the abolition of the commercial barriers between the countries. The U.S. fastened their economic recovery plan to a security network, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a collective security system, created in 1949, and which included those countries that were part of the Marshall plan, plus Canada and the U.S.. Therefore, the new international system knotted together the American allies, guaranteeing to the U.S. an unparalleled leading position over the countries of the to be Western bloc. ⁶²

The national security state

In 1950, Truman approved the National Security Document (NSC-68) which urged a massive rearmament to be ready to defend the country from any Soviet threat. This was just the outset of what would be posed since then as a totalizing war between good and evil.⁶³ As a consequence of the NSC-68, the Congress approved the Internal Security Act that consented to investigate about the subversive activities inside the country, prohibited that communists could work in factories and companies of the military sector, and precluded the immigration of people who were subscribed to communist organizations. This was the foundation of the new national security state, characterized by the centralization of power under the president, higher expenses for security and rearmament, higher levels of secrecy in the public administration, epurations and less

⁶¹ George Kennan, "The sources of Soviet Conduct", *Time*, July 1947

⁶² Testi, p.177

⁶³ Foner, p.333

freedom for the citizens. The National Security Act of 1947 had established the creation of the National Security Council and the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency): the first was in charge to lead investigations and develop new strategies for the domestic and international policies, while the second was the center of the U.S. secret service activities abroad.⁶⁴ It also gave a new shape to the administration, giving more importance and centrality to the president, grouping under the Department of Defense the army, the navy and the air forces, and allowing the establishment of a group of *in-and-outers* (temporary advisors from outside the establishment that came to serve the government thanks to their high specialization in their field, and then returned to their previous occupation).⁶⁵

While the reform of the administrative structure was made, the tone of the nationalist rhetoric was growing, in response to the spread of Communism in many countries - one among all, China, where in 1949 the Communist faction led by Mao Tse Tung got to power after the civil revolution. The resorted rivalry between the U.S. and the USSR, and the emergence of many critical areas where Communism was responsible for antiimperialistic revolts, justified the U.S. military production and inflamed again the domestic fear for communist intrusion.

After the Bolsheviks overthrew the czar in 1917 and the implementation of the USSR, the so-called Red Scare exploded in the U.S. when the country went into recession between 1919 and 1920. At that time, Communism had come to represent an alternative model to challenge poverty and social gaps, then it inspired the flow of social uprisings and general strikes that shook the country and it was seen as a menace for the American social stability. The diffused and unjustified fear that a Soviet revolution might begin in the U.S. and that Soviet infiltrators had entered the country led to the arrest and expulsion of hundreds of people accused of fomenting the revolts, while the wave of riots, by the end of 1920, was fading away.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Testi, p.163-65

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.181

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.100-02

After the Second World War, the U.S. inability to control the Soviet Union contentent, made it necessary to stop it not only through containment, but with anti-communist propaganda at home.⁶⁷ The Second Red Scare involved a larger part of the American population, and caused a national hysteria far more widespread than the first one. The media played a big role in shaping the mindset of the people against the enemy in many ways. People who had run away from the Soviet Union and arrived in the Western bloc wrote their testimony in books about their experiences (*The Long Road*, by Slavomir Rawicz) and took part in the debate about communism. Their contribution was very relevant, even if they were often looked at with mistrust. In fact, it has to be remembered that there was no transmission of news from the Soviet Union, thing which from one side fueled the mistrusts about the sources and the informations that leaked from the USSR in the Western world, and simultaneously gave credit to and spread the fears about communism. Moreover, many of the soldiers who had been made prisoners during the Korean war and had been converted to communism (pretending to have changed their belief in order to end their sufferings), contributed to ground and strengthen the idea that the Communists had the power to change people's mind. Even the comic strips were used as instruments for publicizing the fight on communism and helped to give a shape and illustrate the enemy. The strips about superheroes (like Captain America, Superman, etc.) illustrated the conflict between good and evil, accurately portraying uniforms, weapons and details that suggested the belonging of the characters to the American or the Soviet field. Literary works that were set in a world under a totalitarian and/or communist systems or about social revolts became soon bestsellers (*Animal Farm* and *1984* by George Orwell, *The Rebel*, by Albert Camus).⁶⁸ In the growing anti-communist trend, the Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin turned this generalized tendency into systematic fear. By announcing that he was in possess of a list of name of communists working in the State Department, he started a huge witchhunt which involved not only public officers and members of the Washington

⁶⁷ Del Pero, p.4-5

⁶⁸ Service, p.247

establishment, but also popular artists and Hollywood stars, like Bertold Brecht and Charlie Chaplin.⁶⁹

McCarthy's accusations were not big news: the FBI (led by Edgar J. Hoover, obsessed about communists) had already been able to decodify some KGB codes in 1945, and tried to direct McCarthy's attacks towards those who had been identified as KGB collaborators.⁷⁰ The Senator's real objective, however, was to reveal and accuse Truman and the Democratic leaders of betraying their country, being too soft on Communism and allowing the Soviet advance. Finally, in 1954, McCarthy was censored and his career ended for good, meanwhile the maccarthism was vanishing.⁷¹

During the *maccarthism*, the influence of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) that had been created in 1938, was reinforced to identificate the *un-Americans*(the people who represented a threat to the nation) and public employees had to swear loyalty to the nation. The PCUSA (Communist Party of the United States) was accused of subversion and the hunt for the infiltrators was extended to scientists, artists, officers, ambassadors and diplomats.⁷² That was the case, for example, of Alger Hiss, former diplomat suspected of espionage, and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, executed for giving informations about the American atomic activities to the Soviets.⁷³ It seemed as if being a communist was the worst crime possible: people was investigated, interrogated for any minimum suspicion, and included in lists of communists, which in cases of extreme danger might have been confined in prison camps.⁷⁴

The maccarthism and the inconditioned fear for Communism was tightly connected with the scare for a potential atomic war, those years. After the first Soviet test of the atomic bomb, in August 1949, the risk of a nuclear attack increased people's fears and allowed to rise the security costs for the national security state.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Elisabetta Vezzosi, *Mosaico Americano* (Roma: Carocci, 2005), p.40

⁷⁰ Romero, p.77

⁷¹ Testi, p.184

⁷² Romero, p.72

⁷³ Testi, p.183

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.38

⁷⁵ Vezzosi, p.42

Abroad, the U.S. were exporting wealth and good quality of life: the economic boom of the 1950s allowed them to export in Europe the commodities that came out of the American factories, but especially the cultural products like literature, music and Hollywood movies. The American government committed itself to export the national customs, products and symbols, setting culture at the center of the U.S. foreign policy, with the aim of expanding Americanism as much as possible.⁷⁶

The unrelenting growth of the end of the 1940s had led also to the reconceptualization of freedom in the American culture. In fact, technology and ownership became the new symbols of wealth, which promoted the American values and lifestyle: household electrical appliances, cars and houses in the suburbs allowed people to have more free time and to enjoy a better way of life.⁷⁷ The American model was traded internationally as an example of freedom and progress, thanks to international aid plans and to the spread of the global consumer culture.⁷⁸ Therefore, not only the relationship with the U.S. impelled the rise of a strong sense of gratitude and obligation in those countries which received the American support, but also the American style imposed itself as a role model for the Western world. These circumstances and the structures for international support (NATO, GATT, IMF, etc.) contributed to set the basis for the establishment of a Western bloc, based on the American consensus, and opposed to the control that the Soviet Union exerted over its satellite countries which since 1955 would constitute the Warsaw Pact .

⁷⁶ Testi, p.192

⁷⁷ Foner, p.354

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.349

The U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1950s and 1960s.

The national security state, founded on the Truman doctrine, the NSC-68 and the policy of containment contributed to the creation of a dichotomic division of the world after the Second World War.⁷⁹ For the containment strategy, any Soviet demand was illegitimate and should not be even heard. Any diplomatic approach was rejected and communications among the superpowers were interrupted.⁸⁰ Besides, the NSC-68 enlarged the war field for the clash between capitalism and communism potentially to the entire world, with the consideration that “the assault on free institutions is world-wide now, and in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere.”⁸¹

With the U.S. policy of containment that announced a worldwide fight against Communism, the Cold War had actually become a global conflict.

Eisenhower’s presidency and the Kitchen debate

In 1953, the Republican Dwight Eisenhower became president of the U.S.. He mistrusted the Soviet idea of peaceful coexistence, therefore embraced the policy of *massive deterrence*, for which in case of threat or attack from an aggressor, the U.S. would have reacted with an excessive use of force. This policy was grounded on deterrence and on the gap between the nuclear capabilities of the two superpowers. Moreover, Eisenhower was skeptical about the neutrality of the nationalist regimes that were emerging after the decolonization wave of the 1950s, leading to the creation of the Third World. Since he was convinced that these nonaligned countries might have represented a chance for sneaking the Soviet influence and spreading Communism,

⁷⁹ Romero, p.50

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.53

⁸¹ NSC-68, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68-4.htm> (8/2/2013)

Eisenhower secured the installation of pro-American leaders in countries like Guatemala and Iran, through covert operations of the CIA.⁸²

However, the Soviet-American relations during the 1950s remained strained, while their leaders, from time to time, pretended good relations. One of the most striking and symbolic representations of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union at that time was represented by the Kitchen debate between Khrushchev and Eisenhower's vice-president, Richard Nixon, in 1959 in Moscow on occasion of the opening of the American National Exhibition.

On July 17, 1959 few days before Nixon's departure, president Eisenhower approved the Public Law 86-90⁸³, which designated the third week of July of that year as the first Captive Nations Week. This event was issued to show solidarity to all the nations who were subjugated by the "Communist imperialism" and is still celebrated nowadays, even if it has lost its antisoviet feature. The Captive Nation week is celebrated with the organization of events aimed at increasing the awareness of the state of oppression of those countries that are under the control of despotic or non-democratic governments.

The tone of the resolution was bombastic and high-sounding, it contained references to the enslavement and to the communist ideology. The text was made up of 8 statements, seven of which started with "whereas" and the last one with "therefore"; the first two parts and the last three referred to the American values of freedom, liberty and respect for its people, the central parts, from three to five, were about the brutality of "Communist imperialism" and the enslavement it exerted on what the resolution called "captive nations". The employment of words like *enslavement* and the reference to the United States as *the citadel of human freedom* clearly set the superpowers on two opposed ideological fields. At the same time, the reference to enslavement contrasted with the racism that permeated the American society in which segregation persisted. Despite the first protests against racial discrimination started in 1955, still in 1968 Johnson would comment a report on "Recent Trends in Social and Economic

⁸² Romero, p.110

⁸³ Public Law 89-90, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/58/Page_212_from_STATUTE-073-1-2_Public_Law_86-90.pdf (8/2/2013)

Conditions of Negroes in the United States”, which “does not attempt to gloss over the gap that still separates the white and the black people in this Nation. That gap does exist--and that gap is wide.”⁸⁴

Therefore, the confrontation was no more on the systemic level, rather laid in their ethic. The use of *imperialism* as a characterization of Russia echoed Lenin’s expansionistic plan, expressed also in his pamphlet “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”, of 1917, in which he prompted the working-class people of the Third World countries, that had suffered the domination of the European countries at the latest stage of their development, namely imperialism, to uprising. The fifth part of the text included the list of the captive nations and oddly did not comprise the Soviet Union itself. This indirectly entailed that the whole people of the Soviet Union was the incarnation of the evil, the enemy and the enslaver. Finally, the last sentence of P.L. 86-90 designated the beginning of the celebrations of the Captive Nations Week “each year until such time as freedom and independence shall have been achieved for all the captive nations of the World”. As a result, it implied that this condition was to be considered almost permanent and at the same time, that this celebration was the only measure of which the U.S. would take charge in pursuing this damage. It has to be noticed that the text of the resolution did not include the official name of the Soviet Union, rather referred to the Russians, which suggested a lack of any interest to establish any connection with the ‘enemy’. This resolution was a unilateral action to point the immorality and the evilness of the enemy and at the same time the absence of any will to take any positive measure to counteract its bad behaviour. The fact that the Captive Nations Week is celebrated still today, should be considered as an evidence and a measure of how the perception of the threats to the national security has shifted since the 1950s until today.

Nixon left to Moscow on July 22, 1959, five days later the approval of the resolution. His reception at the airport was “cool and controlled”⁸⁵, in response to the endorsement of the Captive Nations Week Resolution. The day after, he went to the Kremlin and met

⁸⁴ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Remarks Before the Annual Convention of the National Bar Association.," August 1, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29059> (8/2/2013)

⁸⁵ Richard Nixon, *R.N., vol. 1* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), p.270

with Khrushchev. Their encounter was one of the most lively debates about the merits of communism and capitalism of the Cold War. The two leaders visited together the American National Exhibition and debated over the American and Soviet lifestyles and social structures, while standing in front of the installation of an American kitchen. During the discussion, the two men swiftly changed the level of the conversation, referring to the economic systems of their countries and soon after that about the ideology that stood behind them. In fact, the dialogue was full of sudden changes of subjects, like in the passage where, after Nixon outlined the affordability of a house to a middle-class American, Khrushchev accused him to aim at impressing the Soviets with the illusion of an American style which was better than theirs. He attacked Nixon, condemning him for believing to a stereotyped Soviet man which did not exist: “In America, if you don’t have a dollar you have a right to choose between sleeping in a house or on the pavement. Yet you say we are the slave to Communism.”⁸⁶ Nixon replied suggesting an exchange of ideas between their countries which could have been facilitated through the use of tapes to transmit any event or statement to the American television. It is important to underline how Khrushchev, during the debate, announced that the goods productions in the Soviet Union would pass that of the United States, actually putting the Soviet objectives in the American capitalist perspective.

Throughout the debate, the two speakers communicated thanks to their translators, and during the conversation -even speaking very heavy words to each other- they kept smiling and laughing. Nevertheless, the discussion was not taking place peacefully and the two speakers did not seem to aspire to improve their relation. The lack of understanding between the two is clear from Khrushchev’s question: “Now, what did I agree on?” Actually, the two contenders had very strong words and digs at each other; even some passages seemed like a dialogue of the deaf, where one speaker answers to the other with a line about a completely different subject or based on another level of understanding of the matter.

The kitchen debate represented the evidence that it was not the right time, yet, for an open and sincere dialogue between the two superpowers. There was no listening, rather

⁸⁶ “The Kitchen Debate” is available online: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=176> (8/2/2013)

the will to show off the point of view of each part: the Soviets were striving to increase their armament and technology, while the Americans feared the spread of Communism.⁸⁷ The conversation between Nixon and Khrushchev was ineffective, no improvement was made, but it was helpful for making clear the mistrust and the inability to communicate that was characterizing the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States at that time.

The war for freedom

During the 1960 campaign, two young candidates were challenging each other: the Democratic John F. Kennedy and the Republican Richard M. Nixon. That year, the elections brought up many innovations and benefited of the improvement and the spread of technology and media communication, since they were the first to be campaigned also on the television. The two candidates faced each other in four televised debates, but for our analysis it is more relevant to examine the Acceptance speeches of Kennedy and Nixon. The first gave his speech in Los Angeles on July 15, 1960 while the second in Chicago on July 28.

Kennedy's speech was made before the Republican candidate was appointed, but he directed his attack more against Nixon than to the other competitors, also because of his position as vice president. In the first part, the structure of the speech was clearly swinging, to support and underline two concepts. Firstly, it suggested that Eisenhower's legacy could represent a burden too heavy for Nixon to carry. Secondly, listing some former presidents that succeeded to others who had been criticized for their mismanagement of the State, he indicated that the times required a capable and good leader. The main message of the speech was the urgency of a radical change and of discontinuity in the presidency. In Kennedy's speech, the word *new* was counted 30, while its opposite, *old*, was counted 8 times often before nouns connected to the political setting, like *slogans*, *ways*, etc. In 5 times out of 30, *new* was used in the

⁸⁷ Romero, p.203

compound *new frontier* which was the name that Kennedy gave to his plan for the enlargement of social rights,⁸⁸ and the word *revolution* recurred 5 times, the majority of which associated with a technological field in which innovation was starting.

The symbolic image of the candle and the quotation of the Scriptures and of Isaiah connected Kennedy's undertaking to the Christian tradition, and the conclusive quotation of the Old Testament (Isaiah, 40:31) reported a passage in which the beginning of a new era was announced, far more positive and joyful than before, after the people had suffered a terrible punishment from YHWH.⁸⁹ Kennedy put himself forward as the right person to lead the country out of the 'old era' into the future, not only for his young age but especially for his fresh mind and ideas.

Kennedy made reference to the growth of the communist influence and to a shift in the balance of power, but the foreign policy was not the main focus of the 1960 campaign. As it will be more clear when Nixon's 1968 acceptance speech will be taken in consideration, the campaign against Kennedy was focused more on domestic issues than on foreign policy.

The Nixon of 1960 presented himself as the vice-president of Eisenhower, "the man who brought peace to America". He praised his presidency and suggested him as the example to follow for the future president, implicitly evoking the role he had been covering during the last eight years. Nixon's 1960 campaign was not characterized by an ideological rhetoric with a strong East-West counterposition, he rather "used rhetoric when it fit his needs".⁹⁰ He criticized Kennedy's ideas and plans, but not with the rage that had characterized his former career. He admitted that their objectives might bear many similarities but he also stressed that the main differences between the two candidates would lay in the policy used to achieve them. Nixon answered to Kennedy's accusation of being old and out of date shifting the understanding of the opposite of *new*

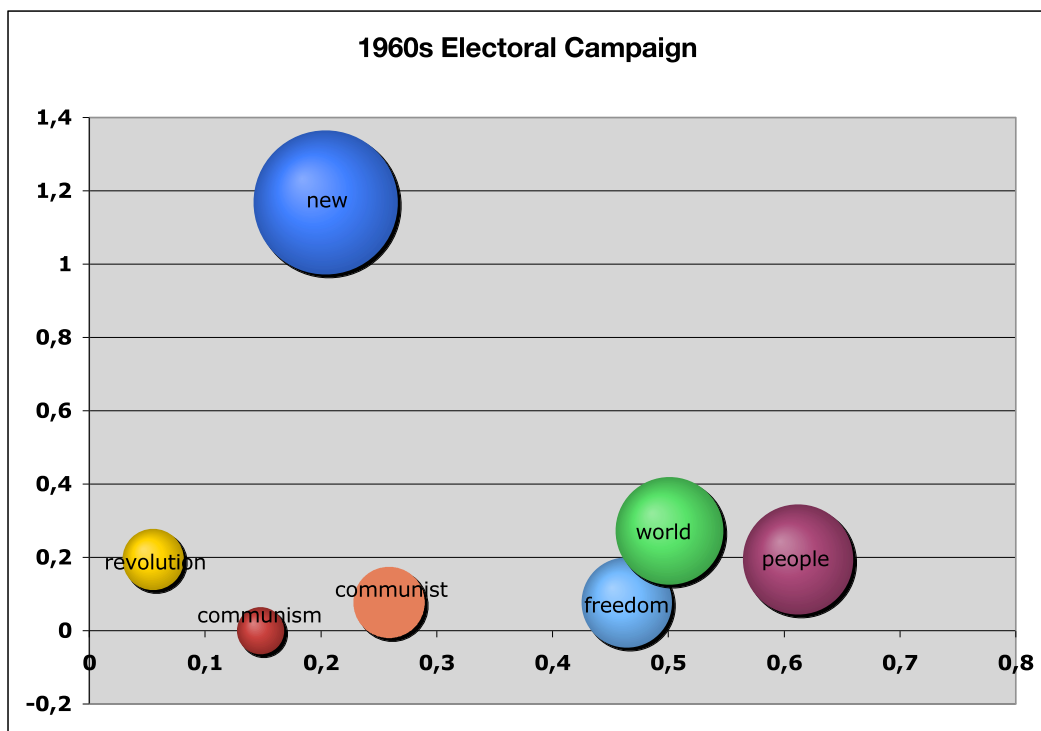
⁸⁸ Testi, p.209

⁸⁹ *La Bibbia di Gerusalemme* (Bologna: EDB, 1974), pp.1524-28

⁹⁰ Hanhimäki, p.19

from *old* to *traditional*, evoking Lincoln and asserting that “the strength of America is in its people’s traditions”.⁹¹

Nixon’s attention was equally focused on the domestic and on the international stage, and underlined the necessity for unity at home to strengthen the role of the nation on the global level. The Soviets were spreading their influence and the challenge was unavoidable. Nevertheless, Nixon, as well as Kennedy, would set the competition between the superpowers especially in terms of economic growth and technologic development. It is important to notice that counting this speech alone, the word *communism* is repeated 8 times, while *communist* 14, nine of which as a noun; another important keyword of this speech was *freedom* (25 times).



Source: Ngram Viewer by Google

During his short presidency, Kennedy expressed the concern that containment was an old tactic that aimed at maintaining the status quo, therefore it was holding the U.S. from stretching their influence to the emerging Third World countries. Taking advance

⁹¹ Richard Nixon: "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago," July 28, 1960. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25974>. (8/2/2103)

of the emergence of the social sciences, he aimed at modernizing the Third World leading it through the path of growth and industrialization. Kennedy's plan was not set outside the bipolar confrontation, in fact, it was completely alternative to the marxist idea. Besides, Kennedy coupled industrialization and freedom, depicting both as quintessential characteristics of the American people.⁹²

In 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt had established freedom as the basis of the American century, epitomizing it in four pillars: freedom of speech and religion, from want and fear.⁹³ One week before announcing his doctrine, in a public speech, Truman had reduced these four "essential human freedoms" to three, leaving out that from need, which might have recalled the socialist values. Interestingly enough, this concept soon disappeared from the public debate, while the idea of freedom became the banner of the American crusade against communism.⁹⁴ Since the end of the 1940s freedom was reconceptualized and associated with the American lifestyle of the boom and industrialization. In 1959, during his visit to Moscow as vice president, Richard Nixon gave a speech titled "What Freedom means to us", presenting it as a value and as necessarily tight to progress and dedicating the entire speech to the American high standard of life,⁹⁵ while Kennedy in his Inaugural address announced:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."⁹⁶

As Romero reports, Kennedy was more disposed to allow the persistence of neutral countries than his predecessors, but he would not let the Soviets believe that the bonds between the countries of the Western bloc were breaking up. He hold and hardened the

⁹² Romero, p.134-37

⁹³ Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," January 6, 1941. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16092> (8/2/2103)

⁹⁴ Foner, p.346-47

⁹⁵ Richard Nixon, "What Freedom Means to Us", July 24, 1959, http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/113_nixon.html (8/2/2103)

⁹⁶ John F. Kennedy: "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1961. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8032>. (8/2/2103)

U.S. position of not giving up about Berlin in 1961, and faced the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, which brought the superpowers to the closest point of a nuclear attack in the whole Cold War.⁹⁷ The high danger that had been avoided indicated the necessity of little improvements in the communication between the superpowers. A direct line between the White House and the Kremlin was established, to prevent that a major decision of one part could be acknowledged by the other only through public means, as it had happened in that case.⁹⁸ The risk of the emergence of competitors engaged in nuclear weapons development required also the foundation of some basis for improving the mutual trust between the leaders of the two nations.⁹⁹ In 1963, the two superpowers signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty, that banned the test of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, and in 1968 the Non Proliferation Treaty, to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to those countries who did not already possessed them.

