

National Security and International Crises:

The World in the 1980s

by *Harold Brown*



We have only recently entered a new decade — that of the 1980s. That makes this a natural time to evaluate the present international situation and what we may expect during that decade. To understand the implications of this situation for the United States, however, it is useful first to look back on how the international situation has changed over the past few decades, how those changes have affected us, and how we need to react to changed circumstances in the future.

The international interests of the United States since World War II have actually been rather constant. They include the need to avoid international chaos, to contain Soviet expansionism, and to advance human rights and political independence throughout the world. Each of those particular interests fits into a more general goal of preserving a world in which all nations are free to develop politically and economically along lines that they themselves determine and to exchange both goods and ideas on mutually acceptable terms.

The principle of staving off chaos was turned into practice even before the end of World War II through various relief efforts that were funded almost entirely by the United States, and shortly after World War II by the Marshall Plan and other economic reconstruction programs. The advancement of human rights and political independence were strongly expressed as U.S. goals immediately after the war when we brought pressure on those of our allies that had colonial empires to grant independence to their component parts. The United States itself gave independence to the Philippines, and whatever reservations one may hold about political developments there since, I have no doubt it was the correct thing to do. The British, the French, and the Dutch remember well —

and not always kindly — our urgings at that time, but there is little doubt that those nations now are, and consider themselves, better off for having dissolved the bonds of their respective empires.

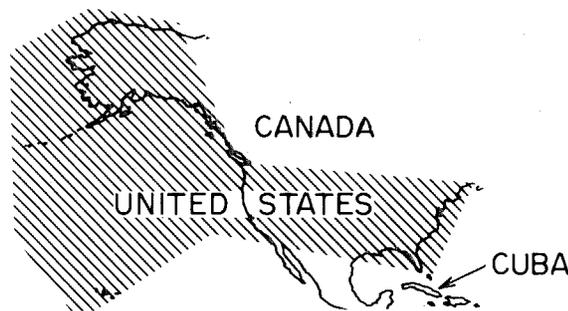
The diffusion of political power to a large number of countries was probably inevitable, whatever complexities and difficulties it may have created. The Marshall Plan itself, though the Soviets were invited to participate in it and refused, was designed in substantial part to contain Soviet expansionism by strengthening Europe economically. Subsequently, the Truman Doctrine, the formation of NATO (the North American Treaty Organization), and the encouragement of Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany to participate in their own defense were all elements in a strategy of resisting Soviet expansionism. By the end of World War II that phenomenon had already expressed itself in the annexation of territories from every country that shared a pre-war European border with the Soviet Union. It also expressed itself in the establishment of puppet regimes in Europe that constituted a Soviet empire that continues to exist to this day.

We may have perceived Soviet actions incorrectly in those days, but I think not. Clearly the Soviets themselves in the late 1940s and through the 1950s saw the prospect, or imagined the presence, of a U.S. encirclement of the Soviet Union. In any event, the U.S. goals that I have listed were not bad ones, and we continue to hold them as national policy.

How do the trends of the 1970s extrapolate into the 1980s? One such trend is the continuing diffusion of power. Not only are there now more than 150 countries, some of them very small and practically all politically independent if not necessari-

mobiles, steel, and consumer electronic goods — have had a considerable and negative effect on our economy. It's true that this wouldn't have happened had not some segments of American industry failed in management or in foresight, and had not labor costs in the United States stayed or gone much higher than they have in some of these other countries.

Furthermore, in international forums our allies (let alone our unallied friends) do not always support U.S. positions politically, but that is the price we pay for being the leader of a voluntary coalition of free nations. I submit that it is a price



worth paying. The alternatives are to retreat into isolation and give up trying to influence events outside the United States, or to adopt Soviet methods. The first alternative is infeasible in a situation where we are importing 50 percent of our oil. The choice of isolation also creates a prospect of facing at some point unfriendly governments on our own borders — an outcome that is a logical consequence of a retreat from participation in international affairs. If you doubt that such a situation can be a real problem for us in view of our great size and strength, consider the effect of having an unfriendly government in Cuba. Last year's Cuban boatlift resulted in the U.S. losing control at least temporarily over the decisions as to whom we would admit to our own country. Our sovereignty was curtailed, and that is not a comfortable situation.

The second, Soviet-style, alternative in dealing with foreign countries has problems of its own, as the Soviets are now finding out in Poland. There is no doubt as to which governmental and ideological style is more popular in the world among people who are given a free choice. No country seeks to emulate the Soviet state these days, not even those revolutionary governments in emerging countries who by force of circumstances become Soviet clients. Some aspiring revolutionary movements look to the People's Republic of China as a model; some, I guess, still look to Castro's Cuba; and some, I think, try to devise one of

their own based on some idealized concept. But none of them says, "We want to be governed the way the Soviet Union is governed."

