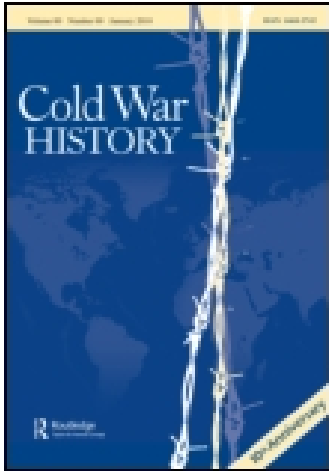


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### An outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, his advisors, and the making of American foreign policy

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**An outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, his advisors, and the making of American foreign policy**, by Betty Glad, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2009, xiii + 398 pp.

Betty Glad's *An Outsider in the White House* is the best account we have of Carter's foreign policy. Glad's portrayal confirms earlier interpretations of Carter as lacking a clear strategic vision for the United States. For example, she shows that Carter was conflicted about how aggressive to be with the Soviet Union and that this internal debate produced an indecisive approach, further complicating Soviet–American relations. Glad's book is comprehensive, and she highlights Carter's unique skills as well as his many flaws. In her view, the negotiations that produced the Camp David Accords were successful, as opposed to many of Carter's other diplomatic initiatives, because at Camp David the President was able to utilise his strengths, including attention to detail, risk-taking, and resolve. Glad also highlights the influence of circumstances beyond Carter's control, such as the extent to which he was hobbled by gaps in United States intelligence, in particular regarding Iran and the 'new' Soviet brigade in Cuba.

According to Glad, Carter's 'outsider status', which proved useful during the campaign with an electorate tired of Watergate and other Beltway scandals, complicated Carter's efforts at governing. In part, this is because Carter's limited international experience made him overly reliant on his staff. This is why, as her title suggests, Glad explains Carter's foreign policy by examining his advisors and in particular, his National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Her close attention to Carter's advisors at times renders the President invisible. In part, this is because Glad is employing an institutional approach to the presidency, but it is also due to the unique role Glad sees Brzezinski playing in shaping the administration's foreign policy. In Glad's analysis, Brzezinski framed policy questions effectively, built support for initiatives, and maintained a strong, personal relationship with the President, all of which facilitated his stewardship of foreign affairs. Glad also sees Brzezinski's ability to articulate a broader vision for American foreign policy as well as the boldness of his ideas as appealing to Carter. It is clear that Glad sees drawbacks to Brzezinski's outsized role in the administration. As Brzezinski gained more authority, he came close to conducting foreign policy on his own, particularly in Sino–American relations. Additionally, Glad highlights what she terms Brzezinski's 'bureaucratic imperialism'; the National Security Adviser executed foreign policy outside State Department channels and took other steps to minimise Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's influence. In her assessment, Carter's overreliance on Brzezinski undermined his early goals of limiting the proliferation of arms and championing human rights internationally.

Glad's focus on Brzezinski raises the question of how much her interpretation was a product of her sources. Her book relies upon considerable research at the Jimmy Carter Library where the administration's National Security Council records are housed and to which Brzezinski has donated personal papers. When State Department

records become more available, we will have a clearer picture of the dominance of Brzezinski in the Carter years. Until then, we can rely on Glad's fine book.

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**Yalta 1945: Europe and America at the crossroads**, by Fraser J. Harbutt, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, xxx+438 pp.

'Yalta revisionism' is a welcome perspective as many Yalta stereotypes still feature frequently in both scholarly and public discourses. Harbutt's main thesis is that there was no international order created at Yalta in February 1945, no 'division of the world'. Instead there had been an 'order of Moscow', established between Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin at the Moscow conference of October 1944 – the notorious informal 'percentage deal', which lasted for nearly 50 years and signified the creation of spheres of influence: in short, the Soviet Union got Eastern Europe, while Great Britain's influence could be exercised in Western Europe and the Mediterranean. This happened because, despite close military co-operation, the United States and Great Britain held fundamentally different views of the new European order. Franklin D. Roosevelt was focussed on universalism and the building of the United Nations. Harbutt constructs a relative unity between European power politics on the one hand and the United States on the other. Anglo-American political unity in particular had been much overstated during World War II. For domestic purposes, Yalta was sold in the US as a major success, an assessment which Churchill did not share because he countered this assessment with first hints at Soviet totalitarianism. It took one more year until Harry Truman changed his previously uncertain line to a more demanding position in the spring of 1946: Churchill's Iron Curtain speech changed at least US public opinion, and the Iranian question brought public debates between East and West to a new climax which marked the more intensive phase of the Cold War.

Harbutt's study is a completely re-written new version of his *The Iron Curtain* (1986). It is based on a wide range of archival sources, and Harbutt closely guides the reader through the quickly changing perceptions and expectations of the various actors. This leads to a remarkable intellectual experience when he argues against an international history that only looks at long-term lines, the *longue durée*, as the French would say. Instead he claims to reconstruct the short term horizons of actors with their openness to the future. His main thrust against a predating of US engagement in Europe and the 'separation of Europe' is valid. But there are some caveats nonetheless. Did Churchill really believe that he could organise a new European order because Roosevelt would not care about this at all in the future? There was a lot of planning for