During the 1960s the U.S. strategic superiority had been contested by the narrowing of the borders of the missile gap of the Soviets and the domestic and international support to the American egemony was clearly declining.¹⁰⁰ After the Soviets had tested their first atomic bomb, in 1952, they kept increasing their nuclear arsenal, and to boost their rhetoric, announcing that Communism would have soon won over capitalism.¹⁰¹ The Soviet attempts to ease tensions with the Western bloc since the death of Stalin were not successful, and after the Geneva summit of 1955, the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 made them vanish.¹⁰² Albeit the attempts of arranging new meetings between American and Soviet leaders, the tension between the superpowers had not changed, rather the Soviet self-confidence had increased, thanks to their armament. When the Berlin Wall was built to prevent the mass departures from East to West Germany, and the nuclear challenge had reached the equilibrium of deterrence, the world freezed in the two blocs and each contentent masked behind ideology.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Romero, p.160

⁹⁸ Garthoff, p.8

⁹⁹ Del Pero, p.24

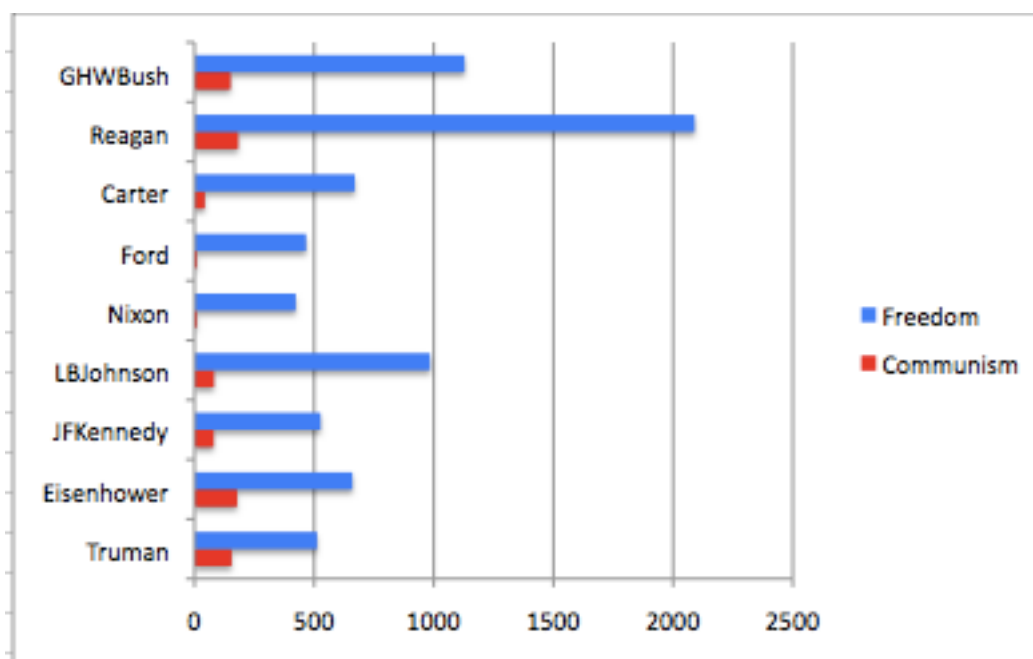
¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.30

¹⁰¹ Romero, p.142-3

¹⁰² Garthoff, p.7

¹⁰³ Romero, p.169

Therefore, when the Kennedy and Johnson administrations intervened in Vietnam supporting South Vietnam to fight against the Soviet-supported North Vietnam, this seemed a necessary action. It was not merely the fear to loose the war that prompted Kennedy to increase the presence of “advisors” first and troops later on the ground, but a real ideologic counterposition.¹⁰⁴ In accordance with the belief expressed in the NSC-68, and with Kennedy’s policy of unconditioned war for freedom, Johnson in public and private occasions, defined the war in Vietnam as a “fight for freedom everywhere”.¹⁰⁵ Besides, the intervention in Vietnam was also dictated by the domino theory, which depicted Vietnam as the first strip of the game, which, if tumbled, would have caused the fall of the entire system.¹⁰⁶



Source: Ngram Viewer by Google

¹⁰⁴ Foner, p.382

¹⁰⁵ See Lyndon B. Johnson: "Exchange of Messages With the President of Brazil.," September 5, 1964. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26489>. (8/2/2013)

Idem: "Remarks in Manchester to the Members of the New Hampshire Weekly Newspaper Editors Association.," September 28, 1964. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26540> (8/2/2013)

¹⁰⁶ Testi, p.201

Also domestically Johnson tried to pursue what he presented as a fight for freedom, trying to implement a plan for rescuing people from poverty. The decade of the 1960s was characterized by the protests of the social movements claiming for the acknowledgement of their rights. The *New Left* emerged from the protests of the students that had joined the identity movements of the Afro-Americans and the natives, as well as feminism. Despite Kennedy was considered as the symbol of openness and freshness¹⁰⁷, it would be necessary to wait until the Johnson presidency to assist to the approval of the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Right Act (1965) and the Fair Housing Act (1968), that allowed the improvement of the civil rights for black people.

Johnson's domestic policy was based on the Great Society: a plan to increase the participation of the state in the society, to eradicate poverty and improve life condition for the poorest people. Among the plans implemented in the Great Society, were created the Medicaid and Medicare, and funds were designated for education and housing.¹⁰⁸ Johnson's "war on poverty" was an attempt to overcome the four liberties: in the commencement speech that he gave at Harvard in 1965, he declared that "Freedom is not enough". Freedom was now a right.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the increasing involvement in the war in Vietnam caused a shortening in the funds for the Great Society, which was interrupted. The damages to Johnson's plan were not the only drawbacks of the Vietnam war, which mobilized young people against the war, together with the marginalized people who were fighting for their emancipation.¹¹⁰ At the end of the 1960s, the term *freedom* was expropriated by the protest movements, that rejected the main values of the previous generations and redefined them.¹¹¹ After the New Left shifted its interest from the appeal of freedom as dissent from the authority, to the demand for more rights and power, the first term will be used again by the Republicans.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.202

¹⁰⁸ Foner, p.373-75

¹⁰⁹ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Commencement Address at Howard University: "To Fulfill These Rights.," June 4, 1965. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27021>. (8/2/2013)

¹¹⁰ Foner, p.377

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.385

¹¹² Ibid., p.398-99

As it will be outlined in the pages to come, during the 1970s, the words of the Cold War were deideologized and lost a great part of their resounding rethoric. The restoration of the bombastic eloquence would resurge only at the beginning of the 1980s, with the Reagan presidency. On that occasion, the scarce consideration of ideology in foreign policy decisionmaking would be one of the main charges to be ascribed to president Carter.¹¹³ As a consequence of this process, the keyword of the decades between the 1940s and the 1970s, *freedom*, which was used as the hinge concept to commit the containment of the Soviet Union as the incarnation of the communist threat¹¹⁴, would partially lose its role in the Cold War rhetoric of the 1970s, during which a more realistic language would be used.

1968, the year of change

In the Soviet Union, since the beginning of the 1960s, the defense budget increased at a rate of 4-5 per cent a year¹¹⁵, in response to the American policy of containment, but it had a very negative impact on the Soviet economy. In the Soviet Union, despite the determination of Dobrynin, Brezhnev and Gromyko (the foreign minister) to reach a détente with the United States, not all the participants in the government supported the decision to improve the exchanges between the two superpowers.¹¹⁶ It should also be considered how this possibility was forced also by the developments that were going to take place in the communist bloc. The deterioration of the relations with the PRC brought the two major communist forces on the brink of a direct military confrontation, the wake of the dissidence of 1968 in Czechoslovakia and the emerging criticism of the Soviet leadership from some of the European communist parties were clear signals of an incumbent risk over the crisis of consensus that had already broke out during the previous year.¹¹⁷ The high expenses for the military, the deteriorating economic

¹¹³ Ibid., p.417

¹¹⁴ Rodgers, p.16

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.25

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.35

¹¹⁷ Garthoff, p.82-83

situation and the emergence of new small actors- the so-called Third World- on the international scene, were threatening the bipolar egemony of the world. Both superpowers were facing a time in which change was necessary: there was no doubt that détente was on their path, the real question was how and in what measure the superpowers should have shortened their distances.¹¹⁸

In 1966, president De Gaulle announced that France would no longer participate in the integrated military structure of NATO because of the U.S. leadership role, while West Germany was becoming increasingly frightened by the possibility of a cut in the American military troops in Western Europe. In fact, this should have been one of the consequences of the resolution that senator Mansfield regularly submitted to the Congress since 1966, requiring a reduction of the number of American troops in Europe. The high expenses for the Vietnam war and for the Johnsonian grand design, together with the antiwar movement protests caused the crisis of that Cold War Liberalism that had characterized the U.S. foreign policy since the mid 1950s.¹¹⁹ The discontent of the public opinion on both sides of the U.S. political arena originated the rise of the New Left, a movement based not on a common set of ideas, but on the criticism of the policies of the government (especially about foreign policy), and put in doubt their very foundations: the idea of containment. Therefore, Nixon and Kissinger applied a realist approach to rebuild a consensus for the U.S. committment worldwide.¹²⁰ Besides, the risk of a nuclear attack was becoming an increasingly unacceptable scenario both for the United States and the Soviet Union, making a further approach on deployment between the superpowers quite an imperative.

So many changes emerged in 1968, that it can be issued as the watershed the of the Twentieth Century: the protest movements became a transnational phenomenon; the Tet offensive in Vietnam marked a smacking defeat for the South Vietnamese and American forces, and the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring, to appoint

¹¹⁸ Hanhimäki, p. 52

¹¹⁹ Del Pero, p.29

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.33

just the major ones. In the meantime, the time between 1968 and 1970 saught the elections of the new leaders of some crucial European countries. Brandt became Chancellor of West Germany, Pompidou was appointed President of France after De Gaulle resigned as a consequence of the violent crush of the protests in 1968; finally, Heath became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.¹²¹ It is possible to say that the elections of these years represented a shift to the left of the new leaders, in accord with the eurocentrist tendency that had emerged, both directly with the open criticism of the American egemonic role, and indirectly through the beginning of the process for the creation of the European Community.¹²²

After the Tet offensive in January 1968, Johnson announced he would have not run for reelection that year, while vice-president Humphrey was the candidate for the Democratic party. The white democrats of the South presented the racist Wallace as their candidate, but this internal fracture awarded the victory to Nixon with the 43,4% of the popular votes, against the 42,7% of Humphrey and the 13,5% of Wallace.¹²³ Unfortunately for Nixon, the democrats got the majority in the Congress and consequently could exert great pressure on foreign policy, which was so important to Nixon. In fact, the Congress had the power by the Constitution to declare war and is in charge, among other things of the approval of the state budget. The great influence of the Congress on foreign policy had been temporarily reduced in 1964 by the Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145, also known as Tonkin Resolution which, acknowledging to the president the role of Commander in Chief, empowered him “to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.”¹²⁴ Nixon would make large use of this power, especially to attack Cambodia and Laos, but the House and the Senate would impose restrictions on the military budget to reduce the interventions in these areas.¹²⁵ Finally,

¹²¹ Hanhimäki, p.29

¹²² Ibid., p.32

¹²³ Testi, appendice, tab.8

¹²⁴ Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145 August 7, 1964, Department of State Bulletin, August 24, 1964 source: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/tonkin-g.asp (8/2/2013)

¹²⁵ William P. Bundy, *A Tangled Web: the making of foreign policy in the Nixon presidency* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p.540

on November, 1973, after 8 failed attempts, the Congress approved the War Powers Resolution that limited the power of the president to make war without its consent.¹²⁶

On occasion of his acceptancy of the nomination as Republican candidate for the general elections of 1968, the future president Richard Nixon presented himself in a new shape. The *new Nixon*¹²⁷ seemed more confident and sympathetic, he step forward as the man needed for a time in which the nation was shocked and stirred after the murder of Kennedy and the mismanagement of Johnson, which origined a wave of mistrust from which Nixon benefited largely.¹²⁸ His experience in the international stage and his acquaintainces with leaders from many countries of the world, conferred him the maturity and reliableness of which the U.S. needed.

The emergence of the New Left, that was protesting against the policies of the Johnson administration, especially about the war in Vietnam and social inequalities, and the high expenditures of the Great Society had deepened the internal division of the Democratic party. Similarly, the Republican party was divided, so one of the most famous mottos of Nixon's campaign was "bring us together".

As a consequence of the developments that took place in the international arena during the 1960s, foreign policy was among the major issues of the 1968 electoral campaign. The situation required to rethink the role or at least the course of action of the United States as world power. Despite the centrality of the matter and the outcome of the elections, Nixon had not expressed a clear and accurate, rather an unspecific, plan about his potential foreign policy.¹²⁹ At the convention in Miami Beach on August 8, 1968 Nixon opened his speech speaking about the future: he was positive, energetic and firm. Curiously enough, between 1900 and 2012 Richard Nixon was the only president to use the word *flag*, and he did in 97 of his speeches. The American flag that was dishonored, victim of violence in the world and no longer an example to follow was used as the metaphore of the American people who had been betrayed by his own leaders. Nixon

¹²⁶ Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: a history 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), p.49

¹²⁷ Michael Genovese, *The Nixon Presidency: Power and Politics in Turbulent Times* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990), p.4

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6

¹²⁹ Hanhimäki, p.20

blamed the previous presidents for the mistakes that had diminished the good name of America abroad, and underlined that she “needs (...) leaders to match the greatness of her people”.

Nixon’s acceptancy speech already presented some of the main characteristics of his policies: he called for a “honorable end” to Vietnam, he mentioned a policy of disengagement, the objective of an “open world” and the possibility of a new friendship with the Soviet Union and the “Chinese”. Nixon presented himself, as he will openly state in his inaugural address, as the leader of change, of the passage from an era of confrontation to the new era of negotiation. Among the shiny images which characterized this speech, the most striking and evocative was the last one: the picture of some people rising upon a hill and the sight of a new dawn. The image of the hill quotes Jesus Christ in the New Testament, right after the Sermon of the Mount¹³⁰, and was introduced in the puritan tradition through John Winthrop’s sermon in which he depicted the American people as a model for the whole world. From there, this image was used as the symbol of the American exceptionalism and would be employed also by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s to depict the greatness and the strength of his people.¹³¹

Nixon’s speech was full of lightful and positive images from the sunrise, to the new day and freedom, and suggested in many passages an uprising movement which linked these pictures. It was also strongly connected with Kennedy’s 1960 speech, with which it shared the frequent recurrence of the world *new*. In 1968, this keyword was repeated 24 times by the Republican candidate, who promised a new leadership with different policies. At the same time, he undertook a commitment to internationalism, rather than to isolationism, as the large use of the world *world* (32) helped to underline, and to a world of peace (22) and freedom (9), led by the United States.

¹³⁰ Matthew 5:14

¹³¹ For example, see Ronald Reagan: “Remarks Announcing his candidacy for the Republican Presidential Nomination”, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=76116&st=city+upon+a+hill&st1=> and his “Farewell Address to the Nation” <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29650&st=city+upon+a+hill&st1=> (8/2/2013)

“My fellow Americans, the long dark night for America is about to end. The time has come for us to leave the valley of despair and climb the mountain so that we may see the glory of the dawn -- a new day for America, and a new dawn for peace and freedom in the world.”¹³²

¹³² Richard Nixon: "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida," August 8, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968> (8/2/2013)

Chapter III

The Communist spread during the 1970's

Despite the scarce popularity of the Soviet Union after the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Sino-Soviet split, between 1969 and 1979 the communist forces came to power in many countries all over the World. In 1975, while the shameful withdrawal of the last Americans from Vietnam was taking place, the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) took control of Saigon and by 1976 the whole country was to be unified under Communist control, the communist forces came to power in Laos and Cambodia. In Latin America experiences like the socialist government of Allende required the U.S. intervention through covert operations to overthrow the leader and assure a stable- even if totalitarian- government. In Africa the last decolonization movements, that begun with the end of the dictatorship in Portugal, brought the communist forces to power in Ethiopia and Angola, thanks to the military and economic support of the Soviet Union.¹³³

Despite new countries had embraced communism, the Soviet Union experienced some setbacks with its long term allies and the strongest communist parties in Europe, which rejected the oppressive approach of the Soviet communism, and created "Eurocommunism"¹³⁴. The signature of the Helsinki Final Act as the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, would be used by the Carter administration to leverage on the scarce respect for human rights in the Communist bloc and later legitimize the dissidents of the countries of the Warsaw Pact to put an end to the Cold War.

Vietnam

Of the many challenges President Nixon had to face as soon as he came in office, ending the war in Vietnam was definitely the top priority. Throughout his career as a

¹³³ Service, p.407

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.410

Senator and Congressman, but especially during his electoral campaign, he had strongly criticized the policies used by his predecessors and opponents. As a matter of fact, the Tet offensive at the beginning of 1968, and the resurgence of the fighting marked a major defeat for the South Vietnamese and the U.S. army and was among the reasons former President Johnson decided not to run for re-election. Therefore, in his acceptancy speech for the presidential nomination of the Republican Party, Nixon made his priority “to bring an honorable end to the war in Vietnam”.¹³⁵ It has to be remembered that the war in Vietnam had a great influence on the American people because it made them aware of the role they were expected to play on the international stage. Consequently, it revealed the hegemonic burden they had to bear, not only in economic and financial terms but also for the loss of human life. The experience Richard Nixon had gained in foreign policy since the beginning of his political career, together with the skills and connections of Henry Kissinger, was the perfect combination required to face the challenges that the U.S. hegemonic role introduced into the lives of ordinary people. Secret talks between U.S. and North Vietnamese representatives started, under the Nixon presidency, in March 1969, while Nixon allowed the creation of a “back channel” that would keep Henry Kissinger in contact with Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United States. During their talks, Kissinger expressed the American concern about Vietnam and his interpretation of the *linkage* policy, asserting that “a settlement in Vietnam was the key to everything”.¹³⁶ This meant that Vietnam was a crucial point in their relations: if resolved, it would have allowed an easing of the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. On the other side, if no settlement was found the American intervention would have intensified, making it more difficult to improve relations between the two superpowers.¹³⁷

While working on these diplomatic ties Nixon decided to play the military card to exert more pressure on the field and in March 1969, ordered the start of the bombings of

¹³⁵ Richard Nixon: "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach, Florida," August 8, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25968>. (8/2/2013)

¹³⁶ Garthoff (1985), p.251

¹³⁷ Ibidem

northern Cambodia, on the border between the two countries- where some North Vietnamese sanctuaries were located- to reduce the capability of Hanoi's attacks on South Vietnam. In the interval between the Tet Offensive on January 30th, 1968 and the elections, on November 7th, the diplomatic efforts of reapproachment between Cambodia, in the person of Prince Sihanouk, and the United States stopped. Meanwhile many North Vietnamese supply basis and communist headquarters moved to the border areas between North Vietnam and Cambodia.¹³⁸ This was the reason why the operation was launched. It was called "Menu" because it was composed of different parts, or 'meals', and formed the first stage of the so-called "madman tactics": a plan to show the Soviets that the American attacks could have escalated unexpectedly and at a greater intensity than before if a settlement was not found.

Since negotiations were not progressing Nixon sent a letter to President Ho Chi Minh in which he called for a peace settlement between the two forces.¹³⁹ The two agreed to a meeting between Kissinger and Xuan Thuy on August 4, although this achieved nothing. In the meantime, Nixon went to Saigon to meet Thieu, and during his visit he made a show of his support for South Vietnam. Privately, however, he emphasised American intentions to respect the schedule for withdrawal. The situation reached a standstill: the death of Ho Chi Minh in September did not change the North Vietnamese position at the Paris talks, and the threats to their allies did not produce any positive effect on the negotiations that were far from being settled. The interference of Laird and Rogers in the secret plans of Nixon and Kissinger made it harder for them to implement their foreign policy decisions.¹⁴⁰

Seeing that this tactic was not working as they had anticipated, Kissinger tried to exert more diplomatic pressure on Dobrynin, while on October 8, 1970 Nixon announced his eight-points proposal on national television, which included the possibility of a neutral South Vietnam as a result of an immediate unilateral withdrawal from the area. Not only

¹³⁸ P. Bundy, *A Tangled Web* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p.71

¹³⁹ Richard Nixon: "Letters of the President and President Ho Chi Minh of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.," November 3, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2304>. (8/2/2013)

¹⁴⁰ Friedrich Logevall and Andrew Preston, *Nixon in the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 191

did he not receive any response from Hanoi, but he was also heavily criticized by national antiwar movements.¹⁴¹

Nixon's address to the "silent majority" that supported him¹⁴² on November 3, 1969 did not calm the protests that had increased since the end of 1969¹⁴³; therefore, in April 1970 he announced the withdrawal of 150,000 troops from South Vietnam by the spring of 1971.¹⁴⁴ This was not the only thing that changed at the beginning of that year: after Lodge resigned from head of the American delegation at the Paris peace negotiations, Kissinger took his place, and secretly met Le Duc Tho for the first time, in February 1970. That same month, B-52 bombing operations of Laos began in secret, but were reported by the newspapers and condemned by many Congressmen.

In March 1970, Prince Sihanouk was overthrown by the Prime Minister Lon Nol, who took advantage of the Prince's vacations in France to persuade the Cambodian elite Assembly to vote for his appointment to a position of supreme power.¹⁴⁵ Kissinger repeatedly excluded any involvement of the United States in this action, despite the long standing relationship between the American government and some of the leaders of the new Cambodians forces.¹⁴⁶ In mid April, Lon Nol declared himself ready to take on the North Vietnamese, breaking Cambodia's neutrality and aligning himself with the United States. Willing to proceed with Vietnamization, and seeing this as a necessary step, Nixon decided in favor of the intervention and on April, 30, announced that 32,000 men were to be sent into Cambodia begin a joint operation between the U.S. and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), to destroy communist sanctuaries in Cambodia.

Since negotiations were at a stalemate, Kissinger started bargaining for a "decent interval"¹⁴⁷, a cease-fire between the armies involved and sufficient time to withdraw American forces from the field consisting of the end of Vietnamization., Nixon decided

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.188-89

¹⁴² Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," November 3, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303>. (8/2/2013)

¹⁴³ <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/second-moratorium-against-the-war-held> (8/2/2013)

¹⁴⁴ Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation on Progress Toward Peace in Vietnam.," April 20, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2476>. (8/2/2013)

¹⁴⁵ Bundy, p.149

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem

¹⁴⁷ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 972

to continue the fighting and expanded the battlefield to Laos with the launch of Operation "Lam Son 719"; attacking the southeastern part of Laos with the help of the ARVN, to prevent an offensive through the Ho Chi Minh trail to North Vietnam by the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN). Even though Nixon reported the operation as a big success¹⁴⁸ it was actually a complete failure, not only on the ground, but also psychologically: images of the defeated army in retreat were broadcasted all around the world, aggravating the protests at home even further.

