

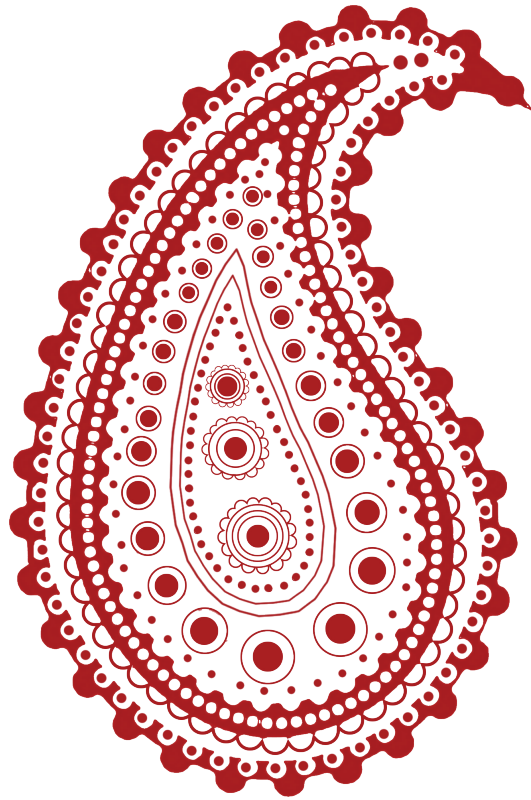
# DĀNESH

THE OU UNDERGRADUATE  
JOURNAL OF  
IRANIAN STUDIES



*The* UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA®  
*College of International Studies*  
Department of International and Area Studies

Volume 1 (2016)



# Iranian Studies Program

*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA®  
College of International Studies*

***DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies***

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Volume 1 (2016)

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## From the Faculty Advisor

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this inaugural issue of *DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies*. The initiative for this journal grew from the hard work and dedication of undergraduate students in the University of Oklahoma's Iranian Studies Program. In particular, I would like to acknowledge **Andrew Akhlaghi** (MA 2016) and **Elena Gharipour** (BA 2016) for their tireless effort in leading this project from its inception, in the spring of 2015, to the publication of this inaugural issue.

Since the founding of the OU Iranian Studies Program in 2011, our goal has been to promote knowledge regarding all aspects of the history, culture, society, and politics of Iran and the Persianate world. As the program has grown over the past five years, the work of OU undergraduate students in the field of Iranian Studies has become truly outstanding. The publication of *DĀNESH*, a peer-reviewed journal published under the auspices of the OU Iranian Studies Program and the OU College of International Studies, is dedicated to highlighting the research of a growing undergraduate program in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. As we continue to mature, we are confident that the vitality of the program will be reflected in the pages of this journal.

The name of the journal, *DĀNESH*, comes from the Persian word meaning *knowledge*, *learning*, and *wisdom*. We believe this is a fitting name for a journal that seeks to foster deep and compassionate understanding of one of the world's most culturally rich and historically complex civilizations. It is with this goal in mind that we inaugurate the publication of *DĀNESH*.

Afshin Marashi  
Farzaneh Family Chair in Iranian Studies  
Director, OU Iranian Studies Program

## **From the Editors-in-Chief**

We are extremely proud to have been a part of this project. We are proud of both the quality of research in the journal and to have been part of such a wonderful process. Each of these papers addresses an important aspect of U.S.-Iranian relations. We hope that these papers will provide much needed context and perspective to the ongoing debates on U.S.-Iranian relations.

We are also privileged to have had such a positive experience editing the journal. Our associate editors worked extremely hard on each of these papers and they were a joy to work with throughout the process. Ultimately, any journal is only as strong as the writers and in this regard we were very fortunate. All of the writers came into this process with the utmost professionalism. We are also indebted to the University of Oklahoma Libraries for helping us archive and host the journal through the SHAREOK system.

The quality and overall process of making the journal are a reflection of the kind of academic environment in the Iranian Studies program and the University of Oklahoma. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the crucial role of Dr. Afshin Marashi. Without his guidance and dedication to the Iranian Studies program, none of this would have been possible.

