AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, NATO IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND THE DEFENSE OF THE GULF

by

Ciro Elliott Zoppo

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AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, NATO IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, AND THE DEFENSE OF THE GULF

Three major factors have driven recent transformations in the international system: the political use of oil resources; new developments in military technology with strategic significance; and the increasingly interpenetration of internal and external political systems.

The emergence of the geopolitics of oil has added an economic dimension to national security, altering radically the relations between the industrialized nations and resource-rich countries of the Third World.

Developments in nuclear and conventional military technology have created conditions that could effectively destabilize the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Eurostrategic balance, and the military gap between major powers and regional powers. Thus, they threaten to erase the boundary between the superpower deterrent system and regional conflict systems. The relative decline of American military capability vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and of the credibility of U.S. military resolve everywhere, has intensified the effects of this change.

Finally, the political turmoil in the Third World resulting from the difficulties surrounding the transition from colonial status to independent and viable nations has become internationalized. This internationalization has taken place not only in terms of superpower involvement but also by the creation of regional conflicts that virtually erase the distinction between

internal and external politics engendering an intensification of social and political instability to almost unmanageable levels of ferment.

The confluence of these factors into a dynamically conflictual pattern has become most pronounced in the countries around the Gulf, a part of the Middle East and an extension of the Mediterranean region. Because the Mediterranean's geography makes it the political, economic, and military junction of Europe, Asia and Africa, the defense of the Gulf is crucially linked with the military and political assets of the Mediterranean. Conversely, the countries of the Mediterranean, along both its northern and southern shores, will be seriously affected by the politics of the Gulf region not in terms of their economic and political well-being alone but also in their security. This can be said to be axiomatic for Europe as well as the Free World in general.

For international security in the 1980's, therefore, the geopolitics of the Mediterranean and adjacent regions will most critically intersect the conflictual East-West political and military interactions and North-South economic and political relations.

The United States, in terms of its policies and its superpower status, is the principal international actor in the Gulf region among Western nations. The global definition of U.S. interests combines with American membership in NATO and the nature of its role to make the United States the paramount link between European security and the defense of the Gulf.

Conjointly, the Alliance's Mediterranean flank is inherently the operational bridge between the military security of Western Europe and the defense of the Gulf states against possible attacks by Soviet forces or

subversions to create Soviet client states or satellites.

I. THE DEFENSE OF THE GULF AND MEDITERRANEAN SECURITY

Defense of the Gulf and security in the Mediterranean region cannot be divorced from each other any more than the security of Europe can be isolated from the defense of the Mediterranean region.

In fact, the shift of focus in the American-Soviet rivalry in the various areas of the Third World to the Gulf, produced by the factors just indicated, has forged strong and unavoidable links between Mediterranean security and the defense of Western Europe that go well beyond the formal and requisite operations in NATO's southern flank. For in the practical referents of the geopolitics of the 1980's the defense of the energy resources of the Middle East has become crucially relevant to the defensive mission of the Atlantic Alliance.

Because the Alliance was originally designed to defend solely the area of the North Atlantic, and because of the long-standing divergences between American and West European policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the European members of the Alliance have strongly resisted, in the past, suggestions that NATO's strategic missions should include the safeguarding of oil resources in the Gulf.

European governments, particularly in Mediterranean countries, are likely to continue to resist an official extension of NATO's defense perimeter, which would involve the use of their military forces, if for no less a reason than the strength of domestic political opposition to the extension of the Alliance's mandate.

But the realities of the shifting East-West military balance and the inescapable and critical need for energy faced by the Western industrial countries will have to eventually reshape European defense policies to conform to the new geopolitical realities.

Until recently, the approach of all European members of the Atlantic Alliance, except for France and Britain, toward the defense of the Gulf region had been exclusively political. More often than not, European states have also pursued diplomatic policies in regard to the strategically important oil resources of that region, that have been unilateral, conflicting inter se, and competitive with those of the United States. The latter themselves being competitive with those of European allies, at the commercial level.