Nixon and Kissinger decided that the strategy to end the war should be continued on the diplomatic front: the improved relations with the Soviet and Chinese governments could potentially exert pressure on the North Vietnamese negotiators. On May 31, 1971 Kissinger proposed a seven-point plan for U.S. unilateral withdrawal, but the North Vietnamese demands were too high and the Paris talks reached another impasse. Consequently, Nixon tried to link his ongoing rapprochement with China with the need for an honorable U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, convincing Kissinger to ask Zhou Enlai to push the North Vietnamese to reach a conclusion. In January 1972, Nixon decided to raise his popularity, announcing additional troop withdrawals by the end of April, and some days later he announced a new peace plan, protecting himself from the backlash against the failure of the Paris talks.¹⁴⁹

On March 30, 1972, the PAVN launched the Easter Offensive with conventional forces on three fronts, not to defeat its adversaries, but to change the balance of power on the ground and demonstrate that high-level meetings like Nixon's trip to Beijing would not change the war in Vietnam.

The Paris talks, that had been suspended since September 1971, restarted in May 1972, but the North Vietnamese were unflexible.¹⁵⁰ Aware of the risks that this action put at both détente and the Soviet-American meeting, Nixon decided to proceed with the operation Linebacker I, starting on May 8, to respond to the Vietnamese offensive.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia.," April 7, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2972>. (8/2/2013)

¹⁴⁹ Kissinger, p.1018

¹⁵⁰ Hanhimaki, p.212

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.217

The action, consisting in the enhancement of the bombing of Hanoi and the mining the port of Haiphong, did not blow up the summit in Moscow, as the Chinese and the Soviets decided not to proceed against it, and only diplomatically protested for the American action, to keep working on the rapprochement between the superpowers. This gained many points at home for Nixon, plus the support from both the Soviet President Podgorny and Zhou Enlai, who persuaded Le Duc Tho to go back to the negotiating table and to drop some resistances.¹⁵² The objective of the Nixon administration to achieve a settlement before the elections seemed quite likely after the talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho at the beginning of October. Nixon agreed on the draft proposed by the North Vietnamese, but Thieu resisted all the arguments expressed by Kissinger and the letters Nixon sent him to convince him.¹⁵³ It is possible to notice the circular progress of history in Thieu's resistance to the peace proposal, that was a bad turn against Nixon in 1972, exactly as he fulfilled Nixon's hope in 1968, refusing to agree to Johnson's plan.¹⁵⁴ However, the same Nixon did not wish for a settlement shaped by the elections, neither stopped the bombing over Hanoi, but only reduced it. The military actions should be suspended only when a settlement was reached, in order not to deliver signs of weakness or to make the president look like ready to sign any kind of deal.¹⁵⁵ Nixon was also sure that a preelectoral peace would have seemed too convenient and possibly not so beneficial, therefore he tried to leave aside the Vietnam issue. Then, when Thieu turned down the accord that Kissinger brought him from Paris, in order to have it signed and go back to settle it definitively, Nixon felt somehow relieved.¹⁵⁶ The elections confirmed the current president with the 61% of the popular votes and assigning to him 49 states against the 2 of McGovern.¹⁵⁷ During the last two months of 1972, the Paris talks continued, but each side was quite obdurate on their position, and neither was willing to make any significant concession, until, on December 13, the North Vietnamese broke off the negotiation again. The

¹⁵² Logevall and Preston, p.199

¹⁵³ Hanhimaki, p.248

¹⁵⁴ Bundy, p.357

¹⁵⁵ Richard Nixon, *R.N. vol.2* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), p.190-93

¹⁵⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Gli anni della Casa Bianca* (Milano: Sugarco, 1978), p.1081

¹⁵⁷ http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/7/newsid_3697000/3697098.stm (8/2/2013)

situation required a showdown to avoid to extend the war for an indefinite time, than the U.S. “Linebacker II” action, also called the Christmas Bombing, was launched between December 18 and 30.¹⁵⁸ The new campaign seemed incoherent with Nixon’s National Security Advisor promises of a “peace at hand”, that he made to the reporters at the White House on October 26¹⁵⁹, and was heavily criticized. The talks between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho started again on January 8, 1972 and initiated the last part of the negotiation, that was concluded on January 23, with the signing of the Paris Agreement between Le Duc Tho and Henry Kissinger.¹⁶⁰ The accord contained the agreement of the United States, the DRV, the RVN and the NLF on an arranged cease-fire, the removal of the U.S. forces from Vietnam, the recognition of the Provisional Revolutionary Government under President Nguyen Van Thieu and the agreement to the establishment of a Four-Party Joint Military Commission to supervise the implementation of the peace accord.¹⁶¹ It has to be noticed that the agreement allowed 200,000 PAV’s troop to remain in South Vietnam and the withdrawal of the U.S. forces, which made the cease-fire real only for the Americans, because a new conflict rose up again, increasing also the concerns around the return of U.S. soldiers. Nixon insisted on Thieu to make the suspension of hostilities real, and asked the congress the economic support to modernize the ARVN. While the October War between Israel and Egypt and Syria caught the attention of the United States and of the Soviet Union, and the American economy went into recession, in Vietnam the fightings flared up again. The reason by which Kissinger and Tho had been awarded of the Nobel Peace Prize, the settlement of the Paris Agreement, had already revealed its untruthfulness. Once the time of the Nobel ceremony had come, Le Duc Tho refused to receive the prize, while Kissinger sent a representative of him, and later, in 1975 would ask to return it, receiving a negative answer.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Logevall Preston, p. 200

¹⁵⁹ Kissinger, *Gli anni della casa bianca*, p.1083

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1138

¹⁶¹ Paris Peace Accords, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Paris_Peace_Accords#THE_REUNIFICATION_OF_VIET-NAM_AND_THE_RELATIONSHIP_BETWEEN_NORTH_AND_SOUTH_VIET-NAM (8/2/2013)

¹⁶² Memcon: Ford, Kissinger, Scowcroft, April 11, 1975, box 10, Memoranda of Conversations, 1974-1977, NSC, GFL

The Congress turned down any request for economic help from Nixon, until he resigned, on August 9, 1974, because of the Watergate scandal, and President Ford took his place. Since the beginning of his presidency, Ford followed Nixon's policies and still relied on Kissinger's advice, asking the Congress economic support for South Vietnam to avoid that a debacle in Vietnam could damage the U.S. international stature and power.¹⁶³ By March 1975, the situation on the ground was tragic, with the North Vietnamese that kept rolling on while the South Vietnamese had no strategy to contrast them and suddenly changed their strategy, moving from the strenuous defense, to the withdrawal without fighting.¹⁶⁴ On March 26, a U.S. airlift was established to bring half a million refugees from Da Nang to Saigon, while the Army Chief of Staff Frederick Weyand was sent on the place on a fact-finding mission, which revealed that the Government of Vietnam was about to collapse.¹⁶⁵ On April 21, Thieu resigned in favor of Vice President Tran Van Huong, blaming the United States for having agreed on leaving NLF forces in the demilitarized zones of South Vietnam and for having abandoned them. On April 23, President Ford gave a speech at Tulane University, in which he declared that the war in Vietnam was finished to him,¹⁶⁶ showing the attitude he had reached about Vietnam. On April 27, Big Minh was appointed by the National Assembly and installed as President, and remained in charge for 72 hours. The final battle for Saigon started on April 29, with the bombing of Tan Son Nhut airport, where eight thousand Vietnamese and four hundred Americans were waiting for the evacuation plan to take place. It was going to take place exactly as scheduled, but in very different conditions than how it was imagined. On April 29, 19 helicopters were sent to the U.S. embassy in Saigon and the operation concluded in the early morning of April 30, meanwhile the NLF and PAVN tanks were entering the city and taking Minh and his cabinet. By 1976 Vietnam was to be unified under communist command.

The United States imposed a trade embargo on Vietnam and vetoed its membership in the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Since not all

¹⁶³ Logevall and Preston, p.213

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.214

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem

¹⁶⁶ Gerald R. Ford: "Address at a Tulane University Convocation," April 23, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4859> (8/2/2013)

the South Vietnamese refugees were evacuated, an exodus started to the United States, since May 1975, with people trying to cross the sea on little boats. Contacts between the United States and Vietnam continued, in order to get informations on the Missing In Action (MIA), for which a special committee was created in September 1975 by the House of Representatives. During the 1976 electoral campaign, Carter blamed a generation of American leaders for their actions in Vietnam and promised not to intervene in other countries' internal affairs, as it had happened with Vietnam.¹⁶⁷

China

By the end of the 1960s the relations between China and the Soviet Union had worsened to the point that the Soviet's all-time friend became, after few years, the forefront ally of the United States. Things between the two communist powers had never been easy and they started deteriorating even more from the beginning of the decade when Mao warned Chruscev of his intention to differentiate Chinese communist policy from the Soviet line. In 1960 the Soviets withdrew all their technology, funds and 10,000 counsellors from China and at the Communist Moscow Conference Mao set himself in sharp contrast with Chrushev. The Chinese line became even more critical about Soviet foreign policy after the Cuban Missile Crisis became less prevalent, and asked for the return of Chinese territories that the USSR took in 1945.¹⁶⁸ In 1965, the Cultural Revolution began the systematic removal of "revisionist" communists through a class struggle. The alledged proposal was to restore the real maoism, but really it was to purge those who could have challenged Mao's power. The Soviet leadership condemned this movement as fanaticism, expressing its support to any attempt to overthrow Mao, through newspapers and radio broadcasts.

After the Soviet crash of the Prague Spring, and the declaration of the "Brezhnev doctrine" that called for the intervention of the forces of the Warsaw pact in those countries where socialism was put in doubt, the Chinese leadership began to consider to

¹⁶⁷ Logevall Preston, p.221

¹⁶⁸ Service, pp.402-04

break their isolation, contacting Eastern European countries like Yugoslavia and Romania to get their support.¹⁶⁹ In the meantime, the Soviets were strengthening their military arsenal and deployed divisions along the Chinese border over the Ussuri river. In March 1969, the Chinese army attacked the Soviet troops, starting a conflict, which was extended the next August to the border on the Xinjiang province. Alarming news leaked from diplomatic conversations about the possibility that the USSR would lead nuclear attacks on Chinese targets, and vanished shortly afterwards, creating a torrent of criticism.¹⁷⁰ After the arguments had decreased, the border skirmishes were replaced by diplomatic talks, and while clashes still occasionally occurred, the trade between the two countries gradually picked up again during the next years.¹⁷¹ This hostility made the existing ideological rupture between the two communist forces more clear¹⁷² and awakened the American awareness to the existing split between the two communist powers, arousing the possibility of a profitable alliance with one or both the parties.

Actually, during the last two years of his mandate, President Johnson had reopened the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, to show that China did not represent a threat for the United States any more. As it can be understood from his article “Asia after Vietnam” published on *Foreign Affairs* in October 1969, Nixon was quite acquainted with China and from many he is considered the first maker of the U.S. China policy.¹⁷³ In that commentary, he had already outlined what was his attitude towards Asia, showing a great interest and at the same time a big concern about China’s role in the continent.¹⁷⁴ Nixon recommended a future reintroduction of Peking in the community of nations, in order to bring it back from isolation and apply the needed restrictions on its armament. To this extent, China could have not represented the leader of the Third World, rather a component for a “Pacific community”¹⁷⁵ together with Japan, India and the United States. In his article, he outlined also an early sketch of the future Nixon doctrine,

¹⁶⁹ Garthoff, p.207

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.208-09

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.212

¹⁷² Romero, p.215

¹⁷³ see Genovese, p.146

¹⁷⁴ Richard M. Nixon, “Asia after Vietnam”, *Foreign Affairs*, 46 (October 1967), p.123

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p.125

suggesting an American disengagement from the theaters of war, and described the United States as a “Pacific power”, showing his greater interest in Asia- which was for him the continent of the future- rather than in Europe- which had already lost its leading position in the world.¹⁷⁶ By 1969, when Nixon took office, the hatred feelings against the Chinese people had vanished in the Americans and himself; a change in the lines of American diplomats had occurred, and the new generation was not as hardliner as the former generation, so time was ready to move towards China again.

At the same time, Mao had decided that the United States would be the best Chinese ally in the short term, in fact, basing on old history and on current fear of a possible attack from both the Soviet Union and the neighboring countries, getting too close with a strong neighbouring nation could have revealed to be too dangerous.¹⁷⁷ Concurrently, the US and China had decided to open their door and get closer one to the other.

When the Cambodian crisis of April 1970, the Warsaw channel the U.S. was shot. Later efforts to send and receive messages between the U.S. and China did not work, and those to create a backchannel through Paris were unsuccessful. Nixon tried also a frontal approach, and lifted the prohibitions to U.S. companies to fuel foreign ships that were carrying goods to the PRC, in August 1970.¹⁷⁸ In the meantime the Chinese leadership started talking to Moscow again.¹⁷⁹ In fact, inside the country there was a struggle for influence between the moderate Zhou Enlai, who promoted an opening to the U.S., and Lin-Biao, who firmly argued that both the Soviet Union and the United States were China’s mortal enemies.¹⁸⁰ At the Lushan Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party, that took place between August 23 and September 6, 1970, Zhou Enlai’s strong advocacy for a reapproachement with the U.S. received the mandate to proceed on that path, still remaining inside the triangular alliance with the Soviet Union and North Vietnam.¹⁸¹ After a consultation with the North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, on September 17, Mao decided to send signs of a significant overture inviting Edgar

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.112

¹⁷⁷ Margaret MacMillan in Frederik Logevall and Andrew Preston, *Nixon in the world* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.117

¹⁷⁸ Hanhimaki, p.106

¹⁷⁹ Bundy, p.165

¹⁸⁰ Hanhimaki, p.107

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.107

Snow, a pro-communist American journalist to appear on the platform beside him on the October 1 celebration of the National Day of the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, this signal was completely missed by Nixon and his advisors¹⁸², who would receive Snow's report of interviews with Mao only in January 1971.

On October 5, Nixon made his step, declaring in an interview to Time magazine that "If there is anything I want to do before I die, it is go to China".¹⁸³ The Chinese government expressed its interest in the matter through the Pakistani and Romanian channels that Nixon had opened during the previous months, asking the leaders of the two countries to deliver his manifestation of interest in reestablishing relations with Beijing. On November 23, the Pakistani president Yahya Khan received a reply to Nixon's statement (but he was able to deliver it only on December 8¹⁸⁴) saying that they would welcome the arrival of a Nixon emissary to discuss over Taiwan.

In the context of the relaxation of the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union the opening to China opened the way to a new international scheme of alliances. Despite the Soviets had already expressed their intention to arrange a meeting during Dobrynin meeting with Kissinger on January 9, 1971, this decision was postponed as a consequence of the Chinese invitation and subsequent organization of the opening to the People's Republic of China (PRC). The importance of the improved relationship with the PRC was used also as a leverage for what has been called "triangular diplomacy"¹⁸⁵, that is to exert pressure on the Soviet Union to improve relations and support the U.S. in some fields like the exit from the conflict in Vietnam, through the new Sino-American friendship. In my opinion, the new bond between the PRC and the U.S. was not deliberately calculated to play on the USSR, because the opening to China was a preexistent desire of Nixon and the outcome was not certainly predictable, but it could have been expected. The uncertainty of the development of the presumed triangular diplomacy, was inadequate to forecast a positive outcome, especially taking account of

¹⁸² Ibid, p.108

¹⁸³ Cover Time, October 5, 1970

¹⁸⁴ Bundy, p.167

¹⁸⁵ Hanhimäki, p.33

the ongoing conflict in Vietnam and the growing economic rivalry between the U.S., Japan and Germany.¹⁸⁶

In March 1971, the State Department announced one more unilateral move towards the PRC, removing the restrictions on Americans wishing to travel to China. In early April, the Chinese ping pong team took part in the 31st World Table Tennis Championship in Nagoya, Japan. Even if this move alone could have been received as a sign of change in the Sino-American relations, the American team also visited Beijing under invitation of Mao, and met Zhou Enlai.

The meeting between Kissinger and Zhou Enlai was set through the Pakistani channel, and eventually took place secretly on July 8, 1971 in Beijing. The two statesmen agreed on Nixon's future visit and Zhou underlined the centrality of the Taiwan issue for the PRC. Kissinger went along with his point, affirming that Taiwan would eventually become part of the PRC, and that the military presence of the U.S. would be heavily reduced in a brief time, after the end of the war in Indochina.¹⁸⁷ Kissinger also promised that the United States would not conspire with other communist countries against China, clearly referring to the Soviet Union, and that the Chinese would be informed of any future agreement with the Soviets. He also suggested a future membership of the PRC in the ONU. At the end of his stay in Beijing, Kissinger discussed with Huang Hia, the future first Chinese ambassador to Canada, the text of the announcement of Nixon's visit, that would include also its purpose, that was to "seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides".¹⁸⁸

The announcement of Nixon's visit to China was given by the President himself on July 15, and it was a shock for Japan (the second, after the end of the gold convertibility), but especially for the Soviet Union. The news that the President would have gone to China before than to the Soviet Union was a bombshell, and was followed by the outcomes Kissinger was hoping for: Nixon received a Soviet invitation for a meeting in Moscow that would have take place the next May, and on September 3 the Four Power

¹⁸⁶ Bundy, p.104

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p.137

¹⁸⁸ Memcons: Kissinger, Huang Hua, et al. July 11, 1971, China HAK Memcons, July 1971, boc 1033, NSC, NPMP. Lord Interview.

Agreement on Berlin was signed.¹⁸⁹ The success of Kissinger's secret trip did not last very long, because the next September a series of crisis was about to take place. In Latin America, the Soviets were installing a submarine military basis in Cienfuegos, while Allende's socialist government was elected. In the meantime a Palestinian uprising led by Arafat against king Hussein of Jordan, was threatening to depose the most moderate king of the region and to increase the Soviet influence in the area. The Syrian invasion of Jordan in support of the Palestinian group was countered by the Israeli airstrikes and ground forces, which made them retreat the next day. The skirmish was ended with an agreement of ceasefire and withdrawal of the Palestinian army and rebels from the major cities of Jordan, between Arafat and Hussein, reached in Egypt under the auspices of Nasser.¹⁹⁰ While these events were taking place, on September 13, after his failed coup against Mao, Lin Biao died on the crash of the flight he boarded to run off. The exit of scene of Mao's assumed rival and Zhou's contender had a positive influence in the process of reapproachment with the United States, because it forced Mao to look for more support from his people and on his side, Zhou suffered no more resistance to the opening.¹⁹¹ On October 20, Kissinger went on his second trip to Beijing, simulating all of what would be Nixon's trip, and most importantly to outline the text of the joint communiqué, later known as Shanghai communiqué, that Nixon would have signed during his own visit in February 1972. The draft already included the "basic agreements- or public disagreements" over issues like Taiwan, and the U.S. commitment to a progressive withdrawal of their troops at a time to be determined depending on the end of the conflict in Vietnam.¹⁹² On October 26, three days after Zhou had delivered the preliminary version to Kissinger, Nixon finished his own draft, which already included the statement that "the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China".¹⁹³ Despite the centrality that was given to the matter during the talks, Mao himself would have

¹⁸⁹ Hanhimäki, p.147

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.96

¹⁹¹ Ibidem

¹⁹² Ibid., p.171

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.172

underlined how the agreement on Taiwan was not so crucial for their new deep relationship.¹⁹⁴

At the beginning of 1972, Mao had been diagnosed severe heart problems and almost died, but by February 21 he was able to meet Nixon, Kissinger and his assistant Winston Lord. Despite his health conditions, Mao's personality imposed itself in the room and delivered to the witnesses an aura of respect that reflected his impressive figure. The subsequent talks between Zhou Enlai and the American statesman, took place the following days and finally resulted in the approval of the Shanghai communiqué. This final agreement on the disagreements that stood between the two countries involved, included their considerations about the Taiwan issue, their common attitude towards the Soviet Union and the acknowledgment of their divergent points of view about Vietnam. During the talks, Nixon and Zhou tacitly coincided in their position with respect to the USSR, through the common renounce to seek a hegemonic position in the Pacific region. Nixon's trip to China was considered one of the major accomplishments of his policy. The president himself, during the last dinner in Beijing defined that meeting as "the week that changed the world".¹⁹⁵ In fact, despite the decisions made involved, if any, very small changes, its occurrence demonstrated what a dramatical shift and rupture had taken place in the communist world.

During Kissinger's visit to Beijing in February 1973, under Zhou and Mao insistence, an agreement was reached for the opening of liason offices (with very similar functions to those of the embassies) in the two capitals. The next month the last American prisoner in China was freed.¹⁹⁶ Despite these positive signs, the declining health of both Zhou Enlai and Mao, new international issues as the Middle East and Oil Crisis in October took much of Kissinger's attention, while Nixon was dealing with the consequences of the Watergate. The subsequent meeting of November marked a highpoint in its diplomatic outcomes, but at the same time indicated a slowing down of the relationship between the United States and China.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.197

¹⁹⁵ Richard Nixon: "Toasts of the President and Chairman Chang Ch'un-ch'iao at a Banquet in Shanghai.," February 27, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3755>. (8/2/2013)

¹⁹⁶ Bundy, p.402

The normalization of the relationship with China was a subject of debate among the closest counsellors of Carter for foreign policy: if Brzezinski was strongly in favour, Vance considered it as a risk for the accomplishment of the détente with Moscow. In January 1976, after Mao's death an internal conflict for his succession begun, and was resolved with the appointment of Hua Guofang, the legitimate designated Mao's successor, thanks to the support of the group led by Deng Xiaoping.¹⁹⁷ As a reward for his support, Deng was reinstated in all his positions, after he had been purged twice by Mao. Before the complete restoration of Deng, Hua tried to strengthen his position and manifested his intention to normalize the Chinese relations with the U.S. underlining the scarce relevance of the Taiwan issue for their relation. Hua's fear was also that, given the fragmented structure of China, the Soviet Union could take advantage of the situation and attempt to subjugate it. Nevertheless, Carter broke his hesitations in favour of normalization on the eve of Vance's trip to Beijing in August 1977, but few days before, the rehabilitation of Deng marked a new change in the Chinese attitude toward that choice.¹⁹⁸ When Vance returned from his trip, normalization seemed at a longer distance, but what was released to the press was more the sensation of an increased understanding on the previous path.¹⁹⁹ It was only at the beginning of March, 1978, after the Fifth CCP, that Carter understood Hua's intention of reapproaching the United States and agreed on sending a mission to Beijing.²⁰⁰ During his trip, Brzezinski revealed to Deng and Hua the American intention to start the process of normalization the next month and the willingness to settle upon Taiwan. After some considerations and Hua's resistences, the Chinese leaders agreed to the proposal, but left the Taiwan issue out of the debate, suggesting the chance of a settlement without precluding the current U.S. sale of weapons to Taiwan. Carter decided to protract the negotiations for some more time, making the most from the preparation of a Chinese conflict against Vietnam for Kampuchea and on the border with the Soviet Union. The normalization was

¹⁹⁷ Richard C. Thornton, *The Carter Years: toward a new global order* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), p 98-99

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.105

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.108

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.115

announced on December 15, with great surprise by Vance, who expected that it would have been achieved only after his meeting with Gromyko at the end of that month, and the signature of the SALT.²⁰¹ The U.S. attempt to profit from the situation put at risk the agreement itself, and the Chinese answer to the final proposal of December 4, that was joined by the invitation of Hua or Deng to Washington, took longer than expected. Finally, Deng decided to agree and accepted the American proposal, but lately, after he consulted Hua, rejected the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue. Further U.S. attempts to receive the authorization to the arms sale to Taiwan were vane. The announcement of the normalization of the relations with China was made on the arranged day. The American interest in the formalization of the alliance with the PRC was shifted in the background of the U.S. foreign policy, due to the emergency of new crisis in the Middle East. The formal agreements did not represent a real and immediate change, rather the reach of a stale point in a relation that had started under very different conditions.