Andrew Akhlaghi  
Elena T. Gharipour  
Editors-In-Chief

## **Operation Eagle Claw: The Ramifications of Political Divisions in U.S. Decision-Making during the Iranian Hostage Crisis of 1979-1981**

Mary Bowman

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The taking of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in the fall of 1979 began a long, complicated 444 days of negotiations and frustrations in insuring the return home of the hostages. In early April 1980, President Jimmy Carter came to the decision that diplomatic negotiations were coming to a dead end, and the time had come to act. With this decision, Carter was faced with divisions among some of his key advisors, especially between his hawkish National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and his dovish Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. However, the President made the final call to conduct a rescue mission to free the hostages. Unfortunately, the rescue mission, by the code name Operation Eagle Claw, came to a disastrous end in the Iranian desert. The decision to conduct Operation Eagle Claw led to the resignation of Cyrus Vance, Carter's loss of the re-election, and the United States' international credibility being destroyed.

On April 24-25, 1980, a rescue mission to free the hostages in the Tehran embassy in Iran by the code name Operation Eagle Claw went under way. Unfortunately, the operation would never reach the embassy hostages. The operation was very complex in nature, and a very improbable mission due to the fact that the group was trying to free over fifty hostages within a heavily guarded facility in the middle of a hostile city in a country halfway around the world. The very possibility of a successful mission seemed impossible. In fact, one of the students within the embassy who was informed of the failed attempt reply was 'Impossible!'<sup>1</sup> The students had long believed that a rescue attempt was unmanageable and had reduced their guard of the embassy. A rescue mission was not the first idea in freeing the hostages. Therefore, the operation was designed to limit commitment and consequences.

Operation Eagle Claw was designed in such a way that at each step, the mission could be shut down with limited consequences. The plan included a combination of Delta Force, Army Rangers, Air Force Pilots, and Navy helicopters. The plan was to fly Delta Force into Iran at a site called Desert One. There, they would meet six helicopters, which would then take them to

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Christopher, *American Hostages in Iran: the Conduct of a Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 154.

the outskirts of Tehran. Then they would be dropped at a Delta hide-site where the force would meet up with Department of Defense agents who would then lead them to a site sixty-five miles outside of Tehran. There, Delta Force would be split into three groups: Red Element, White Element, and Blue Element. Red was responsible for rescuing the hostages in the western part of the compound and taking care of any guards in the area. Blue was responsible for the eastern part of the compound. Once the hostages were in the hands of the Delta Force, they would then bring in helicopters to extract the hostages. The White team would be responsible for making sure Roosevelt Avenue was secure and then eventually aid the withdrawal of Red and Blue. While the attack on the Embassy was happening, another group of Special Forces would be responsible for the retrieval of the three hostages within the Foreign Ministry building. After the operation was over, the helicopters would take the hostages out of the area to an airfield that had already been secured by the Rangers. There, the hostages and their rescuers would be taken out of Iran, while the Rangers would provide security and then withdraw.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the operation never advanced past Desert One. Delta Force arrived at Desert One; however, only six of the eight helicopters needed to transport them arrived. Two of the helicopters experienced mechanical malfunctions and were unable to leave. However, when they began to load the helicopters, they found that only five were flyable. The sixth helicopter had hydraulic problems. As the operation needed six helicopters, the operation commander decided to abort the operation.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, as one of the helicopters began to lift off it crashed into a C-130 refueling aircraft. The result was the death of eight U.S. Personnel and five injured. Furthermore, it caused the abandonment of the other helicopters, which eventually would fall in hands of the Iranians.<sup>4</sup>

The decision to carry out this mission was not an easy one. The Carter Administration tried to use every avenue of diplomacy before turning to military force. Leading up to the decision, there were divisions within the administration about the use of military force, especially from Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Jimmy Carter had recommendations on both sides of the argument. However, National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, advised the President to use military action. The decision to carry out Operation Eagle Claw, and the unfortunate failure of the operation, led to political divisions within the administration, Vance's resignation, and the failure of Jimmy Carter's re-election campaign.

The Secretary of State under the Carter Administration "believed that the hostages were pawns in a power struggle and valuable as long as they were unharmed."<sup>5</sup> This belief led to the idea that the hostages were in no immediate danger; however, the administration was deeply concerned about the conditions and the instability of the hostage's surrounding environment. These concerns and the idea that U.S. force would lead to the Shi'ite passion for martyrdom led to the decision to "use patient diplomacy and concerted international pressure" instead of using force.<sup>6</sup> The main goals of the President were to protect United States' honor and interests, as well as free the hostages. To do this, the early strategy was to maintain all lines of

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<sup>2</sup> Charlie A. Beckwith and Donald Knox, *Delta Force* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 253-256.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-278.