It is no accident that the refugee flows have been in the direction that they have. More than a million refugees have fled from Afghanistan into Pakistan; another million or more from Cambodia and Vietnam into Thailand and into the sea; nearly a million into Somalia from Ethiopia; another million from Cuba to the United States. Until the Berlin Wall sealed it off, there were a million from East Germany into West Germany. Whether in Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, Africa, Europe, or North America, the flight is always from Soviet-dominated territories, from persecution and from slaughter. And the Soviets' heavy hand with those who accept their economic or military assistance has, in cases where they have not been able to occupy the country militarily, driven a whole series of countries out of the orbit of Soviet influence and into a more friendly relationship with the United States. Three very diverse examples, beginning in the 1960s and running into the 1970s, include Ghana, China, and Egypt.

If we are to maintain and expand the circle of nations with whom we have friendly relations — and we need to do this in an economically interdependent world in order to gain access to resources as well as to build political barriers against Soviet aggression — we need to continue to support the cause of freedom and independence. We need greatly to expand our economic and developmental assistance programs, which have an effect all out of proportion to their costs. Those costs are, admittedly, substantial in absolute terms, but they are only a few tenths of a percent of our own GNP as compared to almost a percent for some of the other developed countries. One of the most difficult things to get the Congress to approve has always been developmental assistance to the developing countries. Individual congressmen and senators will almost always admit in private that such money is well spent or that spending more would improve the U.S. position in the world and thus our ability to conduct a successful foreign policy. But its unpopularity with the public as a whole — partly as a result of lack of understanding and partly, I fear, as a result of selfishness — has not been countered by adequate leadership and education on the part of our political leaders. Spending more on developmental and economic assistance is probably the best investment, dollar for dollar, that we can make to advance our foreign policy.

In the area of human rights, we need to push authoritarian governments toward greater liber-

alization, whether they are friends of ours or not. At the same time we need to keep in mind that it is not in our interests that a friendly authoritarian government be replaced by a totalitarian government opposed to us. (I think that although the new administration overstates this point, they are quite right to bring it to our attention.) We need to look at each case carefully to see whether our human rights program encourages liberalization or is going to lead to an even worse situation.

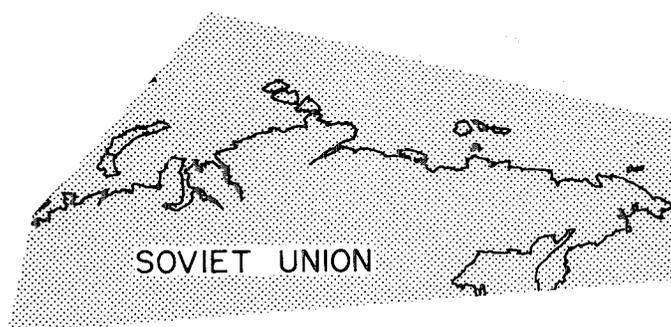
Let me now turn to the military situation, which in many ways is the one measure in which we don't have a clear advantage over the Soviets. It is the area in which they have made the greatest strides in recent years and the only one in which they have been able to compete with us on roughly equal terms. During the past 25 years we in the United States have seen defense against Soviet military power and expansionism as centering in three main areas. The first is the defense of the United States itself against a strategic nuclear attack by the Soviets. This is the only way in which we could be physically destroyed as a nation, and it remains true that we are not able to prevent such action by any active means. There is no physical defense against nuclear war. So long as large numbers of nuclear weapons remain in military arsenals and in light of the ability of the offense to concentrate and overwhelm the defense (assuming there is no poor military planning on either side), both the Soviets and the U.S. will be able to destroy each other for the foreseeable future. But only at the cost of themselves being destroyed in return. That's what deterrence means. It's a poor substitute for safety, but it is one we have learned to live with. A combination of adequate military-force building, careful planning, and equitable and verifiable arms limitation agreements to minimize the costs and help assure stability — these together comprise the proper program to maintain deterrence of strategic war.

The second role of U.S. military policy has been to defend, in alliance with its inhabitants, Western Europe, which constitutes the largest concentration of industrialized population and production in the world. The NATO alliance has served as an effective instrument of this policy for ourselves and our NATO allies since 1949. Originally the U.S. provided not only the strategic forces but a considerable fraction of the conventional forces in place in Europe. Those forces were designed to act as a trip wire if the Soviets should invade Western Europe. Over the last 10 or 12 years, the defense expenditures of European members of NATO have risen from being less than 50 percent of those of the U.S. to more than 60 percent. During the early 1970s, when our de-

fense expenditures were falling in real terms, the expenditures of our NATO allies were rising. Since the early 1960s the Soviet military effort has been increasing at the annual rate of 4 percent or more in real terms, and that means that it would double every 18 years, and it has doubled. In 1978 it was agreed that to meet such continued expansion, the NATO nations would each commit to 3 percent annual real growth for military expenditures. They and we have come close to and in some cases exceeded that number since then.