Cambodia

The Chinese leadership was relieved by the American presence in Indochina and supported Cambodia in order to prevent North Vietnam becoming the main anti-Chinese ally of the Soviet Union. The Kampuchean Communists, also known as Khmer Rouge, came to power in 1975, led by Pol Pot.²⁰² The Khmer Rouge were backed by Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, who had been removed by Lon Nol in 1970, and were joined by many people after the U.S. bombing of the Cambodian forests on the borders with Vietnam. In April 1975, the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, and announced the birth of Democratic Kampuchea. The Pol Pot regime set up radical reforms to implement a real communism, without private property, forcing people to work in collective farms, where money was abolished. Pol Pot ordered the ethnic cleansing of the Vietnamese minority, the deportation of people from the cities to the

²⁰¹ Scott Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), p.138

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.406-7

countryside. The genocide and the terrible life conditions into which people were forced to live, led to the death of at least one fifth of the Cambodian people during the four years of dictatorship. The regime was finally overthrown in January 1979 by an army of Cambodian exiles, backed by the North Vietnamese.²⁰³

Chile

The interests of the Nixon administration in Latin America were limited to the maintenance of the status quo, at the cost of supporting dictators, especially when President Nixon was in office. The fragile relationship between the United States and Latin America became a matter of little importance, due to his policy of disengagement and his greater focus on the Soviet Union, China and Japan.²⁰⁴ After the Cuban Missile Crisis the U.S. intelligent reports of the building of a submarine basis in Cienfuegos on the Southern Coast of Cuba by the Soviets was totally unexpected. No formal agreement about the possible Soviet deployment in Cuba had been made, but the U.S. administration asserted that the letter exchange that put an end to the crisis of 1962 implied a Soviet commitment not to install weapons in Cuba. Despite the Soviet confirmation that the American understanding was correct, the buildup continued until September 25, when Kissinger confronted Dobrynin about the issue, accusing the USSR of deception. No public accusation was made, and at the beginning of October, Dobrynin delivered a note to Kissinger from the Soviet government, which confirmed that they had no intention of violating the 1962 agreement, and during the next few days the two acquiesced on some limits that would be on the traffic in Cuban waters.²⁰⁵ Soon after this diplomatic victory, one of the oldest fears of the American government was realized: the socialist Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile. Allende was seen as a threat by the United States government, not only for his ideas and his strong

²⁰³ Ibid., pp.510-13

²⁰⁴ Recording of Nixon's meeting with Donald Rumsfeld, March 8, 1971, Nixon tapes, conversation 463-6, http://whitehousetapes.org/pages/listen_tapes_rmn.htm (8/2/2013)

²⁰⁵ Logevall Preston, p.275

opposition to the American values and culture, but also because his rise to power represented an extension of the Soviet influence. It was also a destabilizing element for the continent as a whole, because of the long term friendship between Allende and Fidel Castro, which could have resulted in a dangerous Santiago-La Havana axis.²⁰⁶ In fact, long before Nixon's Presidency, the CIA spent 2,7 million dollars in support of the 1964 the campaign of Frey, Allende's opponent in the Chilean elections, and more money was indirectly invested by private and public organizations and individuals from Europe, who had been contracted by the U.S. for the same purpose. Exactly the same thing happened at the 1970 elections, but this time Allende won with a minority vote, as the leader of the Popular Unity, a coalition of Social Democrats, Marxists and Christians. On October 22, 1970 two days before Allende was confirmed President by the parliament, the Chief of Staff Rene Schneider was murdered by some Chilean conspirators, armed by the CIA, who had kept the operation secret even from the U.S. Ambassador Edward Corry.²⁰⁷ But the outcome of the action was quite different from Nixon's original intention, because the murder convinced the parliament to vote for Allende. One year after the Presidential inauguration, Fidel Castro visited Chile and gave a speech in Santiago in which he praised Popular Unity for its unprecedented vision of a democratic route to socialism, that represented the only "peaceful revolution"²⁰⁸ that took place in Latin America in those years. Allende brought many factories and services under state control, but was against the class struggle. He was a strong opponent of the capitalistic model and against the power of multinational corporations because they damaged the economy of developing countries and corrupted the founding values of the entire world.

Since his election, the American attempts of undermining Allende's presidency followed two paths: the first was to "make the economy scream"²⁰⁹ through bilateral economic policies and seeking cooperation from other Latin American countries like Argentina

²⁰⁶ Corry, in Patricio Guzmán, *Salvador Allende* (LaFeltrinelli, 2004)

²⁰⁷ Corry in Guzmán

²⁰⁸ Fidel Castro, speech 1971 in Guzmán

²⁰⁹ Declassified document: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/98353596/Senate-Select-Committee-Request-000090c8> (8/2/2013)

and Brazil.²¹⁰ The second, and ultimately successful, was to encourage a military coup. Since October 1972, in Chile the demonstrations of the middle-class and rightists paralyzed the country, influencing the everyday lives of the whole population and fueling complaints against the President. In 1973, Allende was confirmed President for the second mandate, despite the strong opposition from the right. Some troops rebelled against him, while the social movements were helpless and could only demonstrate their support for the president on the streets. Additionally, the communist forces inside the country were divided, because some of the supporters of Allende were tired of waiting for the implementation of the real socialism. The Chilean communist allies assumed different positions, too: while Cuba was supportive for Allende, Moscow refused to help.²¹¹ On September 11, 1973 Allende was overthrown by a military coup led by General Pinochet, and killed himself inside of the Moneda Palace under siege. In his last speech to the nation, from the Moneda on the day of his death, Allende's declaration "la historia es nuestra y la hacen los pueblos" sounded like a strong accusation towards the few conspirators and the big powers who had taken for themselves the right to break the dream of many Chileans that would subsequently suffer under Pinochet's regime.

Cuba, Angola and Nicaragua

After the revolution of 1959, active revolutionary internationalism and interventionism have been the main characteristics of Cuban foreign policy. In the aftermath of the assassination of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967, Fidel Castro abandoned the open promotion of revolution²¹² and aligned with the Soviet Union.²¹³ The solidarity with its allies brought Cuba to support the MPLA of Netho, involved in a civil war in Angola, against the FNLA and UNITA, that were backed by the United States and South Africa. Castro answered to the help request that Neto had sent to Moscow when the conflict

²¹⁰ Declassified document: http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_093.pdf (8/2/2013)

²¹¹ Guzman

²¹² Thornton, p.357

²¹³ Alessandra Lorini and Duccio Basosi, *Cuba in the World, the World in Cuba* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2009), p.246

flared up again after the withdrawal of the Portuguese troops as a consequence of the end of the Portuguese colonial empire, in 1974. Only after the involvement of Cuba and of the U.S., Moscow decided to help the MPLA. The Cuban troops supported the Angolan counter-offensive to the South African invasion from the south of the country, and in 1976 Neto declared the victory of the MPLA.²¹⁴ In 1975, trying to avoid the Cuban intervention in Angola and underlining the potential economic advantage that the deal could have represented for Cuba, Kissinger offered Castro to normalize the relation between the U.S. and Cuba, but Castro rejected the offer.²¹⁵ A similar proposal was put forward by Carter, but with the same outcome.²¹⁶

Carter's position toward Latin America was more neutral and mild, than that of Nixon and Ford. Since the beginning of the decade, the Marxist Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) was opposing the Nicaraguan president Anastasio Somoza. Between 1974 and 1977, as a consequence of a Sandinista raid, he had seized the country and the FSLN remained silent, until the resistance to Somoza crystallized again after the murder of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, which was blamed to the president, while his opponents formed the Broad Opposition Front (FAO). On August 22, 1978 the FSLN, that had become even more relentless, took the National Palace. Castro showed his support to the Sandinista cause by sending weapons to Nicaragua through Panama and Costa Rica, and in September, the FSLN began its steadier attack against Somoza's troops. In the meantime, Carter called on the opposition to the spread of Cuban intervention in the southern hemisphere²¹⁷, and tried to negotiate between the president and the FAO. Nevertheless, Somoza kept rejecting all peace efforts, until the U.S. left the negotiation on February 8. The Cuban and Soviet support to the favorite FSLN²¹⁸ could have damaged the U.S. reputation of handling their neighboring countries. Somoza fled to Miami on July 17, 1979 and the day after the Sandinistas came to power and dismissed the Nicaraguan National Guard that had supported the former president.

²¹⁴ Romero, p.248

²¹⁵ Thornton, p.358

²¹⁶ Lorini and Basosi, p.246

²¹⁷ Thornton, p.364

²¹⁸ Romero, p.275

Carter decided to give economic support to Nicaragua, until the CIA, at the beginning of 1981, reported that it was selling arms to El Salvador.²¹⁹

The Cuban involvement in the Third World countries continued with the shipment of troops in Ethiopia in 1977; as an answer to the preminent role of Cuba on the international stage, the Soviet Union decided to increase their presence on the island, overcoming the previous understanding over the presence of advisory personnel.²²⁰ The Cuban internationalism was seen as a threat to U.S. security and the Soviet Union was warned against backing its actions.

The case of Cuba shows again how the communist forces during the 1970s changed their position with respect to the Soviet Union. In this case, the marxist regime worked as military pawn when the USSR intervention was hold by distrust or for fear of a direct clash with the United States.

The resurgence of the Communist influence

The second half of the 1970s was characterized by many changes in the international arena, delivering the perception that the Soviet Union was expanding its influence. After the end of the American withdrawal, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia fell under the communist influence, while the post-colonial movements in Africa brought to the Soviet and Cuban intervention in favor of the liberation movements inspired by the communist doctrine.²²¹ In 1979, in Nicaragua, the pro-American leader Somoza was overthrown by a leftist revolution, while in Iran the Shah Pahlavi was forced to escape, allowing the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini to lead the country. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas day, 1979 marked the end of the détente. All these events, even if not intertwined and with different causes, were considered as signals of a

²¹⁹ Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p.244

²²⁰ Thornton, p.379

²²¹ See chapter 1

resurgence of the Soviet power, vis-à-vis the Vietnam syndrom that paralyzed the U.S., strengthening the criticism toward détente.²²²

²²² Testi, p.237-38

Chapter IV

Communism in the U.S. foreign policy during the 1970's

Differently from his predecessors and successors, Richard Nixon used the word *communism* in only 8 of all his public speeches, press conferences and statements as president. This marked the lowest point in the use of this word between the end of World War II and the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991. The same word is counted 178 times during Eisenhower's presidency, 80 in Kennedy's speeches, 81 in Johnson's, it was used 42 times by Carter, 182 by Reagan and 160 by George H.W. Bush. During his career as congressman and vice presidency, between 1946 and 1968 the same Nixon used the word communism 99 times.²²³

The adjective *communist* recurs more frequently in Nixon's speeches but the curve trend descends significantly, going from the 160 to the 58 times between Johnson and Nixon, to raise again to 94 and even to 497 with Carter and Reagan.²²⁴

The difference in the use of the word *communism* was not only quantitative, but also qualitative: in fact, the perception of the concept of communism and of its international role changed during the 1970s. As it will be outlined, the innovative aspect of the Nixon presidency is not to be found in his conduct of foreign policy, rather in the use of a realistic approach to face the international challenges that were already present or emerged during his presidency.

Besides, it is interesting to notice that the use of the adjective *communist* required something to fill its meaning, in fact the adjective can only connote something, but it is not a complete entity. The noun *communism*, instead, is a full concept and does not represent any concrete person, international actor or institution. The volatility of this concept lets the chance to manipulate and use it as a label. Actually, during the Cold War the word *communist* had been used as a noun to indicate the enemies, those who belonged to the other side of the world and whose values were opposite to the Americans, especially to that of freedom. The use of this word as a label leads to

²²³ American Presidency Project [online]. 1999-2013. Gerhard Peters

²²⁴ Ibidem

generalization and flattening of the things denoted as such, and to the inability to reach a completely unbiased vision of them. In fact, tagging an actor, a nation or an organization entails the use of a prejudiced understanding of it, which depends on the background of the observer. For example, the People's Republic of China was usually labelled as *communist* China (use which Nixon dismissed): this attitude was matched by the lack of use of the official name of the country, which was used for the first time by Nixon who therefore formally acknowledged it. Therefore, it is possible to find a match between the action of labelling and the bias for the thing that is labelled.

It is also important to take into consideration the occasions in which the word under analysis was used: Nixon referred to *communism* in public speeches and announcements, in the Annual Reports to the Congress on U.S. Foreign Policy and during televised interviews. During his presidency, Carter used the word *communism* in 42 of his speeches, but it had been pronounced very little times during official occasions or in public events with nationwide live coverage, rather in townhall meetings and other meetings which supposedly had a limited coverage.

In this chapter will be taken into account Nixon's rhetoric during his presidency, with a specific attention to the relations with the communist world and to the changed understanding of *communism* in the U.S. foreign policy.

The Nixon presidency

Many historians agree to name the years between 1950 and 1975 “the Age of Nixon”²²⁵, who is regarded to be the “quintessential post-World War II American figure”.²²⁶ In fact, Nixon protagonized many moments of dramatic change during this time and contributed to their development. All along his career his personality underwent many shifts and the young fervent anticommunist of the late 1940s would become the first president who

²²⁵ see Genovese, p.2
Hanhimäki, p.18

Richard Reeves, *President Nixon alone in the White House* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 2002), p.11

²²⁶ Genovese, p.2

visited Moscow and the People's Republic of China since when it had been established, in 1949.

Richard Nixon's early career is tightly intertwined with the rise of the second Red Scare and the beginning of the Cold War. He started his political career running for Congress for the Republican party in 1946. Soon after receiving his nomination, he took part in a debate with the long experienced Congressman in the House of Representatives Jerry Voorish. The young Nixon scored a big win against the long experienced Democrat, accusing him to be supported by groups linked to the Communist Party; as a consequence, Voorish decided not to run for Congress again, while Nixon's popularity skyrocketed.²²⁷ In his autobiography, Nixon wrote that he had not made up his mind clearly about communism until Churchill gave his Iron Curtain speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. That speech shifted his attitude from disinterested to increasingly concerned about the growth of the communist influence in Eastern Europe. The first public Nixon was a "slashing campaigner", an assaulter whose "'go for the jugular' approach became a trademark".²²⁸ Nixon's maiden speech in the House was a "contempt of Congress citation against Gerhart Eisler, who had been identified as the top communist agent in America".²²⁹ In 1947, Nixon was chosen to be one of the members of a selected committee that would go to Europe and prepare a connection with the plan Marshall of foreign aid. Consequently he had the occasion to get to know communist leaders and to speak with them about their different perspectives. The judgment that Nixon developed through this experience was that Europe needed some help from the United States. In fact, the state of crisis in which many countries were as a consequence of World War II was leading them toward the creation of many communist systems loyal to Moscow.²³⁰ Moreover, not only the leaders of the communist parties in Europe were very charismatic and able to decline the soviet ideology in a nationalistic key, but the parties also depended on the money that arrived from the Soviet Union. Nixon believed that what he saught was the beginning of what he called

²²⁷ Nixon, *R.N.*, p.48

²²⁸ Genovese, p.2

²²⁹ Nixon, *R.N.*, p.54

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.61

“Eurocommunism”, but that name would be used to indicate a quite different movement.²³¹

In 1948, he took part in the case against Alger Hiss, a lawyer who was involved in the Department of State, and was accused and convicted for being a Soviet spy and of perjury. The Hiss case marked the beginning of a time in which Communism became a central concern in domestic and foreign policy. Nixon’s dedication to it brought him even more stature and would put him on the presidential ticket as vice-president of Dwight Eisenhower for the 1952 elections.

During his two mandates as vice president, Nixon made many trips abroad, to cover the international relationships that Eisenhower was forbidden to keep because of his health problems and critical conditions. Anyway, this allowed Nixon to feed his increasing interest in foreign policy and to experience the changes that were taking place around the world. In 1953, he made a long trip in the Far East, including Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; in 1957, he went to Africa and in 1958, to South America. Quite often in these occasions, Nixon had to face strong protests against him and even received death threats from the local people.²³² In different occasions, he tried to face the people who were against him or to get to know their reasons. In his memoirs, Nixon himself considered:

“This experience bolstered my instinctive belief that the only way to deal with Communists is to stand up to them. Otherwise, they will exploit your politeness as weakness. They will try to make you afraid and then take advantage of your fears. Fear is the primary weapon of Communists.”²³³

However, this behaviour was not dictated by the interest in his enemies, or by determination and firmness, but were the reaction of a very fragile person. Nixon was very hesitating, indecisive and masked this feeling of uncertainty with vehemence and contentiousness.²³⁴

²³¹ Ibid., p.63

²³² Ibid., p.232

²³³ Ibid., p.160

²³⁴ Reeves, p.12-13

In 1960 Nixon was named the Republican candidate for presidency, but Kennedy won with a narrow margin. After a second defeat at the gubernatorial elections of 1962, Nixon announced his retirement from politics. During his time off, he took part in the Goldwater unsuccessful campaign, in 1964, then decided to run again for presidency in 1968. This time he won, with a slight gap and without the absolute majority of the popular votes, since the Democratic votes were splitted among the two candidates of that party.

Nixon's leadership represented an attempt "to govern by surprise, scheming to bypass the checks and balances built into the United States Constitution and the scrutiny of the people, the Congress and the press."²³⁵ Nixon was not loved by the media, but he returned their disaffection because of his temperament. Usually, during his presidency, the good news leaked through the officers and were made public by his ministers, whereas the bad news were spread so to discredit the president himself, fueling Nixon's belief of a conspiracy against him.²³⁶

Nixon chose his staff deliberately in order to pursue his more hidden objectives. One of the most self-evident examples of this was the appointment of William Rogers as secretary of State. In fact, Roger was not chosen for his skills in foreign policy, rather because he was unexperienced in this matter and therefore would have gone along with Nixon's wishes.²³⁷ Therefore, the president would hold his checkpoint over foreign policy until he realized he was losing control over the events of the Watergate, since April 30, 1973 and Henry Kissinger would take over the lead.²³⁸

As aforementioned, Nixon's long experience in foreign affairs came from his service as vice-president under Eisenhower and from his travels as a private citizen before the campaign of 1968. His major advisor in this field was Harvard professor Henry Kissinger, who had already participated in the Kennedy's government as advisor for Vietnam and was a close friend of Nixon's competitor, Nelson Rockefeller. Kissinger

²³⁵ Hanhimäki, p.15

²³⁶ Kissinger, *Gli anni della Casa Bianca*, p.31

²³⁷ "Bisogna dire che pochi sono stati i segretari di Stato scelti da un presidente che confidi nella loro ignoranza in materia di politica estera; scelti anzi proprio in virtù di tale ignoranza". Ibid., p.32

²³⁸ Reeves, p.18

served during the Nixon and Ford administrations as National Security Advisor from January 1969 to November 1975 and as secretary of State between September 1973 and January 1977. The studies about the “odd couple”, as Nixon used to refer to his relationship with Henry Kissinger, have extensively explained it and make it unnecessary to be discussed here.²³⁹ However, it is important to stress the role that Kissinger had in Nixon’s administration: his appointment as National Security Advisor coincided with a dramatic loss of importance of the State Department, that during the Nixon administration had less influence than in any previous postwar period,²⁴⁰ and in 1973, as the Watergate scandal was inesorably coming to light, Kissinger became the first person to be both secretary of State and National Security Advisor at the same time. This represented a sort of handover of the foreign policy control, and allowed Kissinger to take the lead of the U.S. foreign policy during the Ford administration as well. In fact, during his time in office, he “established himself as the indispensable man of the American foreign policy”.²⁴¹ But covering such an important position came not without any cost: Kissinger would be considered responsible as much as Nixon for the handling of the Vietnam war and for the covert operations that were commissioned during his administration, especially for those in Chile.

For all the many highs and lows in his relationship with the president, he had a key role in the Nixon administration: while the president could be considered the mind of the American foreign policy, at least until 1973, beyond any shadow of doubt Kissinger was the negotiator, the very maker of foreign policy. As a matter of fact, he arranged and took part in the most popular and successful achievements of the Nixon administration, contributing widely to their development. He paved the way for the presidential trips to China and to the Soviet Union and he negotiated the settlement of the Vietnam war.²⁴² In 1973-74, he initiated the “shuttle diplomacy”²⁴³ to solve the Middle East crisis, travelling relentlessly among many countries as an intermediary for reaching an

²³⁹ see Reeves, *President Nixon alone in the White House*
Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect*

²⁴⁰ Bundy, p.514

²⁴¹ Wilentz, p.51

²⁴² Bundy, p.511

²⁴³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p.799

agreement to solve the Yom Kippur war.²⁴⁴ This was one of his most impressive performances as crisis manager and diplomat, which became one of his main prides.²⁴⁵

Of course one of the examples of Nixon's predilection of Kissinger was clear in the handling of the U.S. relationship with the Soviet Union, which were handled completely by the National Security advisor since the very beginning of the presidency.²⁴⁶ On February 17, 1969 Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador in Washington, met the president and a backchannel was established between the Soviet ambassador and Kissinger. "The Channel" was used to bypass the State Department influence on the most important issues concerning foreign policy, as the negotiations of the end of the war in Vietnam, the new relationship with China, the SALT and later on also the Middle East. This was not just a media of communication, but also a new element in the Soviet-American relation that would have been employed to negotiate "all the important issues affecting the superpowers relationship." During the Nixon presidency, many backchannels were established and systematically used to manage the foreign policy in order to make it available only to very few people.²⁴⁷ Actually, one of the most effective keywords to describe the Nixon presidency could be "secrecy": the Congress and the public were completely unaware of what was happening behind the scenes of the Nixon administration. For example, when the presidential staff arrived in Moscow in May 1972, nobody of the staff knew about Kissinger's secret trip to Moscow, neither that the major part of the final agreements had been already prepared during that visit.²⁴⁸

At the basis of Nixon and Kissinger strategy for foreign policy, especially with the Soviet Union, there was the *linkage*. As the National Security Advisor wrote,

"Our strategy was to use trade concessions as a political instrument, withholding them when Soviet conduct was adventurous and granting them in measured doses when the

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p.452

²⁴⁵ Hanhimäki, p.331

²⁴⁶ Reeves, p.37

²⁴⁷ Bundy, p.56-58

²⁴⁸ Kissinger, *Gli anni della Casa Bianca*, p.901

Soviets behaved cooperatively. In general, we favored projects that required enough time to complete for us to have continued leverage on Soviet conduct”.²⁴⁹

This strategy was backed by the Export Administration Act of 1969 that favored the expansion of American trade with the Soviet Union and was to be implemented by the executive branch.²⁵⁰ Mario Del Pero in his *Henry Kissinger e l'ascesa dei Neoconservatori*, explains that this policy was based on the presumption that in the global system everything is connected and interdependent, therefore that any event can influence all the others.²⁵¹ As already outlined, one of the most relevant examples of linkage is found in how the American government tied the development of their relationship with the Soviet Union to the North Vietnamese willingness to negotiate.²⁵²

The inaugural address of 1969 and the conservative policies of the Nixon administration

Nixon's Inaugural address of 1968 became well known for his announcement of a new “era of negotiation”. However, the primary purpose of his inaugural speech was the promotion of unity and the encouragement to overcome the differences among the American people, as the campaign motto “bring us together” declaimed.