It is a truism of the nuclear era that deterrence of East-West military conflict is the only rational policy option for the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. Some have argued that the extent and nature of a potential threat to the security of Europe has been unduly emphasized. Would they maintain their position after the invasion of Afghanistan, the failure of SALT II ratification, and the recent developments in the Eurostrategic and the Soviet-American strategic balance; with their attending political agitation and the dilemmas raised in U.S.-West European relations?

Others have maintained that the loss of U.S. strategic superiority and the shifts in the Eurostrategic balance, adverse to the West, can be compensated by changes in deterrence doctrine that make possible the conduct of limited and even protracted nuclear exchanges. Indeed, among nuclear strategists the dominant view is that escalation control can be

maintained in limited nuclear war. On technical as well as political grounds how confident can such predictions be?[1]

An examination of the disappearing boundary between the central superpower deterrent system--wrought by evolving technology, shifts in East-West military balances, and redefinitions of superpower strategic doctrines--will be useful in answering questions that arise in the assessment of the significance of the Mediterranean in European security, and of the linkage between the defense of the Gulf and security in the Mediterranean.[2]

The historic relationship between the Mediterranean and Europe gives politics and security in the Mediterranean particular significance for European security. In turn, Mediterranean security because of the membership of France, Italy, Turkey, Greece, Spain and Portugal in the Atlantic Alliance cannot be assessed without direct reference to the state of East-West political and military relations in Europe. The changes in military technology and in the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance and in the NATO-Warsaw Pact military equilibrium, during the 1970's, have intensified the intrinsic relationship between Mediterranean and European security.

Europe's importance for international and Mediterranean security is explainable not simply by Europe's economic and political weight in the world. It is also the consequence of history, which once made it the central system of international politics. Even after it lost its primacy in world politics, during the thirty-seven years of the nuclear age Europe has been directly linked politically and militarily with the American-Soviet strategic balance; becoming the ultimate pivot for the global rivalry of

the superpowers. And, it is likely to remain so because of the Soviet Union's location as an European power. Therefore, the fusion of East-West and North-South conflictual factors in the Gulf and the Middle East will not displace Europe as the crucial and direct link between the central U.S.-Soviet system of deterrence and these Mediterranean regional conflict systems. It is conceivable, perhaps increasingly probable, that regional conflict in the Gulf might escalate into nuclear conflict. But it is practically inconceivable that an East-West military conflict in Europe would not definitely raise a very severe risk of nuclear war on a global scale.

Therefore, the speed and the character of the changes occurring in the Mediterranean and its regional sub-systems, like the Gulf, would be less grave if they had not been accompanied by adverse changes in the European nuclear and conventional balances--themselves directly related to the technological and structural changes in the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States has lost its escalation dominance in Europe and it certainly does not possess it in the region of the Gulf.

Until the 1970's, the military asymmetries, in the conventional sphere, that have afflicted Western Europe since World War II in regard to the Soviet bloc had been compensated for by the nuclear superiority of the United States and America's economic strength. These compensatory mechanisms have been eroded and have become part of the problems of the 1980's for European security, particularly in the area of NATO's southern flank, where they importantly influenced the calculations of front line member states like Turkey.

The dovetailing of these developments with the changing technology of war and deterrence and with the momentous political changes that have taken place regarding Iran and Afghanistan have also significantly altered the security configurations of the Mediterranean.

Changing Military Technology and the Security of the Mediterranean

Changing aircraft and missile technology is shrinking the Mediterranean--whose North-South axis is already quite short--to the point where land-based systems may totally dominate the sea combat environment. The Soviet Backfire and SS-20 ballistic missiles, stationed in the southern military district of the Soviet Union, can cover the Gulf and Middle East and the whole Mediterranean region; while Western aircraft, sea-based and land-based, can reach them even from the Western quadrant of the Mediterranean.[3] Thus, technology has expanded the range of conventional, and tactical nuclear, regional forces to the point where during acute crises--involving the inferred or actual participation of the U.S. and the USSR--the strategic space can become nearly indistinguishable from the regional one, further weakening the distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear, and regional and global.