One question, of course, is how do you match a 4 percent annual growth with a 3 percent annual growth, and the answer is that you don't. Two other things need to be done to balance the growth of Soviet military capability. One is to be more efficient, which isn't always easy I can assure you. The second is to cooperate more closely with our European allies so as to make use of economies of scale and not to duplicate development and production. And that's not easy either.

There continues to be, however, less willingness in many of the European countries than in the U.S. to see the Soviet military growth and



threat as real. My own judgment is that the American people and the Congress will be unwilling to follow through on present plans to increase the capability of U.S. forces to reinforce Europe in a crisis unless the Europeans become more willing to tilt the balance between their defense expenditures and their social welfare expenditures more in favor of the former. I can recall a recent argument in the parliament of a European country over whether they could possibly increase their defense budget by 3 percent from the previous year. Strong arguments were made that in view of the economic exigencies the best that could be done would be to keep it constant. At the same time in that same parliament, a debate was being carried on about increasing some of their social program expenditures. The argument in that case was about increasing it by an amount in excess of the entire defense expenditures of that country. It seems to me unlikely that the percentage of the

total U.S. GNP assigned to defense can rise to 6 percent or even 7 percent while the levels of most of our NATO allies (including some of the most affluent) remain under 4 percent.

We are committed by agreement with our allies to provide modernized, long-range nuclear forces in Europe to offset the Soviet growth in numbers and quality of intermediate-range ballistic missiles and medium-range bombers aimed at Western Europe from the Soviet Union. But in my judgment we are unlikely to carry out those plans unless the Europeans can show the political cohesion and courage necessary to provide bases and facilities — and funding — for such new U.S. deployments in addition to those necessary for U.S. conventional reinforcements. It remains to be seen whether the political leadership of various European countries will take the lead in their own countries for forming such a consensus and in turn join as partners in the kinds of initiatives proposed by the U.S.

There are other areas of the world that are important to us. Our own backyard is certainly important — the Caribbean and Central America. Sub-Saharan Africa is also important in terms of resources that we depend on. But the third area in which our defense has hitherto been centered and which has been seen as critical to the U.S. is East Asia, including Japan, Korea, and the other countries along the Pacific rim. These have become the great success story of U.S. policies since World War II. Europe was industrialized and prosperous before World War II; these areas have become so since. It is true that during the past decade the Soviets have greatly increased their military capability in the Far East; but the cooling of relations with Japan, the progressive alienation of the People's Republic of China from the Soviets, and the normalization of relations between the P.R.C. and the U.S. have more than counterbalanced that factor in overall political-military terms. Political instability in the Republic of Korea, however, has compounded the effects of the North Korean military buildup that took place during the 1970s, and has thus created a trouble spot. The aggressive behavior of Communist Vietnam, which has failed to solve the internal problems consequent on its conquest of the south, has provided the Soviet Union with new bases from which to spread its reach into the western Pacific and Southeast Asia, and at the same time Vietnam threatens its neighbors in that area.

Aside from these three traditional areas — the strategic, the European, and the East Asian — I believe there is now a fourth. During the past few years Southwest Asia, which has always been of

importance to us, has become even more so. One reason is that the industrialized democracies have become even more dependent on oil from that area. While the U.S. gets only about 11 percent of its oil from the Persian Gulf, a cutoff of exports from that area would disrupt world markets in terms of availability and prices. This disruption would be severely damaging to the U.S. through its effects on the rest of the 40 to 50 percent of its oil that the U.S. imports. Since our allies in East Asia import as much as 50 percent or even 75 percent of their oil from that region, a cutoff would be even more catastrophic to them than to us. Soviet domination of the region would make our allies of the industrialized world, as well as many third-world nations, economic vassals of the Soviets.

Moreover, the region itself is beset by ethnic, political, and religious conflicts both between nations and within them. For many years it has been influenced in a destabilizing way by the conflict between the Arab countries, many of them our friends, and Israel, to which we have a special security commitment. And there is an internal threat in many countries of this region from political or religious extremists. They could well act to overthrow existing regimes whether conservative or less so.

The recent Iranian revolution made more explicit and obvious the weakness of what had been regarded both as a bastion of stability in that region and as a shield against the Soviets of the Persian Gulf. In addition, the illegal actions of the Iranian government in holding prisoner and abusing U.S. citizens has made a difficult situation for U.S.-Iranian relations into one in which those relations are characterized by deep animosity. It will take a long time to change that.