Actually, some protesters against the Vietnam war were holding a counter-inaugural address while Nixon was speaking²⁵³ and after the ceremony some militant groups threw stones and attacked the president's car.²⁵⁴ Even in his speech, Nixon expressed his purpose to fill the gap with the protesters, criticizing the bad rhetoric that “fans discontents into hatreds”, and not the opposers themselves.

²⁴⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, p.840

²⁵⁰ Garthoff, p.104

²⁵¹ Mario Del Pero, *Kissinger e l'ascesa dei neoconservatori* (Bari, Laterza 2006)

²⁵² Del Pero, p.62 and notes; see also ch.3

²⁵³ NYT 19 January 1969, 51

²⁵⁴ NYT 21 January 1969, 24

It is possible to notice that in this speech Nixon already outlines his idea of a “silent majority”, which would be that part of the people that did not protest and accepted the choices made by the administration, especially about Vietnam. Nixon will speak out this concept on November 3, 1969 during the “Address to the Nation on the war in Vietnam”.²⁵⁵ The word *voice* is used in this speech 9 times and focuses on both the protests of the demonstrators and to Nixon’s willingness to listen to the entire American population, including those who are part of the majority that remains silent. The vagueness of the speech was intentional and intended to second its unificatory aim: it was not anti-communist or directed against the Democrats, and it did not include any mention to war, especially to Vietnam.

The speech was not characterized by sophisticated rhetoric, and engaged the values of patriotism, morality and religion, making use of sermoniac turns and alluding to biblical narrations and images. Actually, Nixon used words like *talents*, *spirit*, and closed the speech asserting that: “Our destiny offers not the cup of despair, but the chalice of opportunity”.²⁵⁶

U.S.-Soviet relations during the Nixon presidency

This opportunity should have been a relaxation of the confrontation with the Soviet Union. During the Johnson administration a shift toward détente had already been made therefore Nixon’s policy did not represent a big change as it claimed to be. Actually, as many historians have already outlined, Nixon’s choices in foreign policy were not revolutionary, but conservative and dictated by the circumstances.²⁵⁷ In fact, despite the unprecedented outcomes, as reaching the highest point of détente with the Soviet Union and the opening to China, the policies that were adopted by Nixon and his

²⁵⁵ Richard Nixon: "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," November 3, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303>. (8/2/2013)

²⁵⁶ Ibidem

²⁵⁷ See also Jussi Hanhimäki, “Conservative goals, revolutionary outcomes: the paradox of détente”, *Cold War History*, Volume 8, Issue 4, 2008, pp.503-12
Del Pero, p.74
Romero, p.208

administration were not innovative in their contents, but in the rhetoric that was used to implement them.²⁵⁸ For Nixon the reapproachment with the Soviet Union was only 28th on the list of the most important study subjects in the National Security Memoranda which he ordered on March 13, 1969 and after the president's meeting with Dobrynin, the American statesman played the waiting game with the Soviets.²⁵⁹ Despite the Soviet expectancies, in fact, Nixon did not consider détente as the main objective of his presidency, and decided to visit China before the Soviet Union.

The improvements of the relationship between the superpowers culminated with Nixon's visit to Moscow in May 1972, and the signature of the SALT treaty that established the freezing of the number of offensive weapons for each side and consented the installation of two Anti-ballistic Missile systems as a defense barrier for each part. During the summit were signed treaties and agreements on trade, the American agricultural exports to the Soviet Union, and other subsidiary agreements, e.g. to prevent incidents between the navies, in the airspace or over the sea, a call for cooperation in space activities and cooperation in many different fields.²⁶⁰

The negotiations for the SALT were held in three sessions between November 1969 and January 1972, and were seen as the trial for the relaxation of the bipolar tensions.²⁶¹ Consequently, the signature of the treaty was considered as the main pillar of Détente.

As Garthoff outlines in his *Détente and Confrontation*, "the American acceptance of parity implied by SALT meant American willingness to accept that its superiority was waning", the Soviets were seeking for the acknowledgement of parity.²⁶² The SALT meetings also represented a forum for discussion of the Soviet-American relations, therefore they were a successful tool for the new era of negotiation.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ Del Pero, p.74

²⁵⁹ Garthoff (1994), pp.147-49

²⁶⁰ Bundy, pp.322-23

²⁶¹ Garthoff, p.216

²⁶² Ibid., p.221

²⁶³ Ibid., p.223

Even if the SALT was seen as “the leading edge in moving toward an era of negotiation”²⁶⁴, soon a main difference in the Soviet and the American understanding of Détente surfaced. For what concerned the military aspect, the agreement did not represent a huge change, rather established a status quo, limiting the number of the armaments as it was at the time but leaving open the possibility to implement more innovative technologic systems, as the MIRV.²⁶⁵ The Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry vehicles, that allowed to install many warheads on a single missile, gave the U.S. a strong advantage, since they were already part of the American arsenal. The negotiations for the SALT II started again in December 1972 and from March to July 1973, but reached an impasse since the Soviets required to forbid the testing of new strategic system, allowing only the modernization of the existing ones.²⁶⁶

While the negotiations for the new treaty did not progress, Kissinger’s visit to Moscow in May 1973, in preparation for the Washington summit, led to the Agreement on Prevention of Nuclear War (PNW), that was signed during the summit. Brezhnev’s visit to the U.S. took place in June 17-22, partly in Washington and partly in San Clemente. During the summit, four new agreements were added to those of the previous year, the most important of which was the commitment to “make serious efforts” to work out a “permanent agreement” on strategic offensive arms limitations by the end of 1974”.²⁶⁷

Nixon and Kissinger agreed to add the PNW among the agreements signed during the Washington meeting, after the Soviets had been advancing the proposal to add a pledge on “no first use of nuclear weapons” since the early 1960s. The plan was submitted again in 1972 and Nixon decided to consent to it, but shifting its meaning from the nonuse of nuclear weapons to the nonuse of force. Therefore, the agreement was aimed at preventing any act of war through nuclear attack in case of confrontation between any country, through consultation between the superpowers. Between July 1972 and May 1973, it was Henry Kissinger the one in charge of the agreement, while nobody else of the administration knew anything about it. The PNW was intended by the parts as an

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p.219

²⁶⁵ Romero, p.231

²⁶⁶ Garthoff, p.371

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p.375

extension of the Basic Principles of 1972, and its tacit intention was to restrain the opponent power. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union view the agreement as a “political step”, rather than an instrument for improving world security.²⁶⁸

The conclusion of this agreement was also ment to be a signal of improvement in the relationship between the superpowers, but this situation was about to be challenged. In fact, despite some Soviet attempts to alert the Nixon administration about the incumbent Egyptian attack to Israel,²⁶⁹ the October 6 strike arrived completely unexpected to the Americans. After an airlift was established to Tel Aviv, the ONU voted the resolution for the cease-fire, following a Soviet-American proposal. Besides the cooperation, Kissinger was plotting to get the best from the situation, putting the U.S. in a key position of negotiator (for the Israelis) and supporter (for the Arabs).²⁷⁰ Since the Israelis were in an advantageous position, Kissinger elicited them not to respect the cease-fire²⁷¹, meanwhile he rejected the Soviet proposal for intervention to impose it, unconcerned with their menace to intervene unilaterally in case of an American refusal.²⁷² Kissinger threatened to escalate the crisis in case of Soviet attack, while asking the Israelis to stop the attacks. Consequently, the hostilities ceased on October 26, thanks to the American government, which revealed itself as the most suitable negotiator for the Arabs.

This crisis brought to light how different was the meaning of *détente* for the two superpowers: if “overall it can be said that the two powers cooperated in bringing about a cease-fire”, it was clear that each tried to guide the situation to its advantage.²⁷³ The U.S. government exited the crisis as the most vanquishing actor, actually limiting the Soviet influence in the Middle East, and reaching a prominent position in the area. In fact, among the objectives of the policy of *détente* for Kissinger, there was also the

²⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.376-86

²⁶⁹ Hanhimäki, p.307

²⁷⁰ Garthoff, p.419

²⁷¹ Ibid., p.418

²⁷² Romero, p.235

²⁷³ Garthoff, p.413

intention to profit from the new cooperation with the Soviet Union, getting to outmaneuver it.²⁷⁴

While Kissinger was engaged in his shuttle diplomacy, Nixon was dealing with the cover-up of the Watergate scandal, which was also negatively influencing the U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. In fact, if the misunderstanding between the Kremlin and the White House about the Yom Kippur attack had increased the mistrust of Nixon in the intentions of Brezhnev²⁷⁵, the Soviets were becoming more and more suspicious that the Watergate events in reality would be a plot against them.²⁷⁶ The domestic opposition to the détente was growing and tried to undermine Kissinger's attempt to develop a SALT II agreement. In the meantime, senator Henry Jackson (one of the foremost opponents of détente) and Charles Vanick achieved the approval of their amendment to the Trade Act in the House of Representatives, in March 1973. The amendment tied the Most Favourable Nation (MFN) treatment that had been promised to the Soviet Union to improve the trade relations with the other superpower, to the domestic limits that the Soviets had put to the Jewish emigration from their country.²⁷⁷ Jackson attacked the Soviet disregard of human rights, opening the dilemma among the liberals, about the "balance between national interest and defense of human rights".²⁷⁸ After the approval of the amendment, at the end of 1973, the limits that Jackson would have imposed to the implementation of the MFN clause, made the Soviets give up on it.²⁷⁹

A third meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev took place in Moscow between June 27 and July 23, 1974. It was already clear that no progress would have been made during this meeting, since the Nixon and Kissinger rejected the Soviet proposals as attempts to limit the American strategic power, but the very fact of holding the meeting was a sign of the intentions of the parts to collaborate. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM),

²⁷⁴ Romero, p.235

²⁷⁵ Nixon, *R.N. vol.2*, p.475

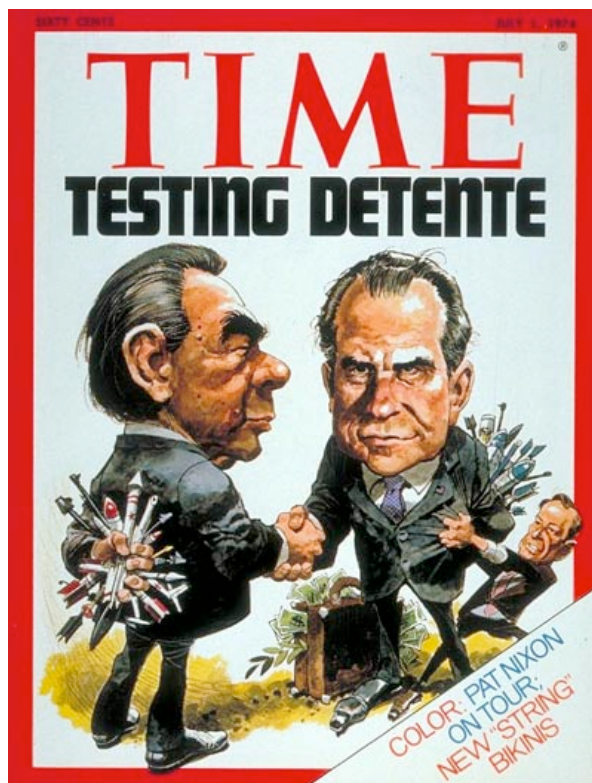
²⁷⁶ Garthoff, p.458

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.461

²⁷⁸ "dell'equilibrio tra interesse nazionale e difesa dei diritti umani" in Del Pero, p.139

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.135-39

reducing from two to one the number of ABM systems for each country, and other agreements were signed during the summit.²⁸⁰ As Garthoff notes, this occasion not only institutionalized the process of détente, but “despite the failure to reach another SALT agreement, did include several interesting new developments in the strategic dialogue between the two countries.”²⁸¹



Time Cover, July 1, 1974²⁸²

The internal dissent and the mistrust of arms control restraints from the public opinion and the military sector were only few reasons for the failure of the progress of détente.²⁸³ Probably, the same reason for reapproachment were the cause for the stalemates and decline of détente. After Nixon’s resignation, Ford and Brezhnev reached a further agreement about a roof for the number of arms for each power, in

²⁸⁰ Garthoff, pp.474-77

²⁸¹ Ibid., p.479

²⁸² Source: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19740701,00.html?artId=2103553?contType=gallery>

²⁸³ Ibid., p.480

Vladivostok, in 1974. The agreement set an equivalence in the number of strategic weapons and warheads, and constituted the condition from which the SALT II negotiations would be led. However, this presumption would be put in doubt during the Carter administration, because it questioned the primacy of the U.S. and the American public opinion heavily criticized it.²⁸⁴

During the Nixon administration, despite the attempt to take advantage of the interests that the Kremlin had been shown since the mid-1960s in a reapproachment, its put in practice did not gave the expected results. The effort to speed up the process, also as a consequence of the emergence of the PRC as an alternative voice of the Soviet declination of communism, and the dismissal of the ideologic counterposition between the U.S. and the USSR was pointless.²⁸⁵ On their side, the Soviets were seeking for stability and for the acknowledgment of equality with the U.S., therefore boosted to put into effect the reaching of détente.²⁸⁶ Despite the progresses achieved in the dialogue and relations between them, “Moscow and Washington remained intrinsecally challengers”.²⁸⁷

**“We should assist but should not dictate”
“Asia after Vietnam”, Foreign Affairs, 1967**

Another important element of Nixon’s foreign policy toward the communist world was represented by the opening to China. Besides, the Soviet bloc was going into pieces and the PRC was challenging the USSR leadership since the 1960s.

In his article published on Foreign Affairs in October 1967, “Asia after Vietnam”, Nixon had anticipated his view about the American commitment in the Indo-Pacific region after the end of the ongoing conflict. He made clear that after the U.S. would have complied with their commitments, an invovement in any conflict in the region

²⁸⁴ Romero, p.247-48

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.222

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p.223

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p.232

would be very unlikely. In the article he also made some remarks about the situation of the main emerging Asian actors with a particular attention to the Chinese case. If from one side he underlined that China represented the “greatest danger of confrontation”, he also solicited that it should have exited its isolation and entered the “family of the nations”. But in order to achieve this reception, it was required that China would have abandoned its “imperial ambitions” and “change its head”. Nixon compared the PRC of 1967 with the Soviet Union of the 1940s, for the needed changes to make in their domestic field. He invited China to follow the example of India, Japan and the other Asian nations, leaving the revolution and embracing an evolutionary progress.

One concept that Nixon stressed was that “the United States is a Pacific power” and part of the “Pacific community”. The article prefigured the dual attitude of Nixon toward China and suggested that he had a positive understanding of the ongoing reapproachment, even if it was “far from reaching a full détente”. From the idea of the Pacific community emerged also the possibility of a friendship between the U.S. and the PRC in opposition to the Soviet Union. This would be one of the main common grounds in the relations that had developed between these two countries, and the matter of many debates during their meetings.

Informal remarks in Guam - The Nixon Doctrine

In 1971, after his trip in Europe. Nixon went to East and South Asia for his second major trip as president. During the travel, he stopped over in Guam, where he was invited to give a press conference. He took the opportunity to brief the press about his new way of thinking about the presidential trips, and to delineate his policy of disengagement (later known as *Nixon doctrine*), putting away the Truman doctrine’s commitment to fight the communist threat worldwide and at any cost.²⁸⁸

During the remarks with the newsmen, he underlined his acquaintancy with the foreign leaders and put the stress on the need of direct meetings between leaders and presidents,

²⁸⁸ Reeves, p.104

instead of exchange of communications through the ambassadors. This decision was in line with Nixon's mistrust of his collaborators and his tendency to keep for himself and the fewest around him any information, especially if this could affect foreign policy or its domestic perception. To implement these changes, the presidential trips would have been shorter and made of "less protocol", and more "face-to-face conversation".²⁸⁹

Furthermore, Nixon asserted his view of Asia, for which, he said, he had a "consuming interest". As he had expressed in his article for Foreign Affairs, it was quite time to come to terms with the American's role in Asia and the Pacific. All along his speech, Nixon underlined how the United States were a Pacific power, because of geographic and historical reasons.

Even here, Nixon disclosed his dual attitude towards Asia and China in particular, which was at the same time the greatest hope and the major threat for the world. He also noticed two new factors in the continent: the emergence of nationalism and regionalism regarding the United States and the demand for a foreign involvement which would not impose further changes. Nixon delineated his policy of disengagement in accordance with this requirement: "We should assist, but we should not dictate". The policy of disengagement was not directed towards the Asian countries only, but was suitable for the whole world. In fact, one of the major consequences of the American disengagement was the creation of regional surrogate powers to pursue its interests; the example that Nixon had in mind at that time was Iran.²⁹⁰

For Nixon, his

"doctrine was not a formula for getting America out of Asia, but one that provided the only sound basis for America's staying in and continuing to play a responsible role in helping non-communist nations and neutrals as well as our Asian allies to defend their independence."²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Richard Nixon: "Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen," July 25, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140> (8/2/2013)

²⁹⁰ Garthoff, p.86

²⁹¹ Nixon, *R.N. vol.1*, p.488

Public interviews and statements

On July 1, 1970 Nixon was interviewed by four newsmen on a program broadcasted by the TV channel ABC and the radio.²⁹² Like Kennedy and Johnson had previously done, the president consented this interview, but only after receiving many requests to make it.²⁹³

During the talk, Nixon was asked whether he would have accepted the election of a communist government in South Vietnam. The president asserted that the right of a people to choose its government was at the basis of the Western world, instead in all those countries where a communist government was elected, there were no free elections. The president announced that in the remote case that the South Vietnamese were to choose a communist government, they would “have to accept the consequences of what would happen as far as the domino theory in the other areas”.²⁹⁴

As openly stated in the question posed to Nixon, he was standing completely opposed to the domino theory that Vietnam was the first string of the game that, once toppled would have caused the fall of all the others.²⁹⁵ What emerged from this declaration was that the necessity of a way out from Vietnam was more important to the presidency than the fight Communism. Besides, the urging necessity to stop the communist advance had been used by Kennedy and Johnson as an excuse to get involved in a war during which more bombs would have been dropped than those dropped over Europe during World War II.

²⁹² Richard Nixon: "A Conversation With the President About Foreign Policy.," July 1, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2567>. (8/2/2013)

²⁹³ Richard Nixon: "A Conversation With the President About Foreign Policy.," July 1, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2567>. (8/2/2013)

²⁹⁴ Ibidem

²⁹⁵ Mr. Chancellor: “What I am getting at, sir, is, if you say on the one hand that Vietnam--South Vietnam is the first of the row of dominoes which we cannot allow to topple, then can you say equally, at the same time, that we will accept the judgment of the people of South Vietnam if they choose a Communist government?”, ibidem

A similar change in the American perspective about Communism was shown during the Interview to Nixon on January 4, 1971.²⁹⁶ During the talk, the president was asked whether the election of Allende in Chile was to be considered as a “loss to communism”. Nixon’s answer was vague, asserting that an intervention in the election could have had repercussions on the whole continent.

As analyzed in the third chapter of this dissertation, the situation both in Vietnam and in Chile was far different from what Nixon had expressed: the policy adopted to cope with these events had not been changed, rather it had been kept hidden from the public eye. Therefore, the striking change in the rhetoric used by Nixon loses its relevance when considering the real events that were taking place. The cold war approach had just vanished, but it was still in use.

But if these two contributions were released before the big events of 1972, this dualistic approach of the Nixon administration was made even more clear in his Remarks at the commencement ceremonies at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.²⁹⁷

Nixon included a digression from the American commitment to halt “the advance of communism” to the “reduction of tensions”, through the split of the communis bloc. The president admitted that “simplistic and misguided as this goal may have been, it was a noble and unselfish goal in its enthusiasm”, but it would cause the need of a policy to cope with the limits of the American power.²⁹⁸ In fact “to solve everyone’s problems all over the world was no longer realistic, nor it was necessary”: However, Nixon admitted that no one of the superpowers would have given up to their principles, but that their reapproachment would have been made for the sake of mankind.

Reiterating the policy of disengagement, Nixon disclosed that the improved relationships with the Soviet Union were based on realistic foundations: easing the tensions with the USSR was allowed not only by the egemonic crisis protagonized by the U.S., but also by the new rhetoric that aimed to achieve concrete objectives rather

²⁹⁶ Richard Nixon: ""A Conversation With the President," Interview With Four Representatives of the Television Networks," January 4, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3307>. (8/2/2013)

²⁹⁷ Richard Nixon: "Remarks at Commencement Ceremonies at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.," June 5, 1974. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4236>. (8/2/2013)

²⁹⁸ “America was no longer a giant towering over the rest of the world with seemingly inexhaustible resources and nuclear monopoly”, *Ibidem*

than to use propaganda to show the content through a magnifying glass. If a durable peace was still to be achieved, it meant that the ideologic division was a gap too wide to be filled and that the main aim of détente was not based on ideas, rather on the instable equilibrium between the Soviet and American interests in reaching a compromise for stability and the individual advantages that this stability could have brought to hand. The consequent change in the rethoric was not given by the extinction of the opposing couples of capitalism and communism, good and evil, etc. The vanishing use of the word *communism* was rather required by the need to tone down the counterposition with the Soviet Union, to match the attempt to negotiate for a more stable international situation with a less aggressive political expression.

The annual reports to the Congress on the United States Foreign Policy

One of the innovations that was implemented by the Nixon administration were the Annual Reports to the Congress on the United States Foreign Policy signed by the president himself²⁹⁹ (but actually written by Kissinger).³⁰⁰ These reports were to be released yearly since February 1970, with the aim to give account of the foreign policy choices made in the previous year and scheduled for the next one by the administration. The reports were also intended as tools for international relations itself, as they represented the presidential outlook on the current international situation and its intentions for the future steps.³⁰¹

The first annual report was released on February 18, 1970.³⁰² The second, the third and the fourth were all titled “U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970’s”, and each presented a subtitle that contextualized it. The report of February 25, 1971 was subtitled “Building for

²⁹⁹ Kissinger, *Gli anni della Casa Bianca*, p.140

³⁰⁰ Garthoff, p.28

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.28

³⁰² Richard Nixon: "First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's.," February 18, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2835>. (8/2/213)

Peace”³⁰³, that of February 9, 1972 “ The Emerging Structure of Peace”³⁰⁴, that of May 3, 1973 “Shaping a durable Peace”³⁰⁵, and a fifth report was drafted but never issued.³⁰⁶ The structure of the reports changed swiftly between the first and the last two, but this analysis will deal only with the words used and not with the structure, except in the case of the first, which will be briefly summarized to sketch an idea of the contents of these reports.