<sup>4</sup> Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985), 297.

<sup>5</sup> Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1983), 377.

<sup>6</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 377.



communication with Iranian leaders to ensure safety and wellbeing of the hostages, and to negotiate for their release. The United States would also attempt to increase “political, economic, and legal pressure on Iran through the United Nations and other international bodies, to increase Iran’s isolation from the world community.”<sup>7</sup> The goal was to make sure Iran understood the ramifications of their revolution and breaking international law by holding hostages. In order to impose international pressure, the United States went before the United Nations Security Council. The Council strongly disagreed with the seizure of the embassy and demanded the hostages be returned. This meeting showed the world that the U.S. was using every diplomatic avenue possible. Furthermore, the U.S. went to the International Court of Justice, which could increase international pressure on Iran. On November 17th, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) persuaded Ayatollah Khomeini to release thirteen female and black hostages. In December, the U.S. proposed the use of economic sanctions on military sales and trade other than food and medical supplies to the United Nations.<sup>8</sup> After the use of economic sanctions and pressure, the United States had exhausted every avenue and began to look into military force.

Vance strongly opposed the use of military force. In March, a group consisting of Carter, Mondale, Brzezinski, Brown, Jones, and Vance met at Camp David to discuss the crisis. There, they began to discuss the idea of military force. At the meeting, Vance gave his reasons for opposition. As long as the hostages were not harmed and in no danger, he did not think that military action was necessary. He pointed out that the use of military force could risk the lives of the hostages, U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region, and U.S.-Soviet relations. Vance thought that the hostages would be released as soon as Khomeini was sure that the revolution had served its purpose and the Islamic Republic was in place. Once these things were in order, Vance thought the hostages would be released, because they would no longer be of value.<sup>9</sup>

However, with each passing month without the return of the hostages, there was growing impatience and resentment towards the cautious policy that repeatedly produced failure and humiliation. Brzezinski argued in favor of an ultimatum “that promised unilateral action highly disruptive of Iranian society” if a resolution had not come to pass by a certain date.<sup>10</sup> In response, Warren Christopher argued that military action would not work because Iranians “welcomed the chance to become martyrs.”<sup>11</sup> Vance continued to promote the idea of waiting because, “the need to protect the lives of our fellow Americans dictated we continue to exercise restraint.”<sup>12</sup>

In Brzezinski’s book, *Power and Principle*, Brzezinski discusses how he had come to the conclusion to act. With growing impatience, he decided that the administration “could not sit” while negotiations continued with no end in sight.<sup>13</sup> When negotiations began to close and it seemed that there would be no future success in that manner, they began to look at military

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 378 and 381.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>10</sup> Sick, *All Fall Down*, 283.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>13</sup> Zbiginew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 486.

options. However, still hopeful that negotiations would re-open, they began the first steps of reconnaissance. In response to these first steps, Vance continued to openly oppose military action. President Carter responded to this with the question of whether or not he was willing to wait another year while the hostages were still imprisoned. Furthermore, the President agreed with Brzezinski that U.S. allies might provide more aid if they thought that they were planning a rescue. In the beginning of April, the negotiations closed. Carter realized the necessity to perform some form of action. The time had come to deal forcefully with the crisis.<sup>14</sup> He thought they 'were no longer dealing with kidnapers...but were, in effect, dealing with a hostile government...'<sup>15</sup> Brzezinski's recommendation was brought forth due to the fact that they could no longer prolong the stalemate. Also, the rising public frustrations with the fact that the hostages were not home led him to this difficult recommendation.

By early April, National Security Advisor Brzezinski had convinced President Carter that the time had come to pursue the military option. In his assessment of the situation, Brzezinski wrote that, "We have essentially run out of peaceful steps we can take to put pressure on the Iranians, are we prepared for more significant military action?"<sup>16</sup> The policy of restraint had run its course. At the same time, the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan in December of 1979. The invasion had put into question the United States leadership role in world politics. Brzezinski's idea to "reassert [U.S.] global leadership" through a demonstration of its 'deterrent capabilities.'<sup>17</sup> This was to be achieved by following through with a military action to free the hostages.