The war between Iran and Iraq has added to the instability in the region, threatening at times to spread to other Persian Gulf states and splitting the radicals from the moderate Arab states (with the radicals tending to side with the Iranians). Let me remind you, however, that military threats are not the only ones in the region, nor are the Soviets the only possible military threat. Attacks by one country on another — with the attacker usually equipped with Soviet-supplied arms — have happened before and they're happening now; examples include Libya in Chad and Vietnam in Cambodia. And similar attacks are likely to happen again in the future.

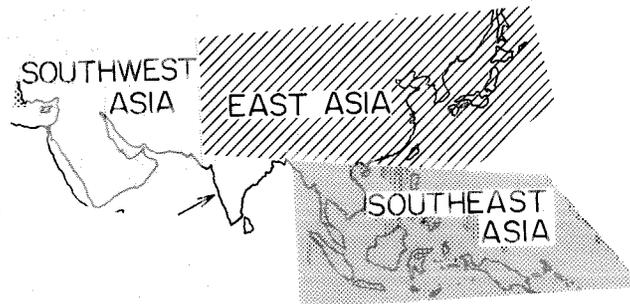
The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan strongly suggests Soviet willingness to use its own military forces in the general area of Southwest Asia. Though the Soviets may think of this action only as assuring the continued Marxist orientation of a

neighbor, the non-Communist countries of the region correctly see it as a possible harbinger of Soviet attitudes toward themselves. That has tended to bring the Saudis and the Iraqis, who formerly had been rather friendly to the USSR, into a great appreciation of the value of U.S. military capability as the only possible counterbalance to a blatant Soviet military push toward the Persian Gulf, or as an offset to a Soviet attempt at political domination based on military power in that area. That, of course, is a more likely use of Soviet military power.

The reluctance of most of the countries in the region to align themselves explicitly with either the U.S. or the Soviet Union has advantages and disadvantages for us. In one sense, it's simply an Islamic wish to avoid either Western or Soviet domination. One facet of this attitude is a strong anti-Communism, which is a principal stumbling block for the Soviets in the area. At the same time, the governments of these countries can't afford to be seen as providing bases for U.S. forces. Because the region is so far from us and so near the Soviet Union, this reluctance poses difficulties for our ability to help defend them. Fortunately there are some natural as well as human obstacles between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf.

During the last couple of years the U.S. has made a start in improving the capability to move forces into the region rapidly by, among other things, deploying two aircraft carrier battle groups and other naval forces in the Arabian Sea. This constitutes the most powerful fleet that has ever been in these waters, regardless of country of origin. And our French, British, and Australian allies have deployed naval contingents as well. We have also moved into the region seven newly acquired ships containing pre-positioned military equipment and supplies that could marry up within seven to ten days with an augmented marine brigade and supporting tactical aircraft squadrons. We've re-oriented U.S.-based ground and air force bases for rapid deployment into the region if necessary. And we've organized a rapid-deployment joint task force that has begun planning for such a contingency. It would command the forces of various military services in case such operations were required. We've begun to develop and procure new aircraft and rapid sealift capabilities, in order to augment our ability to move anywhere from two or three to more than six divisions into the area quickly.

These actions are going to take several years to come to full fruition, of course. Moreover, they're going to cost money. I estimate that over the next five years they'll cost anywhere from



\$20 to \$25 billion. Only the U.S. can assume the bulk of the responsibility for organizing a security framework that includes the nations of the area and for providing the great majority of the outside forces that would act to deter or contain Soviet military expansion in the Persian Gulf region. But since our European and Far Eastern allies depend even more than we do on access to the resources of the region, they're going to have to participate as well. Only a few of them — notably France, Great Britain, and perhaps a couple of others — can be expected to supply additional forces (albeit much smaller than our own) that can be moved to or stationed near the region itself. But all can contribute by providing transit facilities for U.S. forces if needed, and all must also contribute by increasing their own defense efforts and capabilities in their own areas. These will substitute for some of the additional capabilities the U.S. has been planning to introduce into Europe and East Asia as reinforcements in case of a crisis.

To conclude, I'm compelled to draw a twofold lesson from all I've described about the world of the 1980s. It's a simple, perhaps a self-evident, lesson, but it's the one I took with me from four years of service as Secretary of Defense. First of all, military power — no matter how strong — has important limitations in assuring that U.S. interests are preserved in a complex world of intertwined relationships. All the other instruments of national policy — economic, political, and diplomatic, for example — must also be skillfully used if we are to navigate the dangerous waters of the 1980s.

The second part of this lesson is equally important. It is that without adequate military capability on the part of the United States, plus joint military planning and programs with and sufficient efforts by our allies, we are headed for trouble. Soviet military power, the dependence of the industrialized world on Middle Eastern oil, and the growing instability of the developing world will combine to make the world of the 1980s more dangerous than any we have yet seen. With optimism engendered perhaps by remoteness from the scene, I tend to believe, however, that we can and will solve these problems. □