The first annual report to the Congress, was in line with Nixon’s program of building a durable peace through increased partnerships (namely, the Nixon doctrine), the reaffirmation of America’s strength, without leaving aside the cooperation for arms control, and through negotiation. The report continued divided in four parts: the first was dedicated to the introduction of the National Security Council’s new role as the main “forum for Presidential consideration of foreign policy issues”. Consequently, he asserted the preeminence of the president over any decision of foreign policy. The second part concerned American’s “Partnerships and the Nixon doctrine”, while the third was dedicated to the domestic dimension and was about “America’s strength”. Finally, the last part dealt with the plans for negotiation.

Considering the whole report, the word *communism* was used three times: in the second part, when Nixon indicated those African countries that had achieved independence as the “striking examples (...) of the failure of the appeal of Communism in the new nations”; in the fourth part, where he expressed the antithetic relation between Communism and world peace³⁰⁷, and finally praised the policy of limits and suggested to the Soviet Union to overcome the ideologic differences and work together to build an

³⁰³ Richard Nixon: "Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy.," February 25, 1971. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3324> (8/2/2013)

³⁰⁴ Richard Nixon: "Third Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy.," February 9, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3736>. (8/2/2013)

³⁰⁵ Richard Nixon: "Fourth Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy.," May 3, 1973. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3832>. (8/2/2013)

³⁰⁶ Garthoff, p.458

³⁰⁷ “The Communist world in particular has had to learn that the spread of Communism may magnify international tensions rather than usher in a period of reconciliation as Marx taught”, Nixon: "First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's”

new era of negotiation. As mentioned before, this was a clear sign of the de-ideologization that the Cold War was undergoing. This process shifted the clash from the ideological confrontation to the acceptancy of the need for cooperation, even if this never reached its completion.

In the second Annual Report, titled “Building for peace”, the word *communism* was counted only twice: the first to underscore the multipolarity that this movement assumed since the emergence of the PRC as an alternative leader for the Third World countries, and the second as a time reference, expressing the period during which the country was under communist power. Again, in the fourth report, *communism* was used as a reference to an entity that had lost its polarization and had fragmented in many centers.

This was the confirmation that Nixon made use of this term in a very different way from his predecessors: it was no more a static, impregnable concept, therefore, it did not suit to the par excellence enemy as a whole. The causes for this were two: the first was the internal atomization of the Soviet influence, and the contestation of its overall control. The second- and consequent reason-, was that détente set the superpowers as two speakers in a dialogue, therefore the other should not be represented, rather called by name. The dismissal of the word *communism* by Nixon should be read in the framework of the de-ideologization of the conflict and the reapproachment of the two superpowers, that made the labelling of the adversary a redundant and unnecessary action. It was emblematic in this sense, that the third report, issued in 1972, did not include this word, albeit and because of the increased relations and the summits in Beijing and Moscow. In a way, it is possible to consider that the conceptualization of the enemy no more as a closed and invulnerable opponent, but as an equal actor and debater, concurred to the construction and was the signal of a new attitude that allowed a new approach between the two countries.

Chapter V

The Carter administration

After Nixon resigned, investigations brought to the surface the covert activities that had been led during his presidency. Both the former president and Henry Kissinger were considered responsible for the operations that had led to the widening of the conflict in South East Asia and overthrown democratically elected governments, like that of Allende. The uncovering of the secret management of the Nixon administration, catalyzed the criticism of *détente* and deepened the mistrust of politicians, opening the way to the election of the “outsider” democrat Jimmy Carter from Georgia.

During his years in office, Ford had pardoned Nixon for all the crimes the former president had or might have committed during his mandate³⁰⁸ and he dismissed the term *détente*.³⁰⁹ Actually, the criticism around the reapproachment with the Soviet Union had become in the last years a position that joined the hard-line cold war Democrats, like Senator Henry Jackson, and the fervent anticommunists of the right side of the Republican party, led by Senator Barry Goldwater and the emerging figure of Ronald Reagan. The *realpolitik* implemented by the Nixon administration, especially by Kissinger, was compared with Roosevelt’s position at Yalta, the same “soft” attitude that Nixon had criticized during his early career. Even the more moderate people were convinced that, at least, Nixon had double-crossed the American people, making them believe that the Soviets had abandoned their imperialistic plans.³¹⁰ In 1975 a commission was established a parallel commission, called “Team B”, to investigate the accuracy of the CIA evaluation of the Soviet armaments.³¹¹ The next year Paul Nitze and James Schlesinger created a Committee on the Present Danger, asserting that the Soviet Union was not reliable, and the Congress approved the amendment to the Freedom of Information Act, that allowed the American citizens a broader access to the documents of the administration documents.³¹²

³⁰⁸ The age of Reagan, p.30

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p.51

³¹⁰ Ibid., p.52

³¹¹ Romero, p.248

³¹² Kaufman, p.8-11

Aside from the accusations of the miscalculation of the Soviet threat, the Republican Senator Jackson and the neoconservatives charged the Nixon administration for immorality, considering the violation of human rights a sufficient ground to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Soviet Union. Actually, the Jackson-Vanik amendment was grounded on this belief and its debate was exploited as an occasion to criticize the Nixon administration, especially Kissinger, to be unconcerned with human rights.³¹³ The highest point of these attacks was reached in 1975, when the Nobel-prize winner Solzhenicyn, who had moved to the U.S., was invited by some Congressmen to speak in favor of the amendment. He asserted that the improved relations between the superpowers had allowed an increased repression of the dissent, therefore détente was inconsistent with the Soviet domestic policy.³¹⁴ A consistent step toward the Soviet commitment to human rights was achieved with the signature of the Final Act of the CSCE in Helsinki, even though it revealed quite controversial for the domestic reaction to it.³¹⁵

Jimmy who? - The former experiences of Jimmy Carter and the 1976 electoral campaign

The 1976 election were strongly influenced by two main factors: the demographic changes of the country and the evolution of the international scenario(including the perception of the changes at home).

In the last years two demographic changes occurred in the country: first, many white wealthy people relocated from the cities to the suburbs, leaving the metropolitan areas without big capitals, causing their swift deterioration. These changes corresponded also to the election of some Afro-American majors, delineating how the composition of the urban population had changed. Second, the population of the Sun Belt (the states between Florida and California) increased heavily because of the emigration of

³¹³ Del Pero, p.143

³¹⁴ Ibid., p.143

³¹⁵ For the CSCE see Chapter 1

resourceful whites running away from the Rust Belt, the North characterized by the industrial predominance, where the crisis had shut down many activities. As a consequence of these demographic changes, the suburbs and the Sun Belt grew in importance and had a greater influence in the general elections.³¹⁶

Jimmy Carter had entered politics not much longer before running for presidency. He was elected as a member of the State Assembly in 1963, and ran to become the democratic candidate for the governorship of Georgia in 1966, but he lost against the arch-segregationist Lester Maddox. In 1970, he became governor and finally president in 1976. Already in his campaign of 1966, Carter had presented himself proposing a renewed liberal approach, focused on good government, qualified management and economic development.³¹⁷ Carter would come to represent the new generation of tolerant Southerners, characterized by a conservative view of domestic policy and a strong interest in increasing international connections, especially in the commercial sector.³¹⁸ When he was elected governor of Georgia, in 1970, he proclaimed that “the time for racial discrimination is over”, representing equality as a civic liberty,³¹⁹ on the same level of religious beliefs or work conditions,³²⁰

During his governorship, Carter emerged for pioneering commercial ties with Belgium and Japan, opening commercial offices for the state of Georgia in these countries.³²¹ Thanks to these innovative activities, he became the coverman for the Time issue in late May 1971,³²² and catching the attention of some members of the Council of Foreign Relations. This was a non governmental organization, founded in 1918, in which participated scholars, philanthropists and politicians. It had inspired many fiscal and diplomatic policies of American leaders, especially of the democratic party.³²³ Through the CFR, David Rockefeller established the Trilateral Commission, that had the scope of

³¹⁶ Testi, p.236-39

³¹⁷ Itai Nartzizenfield Sneh, *The Future Almost Arrived: how Jimmy Carter failed to change the U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p.39

³¹⁸ Ibid., p.39, p.42

³¹⁹ Ibid., p.41

³²⁰ Jimmy Carter: “Inaugural Address”, January 20, 1977, http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/inaugural_address.pdf (8/2/2013)

³²¹ Sneh, p.43

³²² <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19710531,00.html> (8/2/2013)

³²³ Sneh, p.43

opposing the intensification of the ties that Nixon had established with the Soviet Union, and prompting new relations with Western Europe and Japan. Carter was called to work in the commission since 1973, and this experience proved very meaningful for him, both as an inspiration for his policy- since he would claim to be a progressive, thanks to this participation-, and for the personal acquaintances he made (in fact, many of the staff members of his administration, like Vance and Brzezinski had already worked with Carter in the Trilateral Commission).³²⁴

During his campaign for presidency, Carter put himself as an example of all the American virtues embodied in the self-made man with a strong moral sense of responsibility, especially toward his family, who had gave up to his successful career in the Navy to run the family businesses, and later become a politician.³²⁵ Apart from the Time article, Carter became known to the general public with his autobiography *Why Not the Best?*, published in October 1975³²⁶, and he promoted his candidacy also through an interview that he gave to *Playboy* magazine in July 1976.³²⁷ A proof of the little fame Carter had by that time were the video clips shooted to people “quipping “Jimmy who?” when asked to identify him”.³²⁸ Also the decision to use the shortened name “Jimmy”, instead of “James Earl” was part of the attempt to make him more widely known.³²⁹

Contrasting with his reputation of “technocratic manager” (that came from the centralization of the power under himself during his presidency)³³⁰, among other characterizations, Jimmy Carter embodied the modern populist leader. Mainly sketched as an outsider (even if he was not really such), he presented himself as a crusader for morality, an ardent supporter of human rights³³¹, a solver³³² and a trustee of the

³²⁴ Ibid., p.57

³²⁵ Wilentz, p.74

³²⁶ Sneh, p.45,

³²⁷ Wilentz, p.74

³²⁸ Sneh, p.51

³²⁹ Ibid., p.52

³³⁰ Wilentz, p.76

³³¹ Sneh, p.53

³³² Ibid., p.57

American people.³³³ It is also important to remember, that Carter was a born-again Christian, with very strong moral values to drive him. He brought his religious belief and moral in his presidency, especially in his rhetoric, which was filled with sermonic tones and biblical references. This preaching tone and his strong moral sense contributed to construct its populist attitude.

David Ryfe defines the modern populism that arose during the 1970s as an attempt to heal the fracture originated by the 1960s and 1970s U.S. domestic situation and foreign commitment, trying to answer to the traditional demand that “government ought to respond to the values of ordinary Americans”.³³⁴ One of the main characteristics of new populism was that “the difference between conviction and professionalism has blurred”, following the fragmentation of the political process that took place in those years.³³⁵ However, the renewed phenomenon, as it will be further outlined, stands on traditional populist language and images, turning policymaking into a quite intimate matter to be discussed.

Ryfe asserts that “Jimmy Carter would not have won[the general elections] had he not been so comfortable with the new populism”.³³⁶ As a matter of fact, during the campaign and as president he presented himself as an average man, trustful and reliable. He promised to give the country a “government as good as our people”³³⁷ and tried to remove those customs he believed to be unnecessary and that made the figure of the president look too detached.

Unfortunately for him, the same characteristics that advantaged Carter in the elections, would also turn into downsides during his time in office. His scarce experience of the Washington environment would disentangle him from any obligation to the members of the Congress, but also gave him a scarce knowledge of the formalities and the mechanisms of the establishment.³³⁸ On the other side, not being identified with the

³³³ Wilentz, p.8

³³⁴ David M. Ryfe, *Presidents in Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), p.149

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.150

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.151

³³⁷ Gerald R. Ford: "Presidential Campaign Debate," September 23, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29404> (2/8/2013)

³³⁸ Kaufman, p.17

factions of the party allowed him to openly criticize the behaviour of the former administration, both for its lack of morality and for the excessive use of Kissinger's realist approach from a neutral position.³³⁹ Additionally, his scarce experience in the establishment, enabled him to recover those Southern States that had been traditionally Republicans since the 1960s.

The Republican party turned up in a very bad shape at the 1976 general elections: the fracture originated by the rise of the neoconservative faction, led by Ronald Reagan, openly adversed to the nomination of the president in charge, was so deep that emerged the fear that a fiasco like that of the 1964 was about to happen again.³⁴⁰ Finally, Ford gained enough support to make up an air of consensus in the party around his candidacy and led the party to the elections.

Like it was for Reagan in 1976, the Democratic candidate was introduced as an "outsider": the Democratic electoral machine believed so much in Jimmy Carter, to prefer him to candidates within range of the Senator Henry Jackson and the governor of Alabama George Wallace, who was at his third mandate.³⁴¹ Almost in line with Jackson's position about the need of a stronger policy against the Soviets and critical of the Helnsinki Final Act, Carter was also inclined to cooperate with the Soviet Union. However, this issue was not at the central core of his foreign policy, rather- as inspired by the studies of the Trilateral Commission- his intention was to shift the American focus from the bipolar tensions to a stronger cooperation between U.S., Japan and Western Europe. Besides, Carter put human rights and nuclear weapons reductions at the core of his plan, and linked them with the fight against poverty at home, suggesting that a cut in military expenses would have allowed to improve human rights (that in Carter's policy ment overall civic rights) domestically. In fact, the remaining funds would have financed social plans to limit indigence as a crucial factor for social instability.³⁴² In foreign policy he proved very critical of the parallel agenda of the Nixon administration and of the predominance that was given to national power abroad

³³⁹ Wilentz, p.69

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p.68

³⁴¹ Ibid., p.69

³⁴² Ibid., p.15

over morality *tout court*.³⁴³ Even if Carter's handling of foreign policy was meant to be quite inconsistent with that of the previous administrations, especially that of Nixon, many practices of his term of office were on the same line of the former Republican administration.

The elections of 1976 registered a very low participation, and the margin of Carter's victory was very narrow (50.8 against 48.8 per cent), a result that already disclosed the difficulties that the newly elected president would have to face to keep the American people united.³⁴⁴

Carter and communism

As Skidmore noticed, Carter substituted the war on Communism that had characterized the policy of the 1950s and 1960s of containment with human rights as the center of his foreign policy. Unfortunately for him, using human rights for this role carried also some drawbacks: it was subject to too many interpretations and it lacked the unifying function that anti-communism had both in the domestic and foreign policy sphere, since it was not as appalling as the communist threat was.³⁴⁵ The war in Vietnam had crumbled the consensus around anti-communism as the basis for the U.S. foreign policy, therefore Brzezinski advised Carter to shift the focus on a moral foundation that could be accepted more widely. Besides, while anti-communism naturally implied a face-to-face clash, human rights had a peaceful connotation and contrasted the isolationist drives that would have overlooked the global role of the U.S..³⁴⁶ Despite the wider appeal of the latter, this blurred concept could not fit the same role of anti-communism, neither legitimize completely the American foreign policy of the Carter administration.³⁴⁷ However, 1978 represented a turning point in Carter's foreign policy, which followed a

³⁴³ Ibid., p.14

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p.72

³⁴⁵ David Skidmore, *Reversing Course: Carter's Foreign Policy, Domestic Politics, and the Failure of Reform* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), p.90

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p.92

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p.98

stronger anti-Soviet line, following the general demand for an anti-communist line, also looking forward to the 1980 elections.

Carter's attempt to shift the attention away from the bipolar confrontation and focus on human rights displaced the attention of U.S. international relations on Europe and Third World countries. At the same time, the de-ideologization of the bipolar confrontation that had emerged while Nixon was in office reached its climax during the Carter one-term mandate. This attitude is detectable even in the frequency and use of the word *communism* in the presidential speeches and declarations. While Nixon, in the attempt of improving the relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, used the word *communism* 8 times, during his presidency, Carter, trying to divert the attention from the relations with the Soviet Union, used it 66 times in 42 speeches. For how this might sound absurd, these counts reveal the loss of significance that the term had acquired all along the decade, and the different meaning it begun to carry. However, as we will see, the increased use that Carter made of the word communism would rather answer to mechanisms quite different than those that had led Nixon to use it.

Eurocommunism and the Carter administration

Considering the momentum of the Eurocommunist phenomenon, the high count of the word in Carter's rhetoric could be interpreted as a resurgence of the communist fear, but in reality the variation in the use of the word should be associated with a change in the meaning it assumed inside of Carter's message.

Eurocommunism was a peculiar movement that emerged and vanished during the 1970s. It had not a specific definition and plan of its own, but proposed itself as an alternative to the Soviet communism. It stood opposite to the revolutionary strategies of the Soviet doctrine, since it was for political pluralism and the defense of civil and political rights. The closer ties that were established between the Italian, Spanish and French leaders of the respective communist parties, were named Eurocommunism, and

its rise and decline was associated to the ascent and drop of the appeal of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Therefore, it could be dated between 1974 and 1977, from the moment when the PCI registered its highest electoral success to its loss of consensus, as a consequence of the perception of the inconsistency of the PCI's policies in the *compromesso storico* government with the *Democrazia Cristiana* party.³⁴⁸

Eurocommunism was perceived negatively from both superpowers: the U.S. and the NATO community sought it as a threat to the Western stability, whereas for the Soviet leaders, it jeopardized the unity of the international communist movement.³⁴⁹ However, the biggest concern about Eurocommunism emerged not much in the U.S. or the Soviet Union, rather in Europe, in particular in the Federal Republic of Germany led by the Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. A proof of the little American concern, was the fact that Carter dealt with Eurocommunism in public only once, during a town meeting in Berlin³⁵⁰, when he was asked from a housewife what was his opinion about it. At the beginning of his answer, Carter expressed his preference for a “minimal” and not increased influence of Communism in the Western world, showing how different was his position about this enemy than that of his predecessors who openly contrasted the possibility of the spread of Communism. Like Nixon had expressed his intention to leave the people of the country choose whether to embrace communism, Carter asserted his belief that communism was not a good choice for “free people”, and stresses his wilsonian ideal of a strategy of cooperation to prevent the choice of communism for any democratic people. Moreover, after noticing the interest and commitment of some French communists to human rights, and their activism in demonstrating their belief against violations, the president said that “even communism itself in the Western democracies might have some beneficial aspects of democratic principles in which we believe so deeply.” With this statement, Carter for the first time in the Cold War

³⁴⁸ ¹ Duccio Basosi, Giovanni Bernardini, “The Puerto Rico summit of 1976 and the end of Eurocommunism” in Leopoldo Nuti, *The Crisis of Détente in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2009)

³⁴⁹ Laura Fasanaro, “Eurocommunism”, in Leopoldo Nuti, *The Crisis of Détente in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2009)

³⁵⁰ Jimmy Carter: "Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting. ", July 15, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31087>. (2/8/2013)

framework, acknowledged that there were possibly some common traits of democratic grounds even in the freedom's arch-enemy.

The acceptancy speech³⁵¹

In his acceptancy speech for the nomination as the Democratic candidate, Carter would delineate the main lines of his presidential policy plan. Since the beginning of the speech, he lined up openly against the Republican party, pointing to its internal split, and praised the former Democratic presidents. Carter set himself in line with Johnson as his successor, for sharing with him the commitment to human rights. He pleased the minorities and the immigrants, and recollected them how the Democratic party had always lined up with them to fight their battles. Moreover, he strongly took the distances from the Nixon-Ford leadership, promising to bring the government closer to people: not only representing himself as the leader of the Democratic party, rather reversing the point of view, Carter spoke as an American citizen attacking the "public officials" because they "have lost faith in us". He finally promised to give back the command position to the people, asking for their participation and asserting that "our nation's best is still ahead"³⁵².

While dedicating very few considerations to foreign policy, Carter proposed to give the unprivileged people a louder voice to express their needs, and to improve the Welfare state to their advantage, taking the funds from the military budget. With this draft, Carter symbolically committed to minimize the American engagement in wars abroad to fight the battle for human rights in the domestic dimension, as well as in the international arena. In fact, claiming for equity, he promised to end discrimination and enhance the representatives of minorities and women in his government- as he actually

³⁵¹ Jimmy Carter: "'Our Nation's Past and Future': Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in New York City," July 15, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25953> (2/8/2013)

³⁵² Ibidem

did³⁵³-, and vowed of starting a deregulation to “combine strong safeguards for consumers with minimal intrusion of government in our free economic system”.

In his acceptancy speech, Carter formulated a new freedom, that from “the threat of a successful attack”³⁵⁴, depicting the American warfare initiatives as mere reactions, rather than crusades against those who deny freedom. Carter associated tightly the need for peace to the defense of human rights, rephrasing Nixon’s conclusion of his first Report to the Congress on Foreign Policy, that “peace is much more than the absence of war”.³⁵⁵ Carter’s acceptancy speech included the main concerns he would deal with once president, and already casted his belief of being a solver.³⁵⁶

The Carter administration and foreign policy

Carter never made a mystery about his scarce knowledge of foreign policy, therefore he would spend much of the time left from office to enhance his preparation, reading books and being instructed by Brzezinski. As a matter of fact, he relied much on his administration and advisors for being counselled about the handling of international issues. After the parallel agenda of Nixon and Kissinger, and the involvement of many members of his staff in the Watergate scandal, the American government needed a more crystal clear administration. Therefore, one of Carter’s primary objectives was to rebuild people’s confidence in the American government, and in its morality. Inspired by the model of the Kennedy administration, where a “strong president” matched with a “relatively secure and strong” secretary of state, and an “equally energetic White House”, Carter restored the cabinet system to a prominent position in his government.³⁵⁷ The structure of the Carter administration has been depicted as a wheel with the president at the hub, which would allow an equal access to the president from any of his

³⁵³ Wilentz, p.76

³⁵⁴ Carter, “Our Nation’s Past and Future”

³⁵⁵ Richard Nixon: "First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's.," February 18, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2835> (2/8/2013)

³⁵⁶ Kaufman, p.17

³⁵⁷ An outsider in the White House, footnote 16, p.20

advisors, preventing an “overfiltering” of informations, as it had happened in the Nixon administration.³⁵⁸ Despite the intentions, the “spoke-on-the-wheel” system did not work properly, since its efficiency was threatened by the competition among the members of the staff to achieve a major influence on the president.³⁵⁹

Carter appointed his staff in order to have a broad and diverse set of experienced people, who would have helped him to supply his failures and deficits.³⁶⁰ His administration was composed by people Carter got acquainted with while working in the Trilateral Commission and by his former colleagues from Georgia.³⁶¹ Both the secretary of state, his main advisors, Cyrus Vance, and the National Security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, had worked with Carter since the beginning of his experience in the Commission, in 1973, but their very different backgrounds and political positions did not allow a balanced relationship between them and with the president.