Carter knew that the military was ready to fulfill the mission; however, he also understood Vance's desire to continue to pursue diplomatic solutions. Vance's opposition, found in Brzezinski, believed that "a careful and boldly executed rescue operation represents the only realistic prospect that the hostages- any of them-will be freed in the foreseeable future."<sup>18</sup> Between the two opposing sides, Vance had been the "go-to-guy for Carter in the early years with his policy of human rights, engagement with the Soviet Union, and his patient approach to international relations. However, Carter started to lean away from Vance's view on international affairs after the invasion of Afghanistan and the long wait for the freedom of the hostages. Because of these failures, Carter embraced Brzezinski's assumption of Soviet malice and the United States' need to show that it was still a world power. Carter's political advisor, Hamilton Jordan, suggested to President Carter that "...a punitive response to the crisis was absolutely essential to your own re-election and to America's image in the world..."<sup>19</sup> Many of the President's advisors believed that it was necessary for him to act to save his presidency and the world's view of the U.S. The exception was Vance, who thought that there was still a chance for diplomacy to secure the release of the hostages.

While Vance and his wife were on vacation, a meeting was held by the National Security Council to decide whether or not a rescue mission should be attempted. In his place, Warren Christopher defended his ideas to not turn to military action. However, he had not been

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 487.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 491.

<sup>16</sup> David Farber, *Taken Hostage* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 170.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

completely briefed on the rescue. Christopher did not take a position on the mission and continued to argue for the use of diplomatic relations. However, Christopher was outnumbered in his thinking, and the Council voted in favor of continuing the mission. After the vote was made, Carter set the tentative date for the April 24. Upon Vance's return, Christopher informed him about the meeting. After being informed, he went to the President to voice his dislike of the decision and asked to bring for his view to the Council.<sup>20</sup> After Vance presented his views to the Council, Carter himself responded to his views. The President's first argument was that U.S. allies were not making a huge effort in showing support for the U.S. and would be relieved that the crisis was over if the operation was successful. Secondly, the operation was designed so that it could be shut down at any point if necessary. Furthermore, putting Iran in its place would please the other Persian Gulf states in the region. Finally, the other U.S. citizens in Iran understood the risk when they decided to travel there. With these points made, the President had finally decided to go forward with the operation.<sup>21</sup>

Based on the President's decision to follow through with the operation, Vance decided that he could no longer be Secretary of State. He decided that he could not stand by the President, as he strongly disagreed with the President in what he believed was in the best interest of the country and the hostages. Vance turned in his resignation before the operation took place and said that he would resign whether or not the mission was successful. He would remain in office until the operation occurred and continue to give the President advice. After the mission went through, he would then publicly resign. On the day of the operation, Carter called Vance into the Situation Room to inform him of the decision to abort the mission. However, not long after the President told him, they were informed of the helicopters crash and the loss of U.S. personnel. True to his word, Cyrus Vance publicly resigned four days later after helping inform the world of the incident.<sup>22</sup>

The Vance and Brzezinski dynamic complemented the President in different ways. Vance appealed to the President's "...desire to go down in history as a peacemaker, idealist..."<sup>23</sup> Vance's policies of humanitarianism and diplomatic reasoning before military action worked towards a slow but eventual goal of the release of the hostages. Vance was willing to wait until the hostages were no longer necessary for Iranian goals. However, Brzezinski's "restless energy and persistent pursuit of rash approaches complemented the President's 'activist side.'"<sup>24</sup> Brzezinski's interests were more in "national interest and honor, while on the other hand, Vance placed his concerns with 'human values.'"<sup>25</sup>

After the operation's failure, the public's belief that the President was incompetent increased. After the initial failure, Carter realized that hostage situation would continue and would severely hurt his chances of re-election. Within the media, the President was openly attacked. The Times

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<sup>20</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 409-410.

<sup>21</sup> Betty Glad, *Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 264.

<sup>22</sup> Vance, *Hard Choices*, 410-413.

<sup>23</sup> Betty Glad, "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of the Iranian Hostage Crisis," *International Political Science Review* 10, no. 1 (1989): 48.

<sup>24</sup> Glad, "Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision-Making," 48.