Vance had entered the Washington establishment as general counsel to the Defense Department under Kennedy, and Johnson promoted him to deputy secretary of Defence. Then, he took part in several diplomatic missions, among which the U.S.-North Vietnamese talks as deputy chief negotiator. Vance appreciated Carter’s view of foreign policy as he refused the confrontationist approach vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, but still supporting a strong attitude against it.³⁶² In fact, Vance believed that the common interests of the superpowers would finally allow them to overcome those differences that were inbuilt in their two peoples and live in peace.³⁶³

Opposed to the “dove” secretary of state, there was the “hawk” national security adviser. Born in Poland and grown up in Canada, Brzezinski had received his Ph.D. in Soviet studies and become professor at Harvard. Since 1961, he headed the Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia University and begun his career in the American establishment. Persuaded of the decreasingly central role of the Soviet Union, Brzezinski’s view of the international setting coincided with that of David Rockefeller,

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.10

³⁵⁹ Kaufman, p.17

³⁶⁰ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping faith* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1982), p.49

³⁶¹ Sneh, p.59

³⁶² Kaufman, p.18

³⁶³ Ibid., p.19

the founder of the Trilateral Commission, of which became the first director.³⁶⁴ Contrarily to Vance, Brzezinski was convinced that the differences between the Soviet Union and the United States were irreconcilable, and that the only way to deal with the communist superpower was from a strength position that would come from an overcoming military buildup and allow the U.S. a favourite position from which to negotiate.³⁶⁵ Curiously enough, despite the different views of Vance and Brzezinski, each one of the two advised Carter to appoint the other in the position he actually assigned to them. But despite this coincidence, their personalities were too at odds, and quite soon the National Security advisor had the final word on the main foreign policy issues, while Vance, often abroad on diplomatic missions, would have a less prominent position in the White House routine than Brzezinski.³⁶⁶

Quite unexpectedly, a central role in Carter's administration was played also by the first lady, Rosalynn, who had participated in all of her husband's political activities and during his presidency she even took part in cabinet meetings and was sent as personal representative of Carter himself in many missions abroad.³⁶⁷ Rosalynn Carter, and not only for her great influence on her husband's decision, played a key role in the top floors of the administration. In fact, she often backed Brzezinski's opinions, firstly because she often shared his strong positions, and secondly because he was a favoured of hers.³⁶⁸

As it emerges from the different treatments received by the two main advisors of the president, the wheel structure was not completely efficient and soon revealed the incongruence that was at the basis of the appointed staff. In fact, Brzezinski tried to concentrate the power in the figure of the president, in order to set a broader distance between Carter and the "ideological foes and bureaucratic adversaries such as the State and Defense Departments."³⁶⁹ Therefore, Carter's attempt to reform the executive

³⁶⁴ Ibid., p.19

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p.20

³⁶⁶ Sneh, p.96

³⁶⁷ Kaufman., p.25

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p.26

³⁶⁹ Sneh, p.100

branch did not succeed because of the internal struggle for power prevailed.³⁷⁰ Moreover, Brzezinski's effort to concentrate the power in the figure of the president, reduced the cooperation among the agencies and put Carter in a managerial position, which well suited to him.³⁷¹

The crisis of détente

Carter's attempt to reshape U.S. foreign policy overlooked the strictly bipolar confrontation and used the human rights argumentation to reinstate the "legitimacy and influence" of the nation and, "at the same time, deepen the détente with the Soviet Union."³⁷² But Carter's commitment to human rights had a negative influence on the U.S.-Soviet relations: in fact, on many occasions the Soviet leaders highlighted that the American president's attitude could have jeopardized détente and the whole negotiation for the SALT II. The change of government in the U.S. was perceived with mistrust by the Soviets, especially after Carter manifested his intention to shift the negotiation of the SALT II agreement from limitation to reduction. Despite the tense atmosphere, the talks to settle the agreement continued, but the reciprocal stiffening of the representatives of the superpowers was the first signal of a crisis of détente.³⁷³

Between March 26 and 28, 1977 Vance met Gromyko, and the Soviet ambassador warned the secretary of State that the pressures about human rights were a serious mistake, and, if continued, they might have jeopardized their relations.³⁷⁴ Three days after, Brezhnev took part in the meeting, and broke it up, since the American proposal was no longer what the superpowers had agreed on in Vladivostock. In fact, taking the distances from the Brezhnev-Ford accord, Carter was trying not to limitate but to reduce the nuclear arsenal.³⁷⁵ After five years of détente this was considered the first setback

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p.96

³⁷¹ Ibid., p.100

³⁷² Romero, p.266

³⁷³ Ibid., p.268

³⁷⁴ Sneh, footnote 5, p.42

³⁷⁵ Ibid., footnote 9, p.45

for the renewed cooperation, and the president was considered responsible for that.³⁷⁶ Finally, on May 21, during the Geneva talks, the superpowers committed to arrange the second SALT agreement, in order to set also the basis for a further agreement. The SALT II would have been effective until 1985: technical meetings would be held in Geneva, the ambassadorial talks in the two capitals and Vance and Gromyko would meet to provide basic directions for the whole process.³⁷⁷ Carter repeatedly prompted Brezhnev to set for a summit, through letters and during meetings between Brzezinski, Vance and Gromyko. But every insistence of the American president was rejected due to Brezhnev's health problem, until on June 18, the Politburo confirmed the intention of holding a post-SALT II meeting.³⁷⁸ In a letter of June 30, Brezhnev himself wrote to Carter, confirming his intentions and suggesting that Carter's insistence about setting up a meeting was disturbing. The SALT II negotiations and the communication between the leaders of Washington and Moscow were never interrupted, but in the international scene the crisis of détente begun to emerge.

In Europe, the Soviets were substituting their arsenal with newer and more effective missiles. The Chancellor Schmidt, alerted the U.S. of the growing Soviet threat for Western Europe, and the debate about the possible intervention of the U.S. even at the cost of threatening détente deepened the naturally different views of the two continents.³⁷⁹ While the European leaders, were becoming more and more disillusioned about Carter's policies, the NATO intervened to solve the "Euromissile crisis".³⁸⁰ Few months after the signature of the SALT II the NATO announced that it would deploy American medium and intermediate- range missiles as part of the renewal of their theater missiles, unless the Soviet would remove their SS-20 from Western Europe. Carter joined the declaration, but his attention was suddenly caught from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.³⁸¹

³⁷⁶ Glad, p.46

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p.56

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p.57

³⁷⁹ Romero, p.269

³⁸⁰ Garthoff, p.817

³⁸¹ Wilentz, p.109

Among Carter's plans for Africa, following his interest in the area, there was the idea to support those countries that had acquired their independence as a consequence of the fall of the Portuguese empire and bring them to the establishment of democracy. Unfortunately, these ambitions were soon challenged by the Soviet intentions to assist their local allies in the Horn of Africa and in Angola, pushed also by the Cuban crusades for communism.³⁸² Consequently, Carter's commitment for human rights was soon challenged by the perception of the resurgence of the communist threat worldwide.

In 1977, Castro's acclamation of the Ethiopian revolution led by Menghistu as a real communist revolution suggested to Brezhnev a new interpretation for the Soviet role in the region. Taking advantage of the clashes between Somalia and Ethiopia, he set the conflict in the bipolar opposition between the pro-Soviet and pro-Americans faced each other for the control of the area. With such a scarce support from the U.S.³⁸³, the Somali forces faced the Cuban and Ethiopian troops, backed by Soviets, and were defeated. The communist victory not only allowed to the Soviets the access to the Red Sea, but it meant especially a victory of the communism over the pro-Western allies.³⁸⁴

By the end of 1978, the Soviet involvement in the Third World conflicts through "proxy" armies looked to the eyes of the American leaders as the signal of the resurgent interest of the Soviet leaders to spread their influence, despite détente.³⁸⁵ In fact, to the Soviet interventions, some local crisis originated in the area between Africa and Southeast Asia fueled the American fears that the Soviets might take advantage of the U.S. weaknesses in the region and turn the situation to their own advantage.³⁸⁶ On December 20, 1978 Brzezinski in an address to the Foreign Policy Association announced:

"An arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation.

³⁸² Garthoff, p.270. For the Angolan war, see ch.3

³⁸³ For Garthoff the U.S. did not even have "a favorite candidate to win the conflict"(Garthoff, p.711)

³⁸⁴ Romero, p.271

³⁸⁵ Garthoff, p.729

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p.728

The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries.”³⁸⁷

The American concern about the arc of crisis and the spread of the Soviet influence through it was conditioned also by the Iranian revolution which had forced the Shah Reza Pahlavi to flee the country in January 1979 and brought the Ayatollah Khomeini back to power. Khomeini and the Iranian Shiites were an anti-communist faction, nevertheless their revolutionary movement represented a threat for the stability of the region because of its subversive characteristic³⁸⁸ and for the power vacuum it created in the Middle East, in which the Soviet influence could have been stretched out.³⁸⁹

To counterbalance the Soviet attempt to spread its power, the U.S. pushed for an improvement of the ties with China, announcing the normalization of the relationship with the PRC at the end of 1978. The Congress even acknowledged to China the most favourite nation status, exonerating it from the Jackson-Vanick amendment, while the Soviets would not be receiving it, not even after the signature of the SALT II.³⁹⁰ A critical point in the amicable relations between the U.S. and the PRC was reached with Deng’s visit to Washington in February 1978, during which the Chinese premier announced the intention to attack Vietnam for the control of Kampuchea. Since nor Carter neither his advisors tried to prevent him from launching the attack, but only dissuaded him, on February 17, the day after the summit, the PRC launched the attack against Vietnam. Carter denied to be privy of the Chinese plans (even if he reversed his version of the events in his memoirs³⁹¹), but supported their help to the communist Kampuchea controlled by Pol Pot.³⁹² As a matter of fact, in early January that year, Brezhnev had described the Vietnamese as a “Soviet proxy”, framing the clash between the PRC and Vietnam in the bipolar scheme. However, the U.S. position demonstrated once again how human rights defense depended on a double standard evaluation for the

³⁸⁷ “Iran: The Crescent Crisis”, *Time*, January 15, 1979

³⁸⁸ Garthoff, p.728

³⁸⁹ Romero, p.274

³⁹⁰ Garthoff, p.816

³⁹¹ Carter, p.206

³⁹² For a summary of the Kampuchean communist regime, see ch.3

Carter administration, since it was open to support a bloody communist regime for the sake of its friendship with China and regardless of the bipolar confrontation consequences that it might have brought.

Under Carter, then, no change was made to the policy that had been pursued under Nixon and Ford (and other presidents before them), in support of those regimes that violated human rights, but allowed a more stable international situation.³⁹³ Also the great influence that Brzezinski had on the president outmanoeuvred Carter's fight for human rights as a means for humiliating their adversaries, drawing the attention on their disrespect, while still pursuing an ambivalent policy about them.³⁹⁴ This was possible also because the State Department had developed an unbalanced definition of human rights, in order to put in a good light the U.S. and its allies- regardless of their abuses- and in a bad light the enemies.³⁹⁵

As a matter of fact, Carter's concern about human rights did not match with his concrete actions: soon after he came in office, his interest in the matter seemed to be vanished, as revealed his Address at Commencement Exercises at the Notre Dame University, on May 22, 1977.³⁹⁶ The speech was titled "Humane Purposes in Foreign Policy", clearly opposing his foreign policy management from the realistic approach of Nixon and Kissinger.³⁹⁷ Comparing the last draft with the speech that Carter actually delivered, Sneh underlines how the final outcome was much softer and conciliatory toward abusive states, especially the Soviet Union, than the draft. In fact, it included also concrete methods to put pressure on the states that did not respect the standards in consideration. The speech was not stunning and concepts were quite blurred, but it also included some peculiar images of Carter's rhetoric, among which the diminished attention to communism, and the international wilsonianism.

³⁹³ Ibid., p.100

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p.99

³⁹⁵ Sneh, p.71

³⁹⁶ Jimmy Carter: "UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME - Address at Commencement Exercises at the University," May 22, 1977. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7552>. (8/2/2013)

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p.73

In his talk, Carter outlined the five “cardinal principles” for his foreign policy: the commitment to human rights, the strengthening of cooperation with the Western countries, the engagement to put an end to strategic arms race with the Soviet Union in the context of an improved relationship, the attempt to bring peace in the Middle East and to reduce the spread of conventional and nuclear weapons.³⁹⁸

This was the occasion when Carter proudly announced that “we are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear.”³⁹⁹ As noticed before, this statement was an accuse to the policies of the former administrations, and an attempt to set himself out of the bipolar mechanism. Considering his previous reflections about the success of democracy in India, Portugal, Spain and Greece, Carter set Communism as the opposite of democracy, but his tone was not in line with the Cold War rhetoric of fear and open battle. He seemed rather relieved, saying “I’m glad that that’s being changed”, as if the war on Communism would have been a incidental matter with a minimum impact on foreign policy. Illustrating how his priorities in setting the U.S. international agenda had changed, Carter presented as granted the fact that the time in which the relationship with the Soviet Union was its central matter was over. In this context, the admission of his belief in détente with the Soviet Union as a mean for peace was not as shocking as it would have been in a context in which the head-on confrontation between the superpowers was the central issue of world politics.

The president tried to shift the attention from the ideologies and the Cold War tensions to “the new global questions of justice, equity, and human rights”.⁴⁰⁰ But this alternative vision of the international arena was not coherent with Carter’s intention of implementing the political choices to make the change true. Associating terms like “developed communist countries”, he revealed how the view of the Soviet bloc as a fragmented unit had entered in the ordinary vision of the communist world and pushed a

³⁹⁸ Jimmy Carter: "UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME - Address at Commencement Exercises at the University," May 22, 1977. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7552>. (8/2/2013)

³⁹⁹ Ibidem

⁴⁰⁰ Ibidem

new approach to the U.S. foreign policy, that differentiated the actors on the other side as quite independent actors, that could operate without the Soviet intervention.

From his intention to “create a wider framework of international cooperation suited to the new and rapidly changing historical circumstances” emerges the wilsonianism of Carter, that pushed for the predominant activity of transnational actors to the American power showoff.

A striking image that Carter introduced with this speech, is that of the city upon a hill, of the outstanding nation set as the example for the world, and is also paraphrased when he asserts that “our rise to world eminence is briefer still”.⁴⁰¹ This image is boosted by the large use Carter makes of the pronoun “we” and the adjective “our”, which becomes very striking by the end of the speech:

“Let me conclude by summarizing: Our policy is based on an historical vision of America’s role. Our policy is derived from a larger view of global change. Our policy is rooted in our moral values, which never change. Our policy is reinforced by our material wealth and by our military power. Our policy is designed to serve mankind. And it is a policy that I hope will make you proud to be Americans.”⁴⁰²

It has also to be noticed how the speaker presented himself as the real architect of that entire policymaking process, that should make so proud the American people, summarizing it as a professor and expressing his concern about the good reaction to it.

The Notre Dame speech revealed Carter’s smoothed intentions about the pursue of human rights, with respect to the position he should have expressed if he would have followed the drafts, that were more in line with Carter’s line during the campaign.⁴⁰³

The softened position of the president was the first signal of his use of human rights as a weapon for handling the relationship with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, while he tried to improve relations with Cuba and Vietnam, despite they were communist-led countries. As a matter of fact, the foreign policy of the Carter administration proved to follow a double standard for evaluating the importance of human rights over the

⁴⁰¹ Ibidem

⁴⁰² Ibidem

⁴⁰³ Sneh, p.97

American military and commercial allies.⁴⁰⁴ Also Brzezinski explained how the predominance of human rights had been in contrast with the “pressing requirement of strategic reality”, prevailing on them only during the first term. For Carter the commitment to human rights was a moral value which stood as the “soul of our foreign policy.”⁴⁰⁵ Carter’s plan was to integrate these values in the U.S. foreign policy and in the international system, therefore he instructed Vance to create a group that would deal precisely with human rights and policymaking. In May 1977, Vance appointed Warren Christopher at the head of a group (that would be named after him) of eighteen experts, with the aim of incorporate human rights in the U.S. foreign policy and to coordinate the efforts of the administration to support this efforts.

Despite these attempts and shows to put human rights as the new center of the U.S. foreign policy, Carter was proving the inefficiency of this concept to substitute the fight on communism as the main domestic concern. It lacked the unifying purpose and it did not help creating a common enemy from which defend the people itself. The replacement did not hold water, and in the breaches the need for a return to confrontation with the Soviet Union emerged again. At the same time, Carter’s inability to reintroduce anti-communism in the U.S. rhetoric was reasonably a signal of the scarce grip this threat had came to have on the U.S. people.

The Wake Forest speech and the resurgence to confrontation

When the first term of his mandate was about to end, Carter realized that his administration had been focused too much on human rights and global issues, while the Soviets had resorted to military buildup. Since 1978, Carter’s attitude in foreign policy tilted toward the positions of Brzezinski, and this change was reflected also in his rhetoric. Besides, the American people perceived again the strengthening of the Soviet threat, especially in Africa, where their proxies were waging wars under the communist flag. At the midterm elections, those Congressmen who had supported most Carter’s

⁴⁰⁴ Glad, p.247

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p.248-49

human right agenda “found themselves under assault”.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore, not only by his choice, but also by the circumstances Carter was forced to turn down his agenda and to take up an hawkish confrontation with the Soviet Union.

In the Address at the Wake Forest University in North Carolina⁴⁰⁷ appeared again the Cold War antagonisms expressed by an anti-Sovietism that sounded much like Brzezinski’s mind. It should come as no surprise, than, that after some circumstantial comments and personal anecdotes Carter focused the attention of his audience on national security. Once announced an increase of the military budget, he promised that “we will not allow any other nation to gain military superiority over us”. Reiterating the American pledge as international defender, the president recounted the commitments of the American forces worldwide to “maintain peace”. The oxymoron of protecting peace with the arms was typical of the Cold War rhetoric of deterrence and military buildup, that was not really directed to the absence of war, rather to “prevent threats and domination by others”.

The changed priorities of the administration partially clashed with Carter’s belief that cooperation with the Soviet Union was still possible. This double attitude was not only explicit in his intention to continue the SALT II negotiation, but it was also reflected in the alternance of tender and tough rhetoric in the Wake Forest speech.⁴⁰⁸ In fact, even if Carter’s language was more aligned with that of Brzezinski, the persistence of former characteristics and tones made not clear wheter the anti-Soviet attitude Carter had undertaken would be temporary or not.⁴⁰⁹

Similarly to the Wake Forest speech, also Carter’s talk at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis was an example of fusion between cooperation and confrontation rhetoric.⁴¹⁰ In fact, after arguing that the relaxed relations between the superpowers were “central to world peace”, he underlined the necessity to find a common understanding about the

⁴⁰⁶ Kaufman, p.117

⁴⁰⁷ Jimmy Carter: "Winston-Salem, North Carolina Address at Wake Forest University. ," March 17, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30516>. (8/2/2013)

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p.145-46

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p.118

⁴¹⁰ Jimmy Carter: "United States Naval Academy Address at the Commencement Exercises. ," June 7, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30915>. (8/2/2013)

meaning of détente and a reciprocal commitment to pursue it. Besides, he outlined the main American principles for the international setting, in a way that clearly opposed them to the Soviet assumptions and behavior:

“Our principal goal is to help shape a world which is more responsive to the desire of people everywhere for economic well-being, social justice, political self-determination, and basic human rights.”⁴¹¹

Furthermore, Carter depicted the Soviet understanding of détente and accused the Soviet leaders of having corrupted their system, to the point that “even Marxist-Leninist groups no longer look on the Soviet Union as a model to be imitated.” The president sketched the blocs of the superpowers as if they were completely opposite one to the other, like day and night, black and white, but he also explicitly admitted to be thinking about the next SALT agreement. Then, after a series of “I” and “we” at the beginning of the sentences in which he outlined the American intentions, he shot the definitive sentence about their future relation: “The Soviet Union can choose either confrontation or cooperation. The United States is adequately prepared to meet either choice.” Garthoff reports that this sentence was quite different in the drafts, in which it seemed more the expression of Carter’s opinion and not of a plain choice: “I am convinced that the leaders of the Soviet Union want peace. I cannot believe that they could possibly want war”.⁴¹²

The speech was perceived by the American people with astonishment and perplexity, and Vance reported that it was the result of a splitted mixture of Carter’s and Brzezinski’s opinion about the matter. whatever the inspiration, the statement pronounced by the president, putting the Soviet Union in front of a choice between cooperation and confrontation represented already a choice of discharging the United States from détente, and put them in a dominant position with respect to the conflict.⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Ibidem

⁴¹² Garthoff, p.666

⁴¹³ Ibid., p.667

SALT II and the State of the Union speech

Despite the cutting remarks about human rights, the military confrontation through proxies, and the normalization of the Sino-American relationship, the negotiations for the SALT continued. After twenty-five meetings between Vance and Gromyko since the beginning of the year, on May 9, the secretary of State announced that an agreement on SALT II had been reached. Carter, Vance and the secretary of defense Brown made many speeches in the days around the announcement, to push the public opinion in support of it, stressing its importance for the American national security, but the opposition to the agreement was too strong, especially on the Republican side.⁴¹⁴ What in Carter's hope was to be the turning point toward the reawakening of détente, proved to be its "swan song".⁴¹⁵



Carter and Brezhnev sign the SALT II treaty.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Garthoff, p.798-799

⁴¹⁵ Romero, p.275

⁴¹⁶ Source: http://quotationsbook.com/assets/shared/img/1354/Carter_Brezhnev_sign_SALT_II.jpg

The summit should have taken place in the U.S., since the last meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev had been in Moscow (while that between Ford and the Soviet prime minister in Vladivostock was on neutral ground), but it was moved to Vienna to facilitate the Soviet leader, due to his health conditions.⁴¹⁷ During the meeting the strong position of Carter stiffened the attitude of his counterpart- which was ordinary for the relations between the superpowers since when Carter came in office-, especially admonishing the Soviet proxy wars and the military buildup in Cuba through the shipment of Soviet fighter-bombers the year before. The summit was successful, since the SALT II treaty was signed, but there was no real dialogue between the parts.⁴¹⁸ In the communiqué of the 1979 summit, unlike in those held between 1972 and 1974, no reference was made to the “principle of peaceful coexistence”, but it was underlined its relevance in the process of strengthening détente.⁴¹⁹ However, both leaders remarked that their countries had two choices, and each would have not given up pursuing their policies of- in Carter’s words- “cooperation when possible, competition when necessary”.⁴²⁰ Carter and Brezhnev demonstrated to be quite firm in their positions, and when the Soviet leader recalled the positive moments of cooperation between the superpowers, he mentioned only achievements of the Nixon-Ford period (the solution of the Middle East crisis of 1973 and the preparatory talks for the CSCE). Since Carter raised the issue of human rights, in the communiqué was included the engagement of each country not to intervene in the domestic affairs of the other.⁴²¹ Finally, it is relevant to notice that once again Brezhnev alerted Carter not to cross the limits that the Sino-American relation had reached, showing the key role that China had come to occupy in the triangular diplomacy.⁴²²

Carter could then ascribe among his achievements the signature of the SALT II treaty, but once at home, he did not have enough influence to have it endorsed. The Senate Armed Services Committee in a report that was issued at the beginning of December

⁴¹⁷ Garthoff, p.800-02

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p.804

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p.808

⁴²⁰ Carter, p.261

⁴²¹ Garthoff, p.808

⁴²² Ibid., p.809

that year, advised against the ratification of the SALT II, since it was against the national security interests.⁴²³ Any attempt to amend the agreement was preemptively rejected by Gromyko, and the ratification left it lingering. The relations with the Soviet Union dwelled in the midst: until the definitive crash that came with the invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas day of 1979, the behavior of the superpowers did not shift from that they hold before the signature of the SALT II.

U.S. international policy after the SALT II

Carter's intentions of relaunching détente were vanished by the opposition to his foreign policy. Domestically, Carter was heavily blamed for having turned his back to the longtime American ally in Nicaragua, president Anastasio Somoza, who had been lifted by the marxist Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), and for the end of the special relation with Taiwan as a consequence of the normalization of the relations with the PRC.⁴²⁴

The FSLN due its name to the anti-American rebel who opposed the Nicaraguan occupation by the United States at the beginning of the century. After three years of regime, Somoza was overthrown and despite the American attempts to negotiate between the former leader and the moderate forces inside the country, the Sandinistas, thanks to the Cuban support, came into power in July 1979⁴²⁵. Brezhnev praised the Nicaraguan experience as a real example of communism⁴²⁶, while Carter had left the negotiations in February because Somoza blocked up any attempt of peace.⁴²⁷ Since he overlooked the former friendship with the Nicaraguan dictator, Carter quitted the negotiations and left Sandino alone.⁴²⁸

⁴²³ Ibid., p.814

⁴²⁴ Garthoff, p.812

⁴²⁵ Thornton, p.364-65

⁴²⁶ Romero, p.275

⁴²⁷ Thornton, p.365

⁴²⁸ Garthoff, p.814

In the meantime, the U.S. intelligence discovered a Soviet ground force brigade in Cuba, that had been displaced there since 1962. The finding did not represent any violation to the international law, nor to the agreements that stood between the U.S. and the USSR, but the American public opinion was quite shaken by the fact that the presence of the troop had remained unnoticed for so long.⁴²⁹

On its side, the American administration had planned to increase the military expenditure for 1980, actually dismissing the détente policy. As a matter of fact, the same Nixon and Kissinger had eagerly advised Carter to hold a stronger position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union.⁴³⁰

The hostage crisis worsened the superpowers relations and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan definitively brought them back to confrontation. On November 4, 1979 a self-declared group of 3000 students took the U.S. embassy in Teheran and captivated the staff, demanding the hand over of the shah that had been admitted temporarily in the U.S. to receive some specialized treatments for his health conditions. The kidnapers wanted to judge the shah, to obtain the wealth he was supposed to have hidden in the U.S. and to receive a formal apology from Carter. In this situation, Khomeini claimed to be helpless. In the meantime, the U.S. was accused to be involved in the brief occupation of the mosque in Mecca by a group of extremists, on November 20, and consequently took place some anti-American manifestations. The American embassies in Islamabad and Tripoli were set to fire and anti-American riots took place in Turkey and Bangladesh, and there are some suspects of a Soviet involvement in this.⁴³¹ That was the beginning of the “hostage crisis”, a nightmare that lasted 444 days for the American people, and ended on January 20, 1981, few hours before the inauguration of Ronald Reagan.⁴³²

On December 25, 1979 the Soviet Union troops invaded Afghanistan to help their political allies in the revolt against the communist regime. Since June of that year, the Carter administration had planned to back the organization of operations led by locals

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p.816

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p.818

⁴³¹ see Ibid., p.104, p.819

⁴³² Wilentz, p.126

against the Marxist leadership, possibly to create a homologue Vietnam war for the Soviets.⁴³³ The news of the invasion divided the U.S. people between those who believed that getting Afghanistan was the purpose of the Soviets and those who were certain that this was just another demonstration of the renewed expansionist attitude of the communist leaders.⁴³⁴ Carter suddenly withdrew the SALT II from ratification, prompted the stop of grain selling to the Soviet Union, and the boycott of the Olympic Games of Moscow 1980. In January 1980, the president proclaimed his doctrine, promising the American military intervention in the Persian Gulf region in response to any foreign attack that might have been considered as a menace for the U.S. interests in the area.

Despite the “hawkish” attitude that Carter assumed as a consequence of this action, he would still be considered uncertain and zigzagging, both from the international leaders and the domestic public. Carter’s vagueness and ambivalence in the relationship with the Soviet Union and his dedication to détente were decisive in the 1980s elections, that saught the victory of the neoconservative Ronald Reagan over the former president.⁴³⁵

The modern populist, the fireside chats and townhall meetings

In his attempt to bring the presidency in everyday life, Carter reintroduced the fireside chats on TV and the townhall meetings across the country.⁴³⁶ The townhall meetings were political rallies attended by nearly 1,500 people in off-the-track areas; the intention behind these meeting was to represent the American people gathering with the president as one of them, but actually were seen more as a mass counterposed to “the president” himself. Carter brought some innovations to these formats (one for all the spontaneous questions from the audience) but often his changes brought up some difficulties about their handling, especially for what concerned the role they had in the administration. In

⁴³³ Ibid.,109

⁴³⁴ Garthoff, p.1085

⁴³⁵ Garthoff, p.1120

⁴³⁶ WIlentz, p.78

fact, despite the scarce impact on the president's popularity, Carter decided to keep holding them, in order to give the people a "sense of participation in the government".⁴³⁷ It was not clear, though, how to consider these public appearances, especially for the press: sometimes covered as traditional news, others as campaign events, press conferences or speeches, the media as well as the American people, perceived these events with uncertainty. The ambivalence of these events, in which Carter moved back and forth, telling personal anecdotes in a familiar tone, or reporting political occurrences using professional rhetoric, often gave the idea that he was speaking "over the heads of his immediate audience to communicate with wider constituencies", rather than to be there to meet everyday people. The townhall meetings strengthened Carter's populist image and attitude: he used to present himself as a model to emulate, the moral leader of "the strongest nation on Earth"-as he used to refrain at the end of the meetings. In his answers, as well as in his speeches, there is a predominant use of the pronoun "I" and of the compound "I as President", which set Carter at the center of the stage as the main actor and policymaker.⁴³⁸

Communism, socialism

The first time that Carter used the word *communism* during an official or public occasion as president, was in the Notre Dame commencement speech, acclaiming that the the American people was free from the excessive fear of communism that had spread among the population during the previous decades. This new acclaim came unexpected, but it was not accompanied by the dramatic change it heralded. In fact, the confrontation between the superpowers had not ceased out of a sudden, but it was revealed by the proxy wars in Africa. One year after the Notre Dame speech. in fact, during a news conference, Carter was asked whether the "inordinate fear of communism" had emerged again for that continent and if there was a real interest in it, besides the conflicts, and the president expressed his belief in the role of international

⁴³⁷ Ryfe, p.156

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p.159

and regional organization as powers to contain the spread of Communism. Again here, the concept of *communism* is connected with the system it requires, and Carter stressed the necessity of giving the African peoples the chance to get to know both types of system- the capitalist and the communist-, but defined the U.S. and the Soviet Union respectively as the “democratic friend” and the “totalitarian friend”.

Already at that point emerged Carter’s typical counterposition of Communism and human rights or democracy. As a matter of fact, during the first term of his presidency, Carter spoke about Communism to give account of his human rights concerns: during a Question-and-Answer session with reporters in January 1978⁴³⁹, Carter was asked whether in Iran any progress was made about this matter as a consequence of the importance they had been given during Carter’s first year as president. From the president’s declaration emerged very clearly two patterns of his presidency: the double standard applied in pursuing human rights improvements worldwide and the opposition of communism to human rights *tout court*. Carter justified the lack of changes toward the improvement of basic life conditions, comparing the “law that (...) outlaws the Communist party and that outlaws communism” to those focused to grant the acknowledging essential freedoms. On the other side, the alliance between the U.S. and Iran, and the centrality of that nation in the Middle East as the main pro-American state in the region prevented Carter from taking any strong position against it. Carter’s attitude to mask the real essence of the domestic policies of the U.S. allies was shown also few months later, when he stressed the value of the new friendship with the Tanzanian leader Nyerere.⁴⁴⁰ Being asked whether that leader was socialist, Carter skipped the ideological matter, asserting that he cared only Nyerere’s nationalist feeling and his relationship with the U.S..

⁴³⁹ Jimmy Carter: "The President's Overseas Trip Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters on Board Air Force One en Route to the United States. ," January 6, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30424> (8/2/2013)

⁴⁴⁰ Jimmy Carter: "Interview With the President Remarks in an Interview lot "Black Perspective on the News.," April 5, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30620>. (8/2/2013)

In his Address to the Nation on the Panama Canal Treaties⁴⁴¹, Carter spontaneously used the word *communism*, in the attempt to unify the domestic support for the accord signed few hours before and that would assign the Panamenians the control over the Canal since 1999. Despite the intentions, Carter's effort was not so impressive, since his rethoric was too mild, for he only underlined that

“[I]n the peaceful struggle against alien ideologies like communism, these treaties are a step in the right direction. Noting could strengthen our competitors and adversaries in this hemisphere more than for us to reject this agreement.”⁴⁴²

The lack of determination and of the explicit intention to fight the enemy, Carter's statement losed its effectiveness and missed the mark. Besides, the president referred to “alien ideologies”, “competitors and adversaries” as a plurality, adding vagueness to his message, which was consequently weakened.

Interestingly enough, *communism* was used only twice by the president during 1979, the year of the signature of the SALT II, the definitive opening to China, the Iranian revolution, etc., while the frequency of its use increased dramatically the next year, after the Soviet invasion of Aftghanistan and the general elections came closer.

If during the first term of the Carter presidency, he used *communism* mostly in opposition with human rights, this ment that it represented more a series of values, than a steady structure. Carter's intention to make a deal with the Soviet Union impelled him to think of it as a changeable system. Therefore, the president would refer to *communism* as a movement that might “spread”⁴⁴³ or “creep in”⁴⁴⁴, rather than to

⁴⁴¹ Jimmy Carter: "Address to the Nation on the Panama Canal Treaties," February 1, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29995>. (8/2/2013)

⁴⁴² Ibidem

⁴⁴³ Jimmy Carter: "Asheville, North Carolina Remarks on Arrival at the Asheville Municipal Airport. ," September 22, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29840> (8/2/2013)

⁴⁴⁴ Jimmy Carter: "Columbus, Ohio Remarks at a State Democratic Party Reception. ," September 23, 1978. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29849> (8/2/2013)

“totalitarian” and tyrannic system, as he would do during his second term.⁴⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, it is interesting to notice that the uncertainty and the hesitation of the Carter administration’s approach with respect to the Soviet-Americans relations was reflected also in the fact that during 1979(the year of the signature of the SALT II, the opening to China became effective, the Iranian revolution took place, etc.) the word *communism* was used only twice, while its frequency increased dramatically the next year, after the Soviet invasion of Aftghanistan and the general elections came closer. After the Christmas attack, in Carter’s language, *communism* was used particularly in compounds that indicated the statically of the communist system:

“(…) had the Soviets been successful in selling to one of its neighbors, in Afghanistan, the attractiveness of a totalitarian government under communism, similar to that existing in Moscow”.⁴⁴⁶

This quotation reveals from one side a marked ceasure with and a tough judgment of the Soviet bloc, and on the other the asserted perception of its fragmented condition. In fact, the reference to other totalitarian regimes that might be inspired by that of Moscow, implies the assumption that the communist monolith was definitely split. Besides, the reference to Communism as a given condition (“living under communism”⁴⁴⁷, “get

⁴⁴⁵ Jimmy Carter: "Nimitz Battle Group in the Indian Ocean Remarks on Board the U.S.S. Nimitz on the Battle Group's Return to the United States. ," May 26, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44679>. (8/2/2013)

⁴⁴⁶ Jimmy Carter: "American Society of Newspaper Editors Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Society's Annual Convention. ," April 10, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33248>. (8/2/2013)

⁴⁴⁷ Jimmy Carter: "Interview With the President Question-and-Answer Session With Foreign Correspondents. ," April 12, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33269>. (8/2/2013)

away from communism”,⁴⁴⁸ etc.), and as a jaling system was a pattern of many other Carter’s speeches.⁴⁴⁹

Finally, the loss of effectiveness that the term *communism* had acquired during the Carter administration was revealed by the use that the president made of it since October 15, 1980, during the Remark to Senior Citizens in Boston, Massachussets.⁴⁵⁰ On that occasion, Carter said as follows:

“Social security is the cornerstone of a decent life for older Americans. When Franklin Roosevelt proposed social security, the Republican opposition said this is the same as communism or socialism. Social security has been one of the greatest things that ever happened to our country.”

The context in which Carter put this word revealed the high impact, though empty significance that this word had. From one side it was ment as reason of great concern, on the other it had been emptied and used as a synonym of socialism and coupled with it, to fill their respective meanings. In all of the remaining 15 speeches in which the word *communism* was included, Carter used it with this same meaning. The main objective was to lessen the Republican accusations of populism, charging the social policies of the Democratic party as populist and demagogic. For example, facing the accusations of Reagan, the Republican candidate for the 1980 elections, Carter would say: “ The Republicans said the minimum wage was socialism, communism.”⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁸ Jimmy Carter: "Asian/Pacific American Democratic Caucus Remarks at the First Annual Dinner. ," May 22, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44590>. (8/2/2013)

⁴⁴⁹ To quote some, see: Jimmy Carter: "United States Foreign Assistance Remarks at a White House Briefing for Members of Congress. ," May 19, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33431>. (8/2/2013)

Jimmy Carter: "Asian/Pacific American Democratic Caucus Remarks at the First Annual Dinner. ," May 22, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44590> (8/2/2013)

Jimmy Carter: "Interview With the President Responses to Written Questions Submitted by Wilton Fonseca of the Portuguese News Agency, ANOP. ," June 25, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44661> (8/2/2013)

⁴⁵⁰ Jimmy Carter: "Boston, Massachusetts Remarks to Senior Citizens. ," October 15, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45298> (8/2/2013)

⁴⁵¹ Jimmy Carter: "Texarkana, U.S.A. Remarks at a Rally With Local Residents. ," October 22, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45359>. (8/2/2013)

The only occasion in which he used this formula was on October 31, 1980 in Columbia, during a townhall rally, when a young women asked Carter to take a stronger position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, to avoid to enter a new Vietnam. In that occasion, the president answered her that the power show off of the Soviets in Afghanistan “was not a triumph for communism, it was an indication of the failure of communism”.⁴⁵²

Once again, Carter showed that despite the facade exhibition of the American power, Carter was not able to take a firm position with respect to the Soviet Union. Carter asserted that the need of controlling people and closing the fences or the borders were demonstrations of the weaknesses of the communist model and of its lack of influence.

In Carter’s rhetoric, Communism was no more the arch-enemy of democracy, human rights and Western ideals. After the communist bloc was fragmented *communism* could no longer be associated directly and solely to the Soviet Union, but it became a emptier shape to be filled with images of bad example not to follow. In the president’s words, communism was harmless and valueless. In fact, there is no opponent principle to Communism, and no war to be declared for democracy, or freedom or even for human rights. With the Carter presidency the moral foundation of the U.S. foreign policy reached its lowest point, a gap which Ronald Reagan was called to (and abundantly) fill.

⁴⁵² Jimmy Carter: "Columbia, South Carolina Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting ," October 31, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45409>. (8/2/2013)

Conclusions

In no other time in history of the U.S. as in the aftermath of World War II, presidential communication assumed a central role in the office. The presidents of the second half of the twentieth century had to deal with communication and media, and make use of rhetoric like no one else had done before.⁴⁵³ Their communication skills have strongly influenced the policymaking process and the centrality that they achieved gave them the power to shape the perception of the U.S. policies at home and abroad.

Since the first years of the second postwar period, the U.S. head of state became an extremely powerful and public role. In fact, as a consequence of the rearrangement of the state structure- which increased in size and complexity-, and of the setting of new laws many things had changed in the American administration. Apart from his previous charges, the president was responsible for domestic and foreign policymaking, defense strategies, and for proposing the yearly budgets.⁴⁵⁴ Consequently, people's expectations about their leader's responsibilities increased, and the presidents had to get accustomed to it. Besides, with the diffusion of the television and other medias, presidential communication had to expand its skills and to adapt to the technological changes, for example airing the debates of the presidential campaigns on television. Therefore, the importance of the message was shifted from the voice- which dominated communication when the presidential messages were broadcasted by the radio-, to the body language and the personality. Despite the importance that is given nowadays to the presidential image and to any aspect of the head of state's public appearances (from little details to weird postures), these customs were not so developed during the period under analysis.

Since the moment in which Truman gave the order to drop the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world perceived how crucial the decisions of the U.S. president were for the whole world. The implementation of the national security state and the subsequent centralization of the power under the president, who assumed the power of declaring war without prior consultation of the Congress thanks to the Joint

⁴⁵³ Rodgers, p.15

⁴⁵⁴ Ryfe, p.96

Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145 of August 7, 1964- also known as Tonkin resolution, gave him actually an imperial power.⁴⁵⁵

If the decades of the 1940s and 1950s had represented a period of wealth and consolidation, the uncertainties of the 1960s and 1970s were embodied in the attitude toward disaggregation.⁴⁵⁶ The social and international changes were reflected also in the rhetoric and in the language: many of the words and metaphors that had been used to represent and describe the world during the previous decades were abandoned and progressively emptied of their meaning. The emergence of the bipolar conflict and the resurgence to conflicts in many parts of the world were due and functional to the new world order that had been established after the Second World War. The presidential rhetoric proved to be successful in persuading the American people of the importance of defending the world from the communist threat, increasing the climate of terror, and putting on stage a real “drama of global struggle”.⁴⁵⁷

The trajectory of the conflict, that had started as an ideological battle, witnessed a sudden drop during the 1970s, which corresponded to the de-ideologization of the conflict that took place during that time. The signals of this process were detectable both on the quantitative and qualitative levels, as in the case of *communism*. As already indicated, the number of times which the presidents Nixon and Carter used this word was significantly less than their predecessors, and the context in which they were pronounced became less official. This trend revealed a diminished significance of these words in the presidential communication, since the social and cultural context had become insensitive toward these words. The attempt to shift the focus on other issues, like in the case of human rights, was a signal that the meaning of communism was being lost, and its use combined with *socialism* suggests a further step of this process. In fact, not only the connotation of the word had lost part of its filling, but it had also merged with another word that in the previous decades had its own meaning, and philosophical understanding.

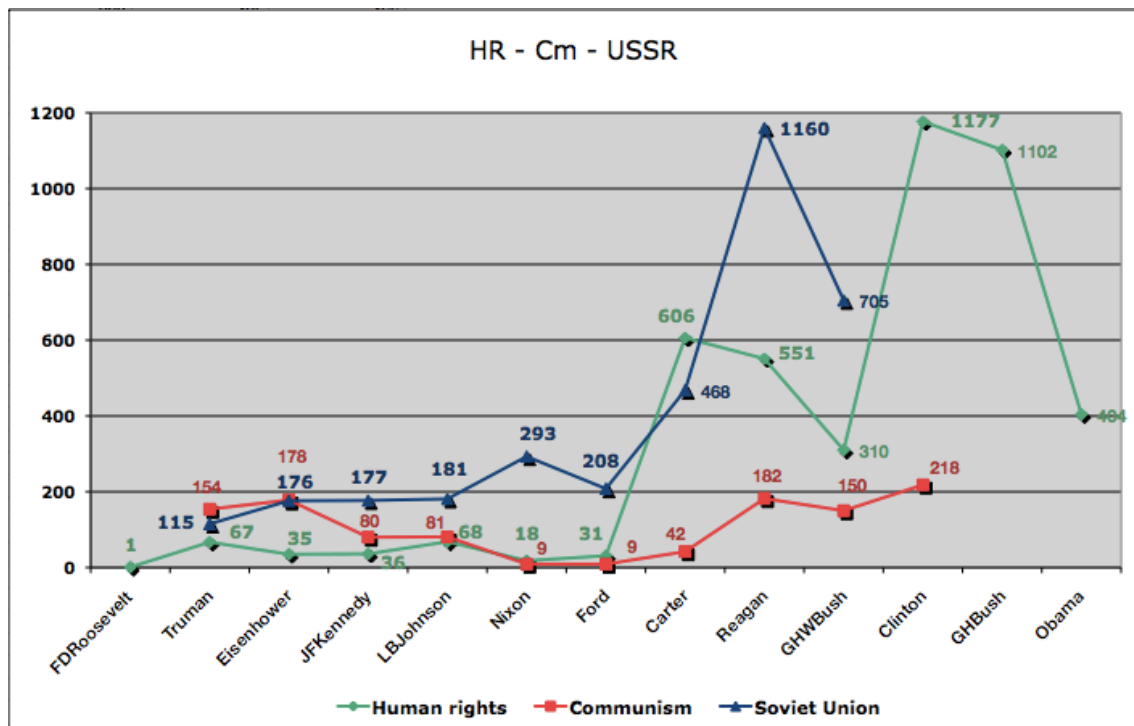
⁴⁵⁵ Joint Resolution of Congress H.J. RES 1145 August 7, 1964, Department of State Bulletin, August 24, 1964 source: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/tonkin-g.asp (8/2/2013)

⁴⁵⁶ Rodgers, p.5

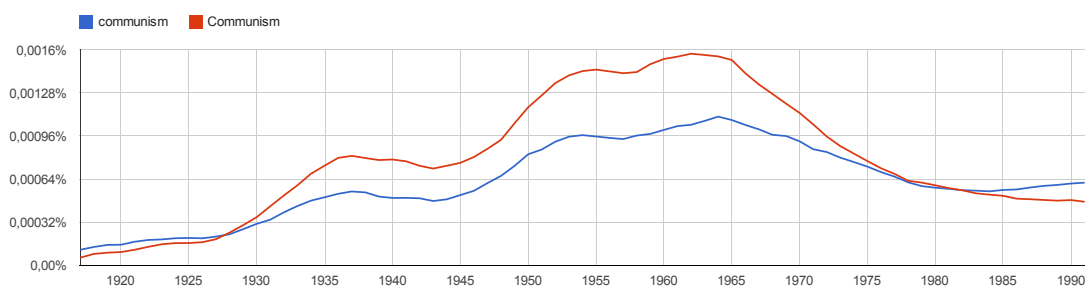
⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p.16

Besides, it should be noticed that the permanence of the word *communism* in the U.S. presidential rhetoric indicates the impossibility to identify an appropriate alternative with the same effect, and, at the same time represents the endurance of the efficacy of the word.

As the graphs below illustrate, the presidential communication after the 1970s recovered the use of the term *communism*, but in the corpus of the American literature, the use of the capitalized word drops since the beginning of the decade, while the non-capitalized form is more used than the capitalized, since that moment. This is not only the signal that the perception of the fragmentation and ideological crisis that the Soviet bloc was facing was transposed in the writings, but also that the original meaning of the word had gone partially lost.



Source: Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>



Source: Ngram Viewer by Google

As Rodgers displays, the fracture of the 1970s, caused a change in the rhetoric and use of words of the Cold War, which would lose part of their meaning, and in some case would retrieve it during the 1980s. The restoration of the words of the Cold War during the 1980s would affect also cultural images and in some cases symbols would assume a meaning or would be used to deliver completely different ideas, pursue contrasting policies and spread different beliefs.

The track that the word *communism* followed during the Cold War was emblematic for its central role in the onset stage of the confrontation period, and became less influential during the détente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It would be advisable to follow a further research, investigating the role of this and other words during the 1970s and 1980s, to detect the causes and possible explanations for these changes, and the potential scenarios in the present and future presidential rhetoric.

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