<sup>25</sup> Rose McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," *Political Psychology Special Issue: Prospect Theory and Political Psychology* 13, no 2 (June 1992): 249.

wrote, “While most of Carter’s political foes tactfully withheld criticism, his image as inept had been renewed.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the *Washington Post* wrote that Carter was “...unfit to be President at a time of crisis.”<sup>27</sup> According to the *Time* article, “Shock, Anger - But Also Sympathy”, “the aborted mission was the reinforcement of an already strong conviction Carter is not up to leading...”<sup>28</sup> With these ideas, the nation leaned toward the idea of new leadership. The 1980 election brought forth the Republican face of Ronald Reagan, who used these ideas in his favor. As Reagan put it, ‘I will not stand by and watch this great country destroy itself under mediocre leadership...’ Reagan used this to undermine Carter’s ability to lead the country.<sup>29</sup>

While the campaign dragged on, the Carter Administration tried in vain to keep the public eye away from their inability to end the hostage crisis. In December of 1979, Carter’s ratings in the approval index for his handling of the crisis was at 75 percent.<sup>30</sup> As the hostage crisis continued, Carter’s popularity among the populace continued to decline. By April 8, Carter’s approval index on Iran dropped to 40 percent and may have led Carter to approve the rescue mission.<sup>31</sup> However, after Carter made the decision to go through with the rescue mission, his approval ratings went up to 46 percent.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, when people were asked if Carter made the right decision in going through with the mission, 71 percent said yes.<sup>33</sup> In June of 1980, when asked which President could handle the situation the best, Carter scored the highest with 34 percent.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, Carter hit the lowest point of his approval ratings in July of 1980 at 21 percent.<sup>35</sup> With the first anniversary of the taking of the U.S. embassy fast approaching, public frustration and pressure were placed on the President. Unfortunately, the President’s oath to not campaign while the hostages were still in Iran made his political condition much worse, and he was advised to leave the Oval Office.<sup>36</sup> The crisis and the failed rescue attempt took a huge toll on President Carter and his possibility of re-election. In the *Time* article “A for Effort, F for Execution,” the author thought that if the rescue mission had been successful it would have swayed the voters to back the President. Unfortunately, it did not and the result was a negative response in Carter’s approval ratings.<sup>37</sup> With this, Iran came to the conclusion that Carter would do anything for a resolution to the crisis and he would be easier to work with than the newly elected President Reagan.

Carter worked tirelessly to insure the hostages return home; however, he withdrew from publicly campaigning. The operation’s failure finally allowed the President to leave the confines of the Oval Office and return to the campaign he had postponed towards the beginning of the

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<sup>26</sup> Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 175.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> “Shock, anger- but also sympathy,” *Time*, May 5, 1980, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> David L. Larson, “The American Response to the Iranian Hostage Crisis: 444 Days of Decision,” *International Social Science Review* 57, no. 4 (Autumn 1982): 206.

<sup>31</sup> Larson, “The American Response to the Iranian Hostage Crisis,” 206.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>36</sup> Steve Smith, “Policy Preferences and Bureaucratic Position: The Case of the American Hostage Rescue Mission,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 61, no. 1 (Winter, 1984-1985): 13.

<sup>37</sup> ‘A for Effort, F for execution,’ *Time*, May 5, 1980, 31.

crisis.<sup>38</sup> Senator Byrd encouraged Carter to leave the Oval Office and talk to the people. In his view, “The Ayatollah Khomeini doesn’t just have fifty-three hostages...He also had the President hostage.”<sup>39</sup> A few days later, Carter came out of the White House to resume a “limited campaign schedule.”<sup>40</sup> Before the election, the Carter Administration worked hard to bring the hostages home before Election Day. Unfortunately, the deal that they believed they had made with the Iranians to get them home before Election Day did not follow through. In his diary, Carter wrote that they were “getting some very disturbing public opinion poll results, showing a massive slippage as people realized the hostages were not coming home...this apparently opened up a flood of related concerns...that we were impotent.”<sup>41</sup> The next day, he lost the presidency. The political ramifications of the failure may have been limited if they had decided to act sooner; however they believed they had to allow the negotiations an opportunity to succeed.

Even though the release of the hostages did not occur until minutes after Reagan took office, the Carter Administration was able to secure a deal for their release before the election. The deal was the release of the hostages in exchange for unfreezing Iranian funds in U.S. Banks. After the election, the Algerian government offered their services as mediators between the U.S. and Iranian governments. With this knowledge, Carter sent Christopher and another selection of State Department officials to Algeria to complete the negotiations. While they were there, Carter enforced a deadline for a compromise. If the Iranians did not make a deal, they would have to restart negotiations. Newly elected President Reagan backed Carter by stating that he would back any arrangements between Carter and the Iranians. Finally, they reached a deal, where Iran agreed to pay any loans to the U.S. back. Due to technicalities, the deal took longer than expected. Therefore, the hostages were not released until right as Reagan was sworn into office. This means through all of the work Carter had done and all the grief that he had gone through, the hostages were not released while he was still president.<sup>42</sup>

While the President was unable to secure the timely release of the hostages, he was able to prevent other situations such as a war in the region, loss of lives on both sides and Iran running to the Soviets. When it got to the point where nothing diplomatically could be done, the operation was approved. In the event of failure, he undertook complete responsibility.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the failed attempt also relieved the President of the pressure from the public to react to Iran militarily. This relief led to the ability to continue diplomatic negotiations with Iran. In Brzezinski’s opinion, “I felt that we owed it to all concerned to try to rescue the hostages once we had a reasonably good change of being successful.”<sup>44</sup> On top of the failure of the operation and public humiliation, Carter faced the task of re-election. Because of the press’s implication of the President being incapable of doing his job, Carter could have made rash decisions that cost the hostages their lives or tremendous global political ramifications. Instead, he refused to make

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<sup>38</sup> Glad, *Outsider in the White House*, 268.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>41</sup> Farber, *Taken Hostage*, 179.

<sup>42</sup> Glad, *Outsider in the White House*, 275-277.

<sup>43</sup> Warren Christopher, *American Hostages in Iran*, 171.

<sup>44</sup> Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 500.

any other military decisions while there was still the ability to negotiate. Because of this, he succeeded in saving lives and U.S. interests. Unfortunately, this cost him his presidency.<sup>45</sup>

The rescue mission was the complete opposite of Carter's initial policy of "humanitarian emphasis," and it was an extreme decision from a military perspective as well.<sup>46</sup> When the President made the decision to attempt the rescue mission, he was looking towards a situation that was poor and progressively getting worse. Iran was refusing to negotiate, 60% of the populace that thought he was 'too soft on Iran', his campaign was going poorly, and 70% of the populace believed that it was time for a new president.<sup>47</sup> Carter needed something to boost his popularity and hopefully save his presidency. The operation had just the right amount of risk. If the operation was successful, the hostages would be free, Carter would be viewed as a 'hero,' and United States international credibility would be restored.<sup>48</sup> However, the absolute failure of the mission demonstrated just how detrimental a decision to perform a rescue mission could be politically. Carter lost his Secretary of State, the hostages were removed from the Embassy and scattered across Iran, were not released for another nine months, the United States' international credibility was destroyed, and it cost him the election.<sup>49</sup> Many people within the United States questioned if it would have been better to wait instead of attempting an extremely difficult rescue mission, even some of the hostages agreed with this opinion. After the failure at Desert One, Carter's "reelection became impossible."<sup>50</sup>

Operation Eagle Claw was a risky endeavor; however, the decision did not come easily. The President's first plan of complete humanitarian and diplomatic policies were completely exhausted before the President became restless and came to the conclusion that it was time to act. The decision to carry out the military option brought forth debates and divisions within Carter's Administration caused by the President's two main advisors being completely opposed on the subject. Secretary Vance was more dovish and wanted to continue the diplomatic path based on his belief that the hostages would not be harmed due to the fact that they were pawns in the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the other hand, National Security Advisor Brzezinski was more hawkish in the decision. He believed that the United States needed to act to preserve its honor and credibility in the international sphere. Also, he thought that a mission was the best way to free the hostages in a timely manner. Eventually, Carter began to see that action was necessary. Unfortunately, the end result of the mission was not what anyone expected. Before the mission took place, Vance decided to resign as Secretary of State whether or not the mission was successful based on principle. With the unfortunate failure of the operation, Carter lost the remaining faith that the people had in him to be a successful president and with that the election. Furthermore, the President made the U.S. look like it no longer had the ability to handle conflict quickly and decisively. President Carter's decision to follow through with the military option, as a last chance effort to save his presidency and to bring the hostages home faster,

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 508-509.

<sup>46</sup>McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations," 237.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 240.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.,257.

<sup>50</sup> Charles G. Cogan, "Desert One and Its Disorders," *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 1 (January 2003): 216.

completely backfired. The ramifications of this decision were devastating from the terrible loss of military personnel to Carter's loss of the people's faith in him as a President.