Quite apart from the impact of the changing military technology, the United States has officially conditioned the nuclear threshold in the Gulf. Under the "Carter Doctrine" the United States would resort to the use of tactical nuclear weapons in order to make up for American conventional military inferiority in the region if the Soviet Union attempted to expand its control beyond Afghanistan.[4] The U.S. might have to do this to prevent any *faits accomplis*, deemed irreversible.

Because naval task forces figure prominently in the potential conflicts of these regions, it is pertinent to underscore that the most telling effects of these technological changes have been on naval forces, including aircraft carriers. These are the kinds of forces that would come into play at the outset of a local crisis. The carrier task forces of the U.S. Sixth Fleet have provided a major military tool for crisis management in the Mediterranean, and have had the mission of providing U.S. air support for the defense of Italy's frontiers with Austria and Yugoslavia, and for Greek and Turkish air defenses. This air support has also provided a backdrop for the defense of Yugoslavia. The increased technological vulnerabilities of such forces has already eroded confidence in the U.S. political commitment to the defense of the Mediterranean.[5] Because of these technological developments, Soviet ships in the Mediterranean are also in a more precarious situation,[6] and would have to rely heavily on air cover provided from aircraft based on Soviet territory. This military requirement also obscures the boundary between the central U.S.-Soviet deterrent system and regional conflicts and would threaten also the distinction between NATO and non-NATO contingencies.

Both the U.S. Sixth Fleet and the Soviet Eskadra have had, for quite some time, missions independent of their respective roles in European security. The fact that long-range aircraft, equipped with modern air-to-surface missiles, and backed by nuclear-powered attack submarines, currently pose the prime threat to these naval task forces combines with their alternating redeployments from the Mediterranean to the Gulf to form of these two areas a single conflict system.

The separation of NATO and non-NATO military contingencies has been a major political issue in the renegotiations of U.S. base rights in Turkey and Greece. It has been also an important focus for political pressures that have been brought to bear by the opposition on government policies regarding Italy's role in NATO. With similar rationales the Socialist and Communist opposition has opposed Spain's entry into NATO on the grounds that Spain would lose its foreign policy independence toward the Third World if it joined the Alliance. Changing military technology and the elevation of the politics of oil to strategic meaning have been creating conditions that could eventually obliterate the distinction between NATO and non-NATO military contingencies in the Mediterranean, regardless of the diplomatic positions taken by Mediterranean countries actually, or eventually, hosting U.S. and Soviet facilities. It is relevant that while technological changes in military systems have tended to diminish the strategic significance of the Mediterranean in terms of U.S.-Soviet nuclear deterrence, incorporating the Mediterranean into the Eurostrategic deterrent space has made the Mediterranean more crucial to East-West confrontations in the Middle East and particularly the Gulf.

In terms of nuclear war, there are no genuine strategic military targets in the Mediterranean or nuclear weapon systems strategically significant for the United States. Although there are Western military forces, with nuclear capability stationed in several Mediterranean countries, and Soviet nuclear systems, in the Soviet Union and with the Eskadra, that can target the territory of the Mediterranean countries, none of these forces, including those on French aircraft carriers, have strategic missions assigned to them. No American, Soviet, British, and French strategic launchpoints

exist in the Mediterranean.

This does not mean, of course, that if an escalating conflict involving American and Soviet forces in this region breaches the nuclear threshold--by miscalculation or intent--that nuclear battles could not occur. It simply means that there are no strategic territories there in terms of nuclear central war.

In political terms, certain Mediterranean countries, because of their geographic location or political importance, are strategic. This can be said in the sense that either by being members of NATO or being on the Western side these countries contribute to the deterrence of East-West conventional conflict or that a shift in their political affiliation to the Soviet side would constitute a major political defeat for the West.

These elements certainly combine in Turkey, Italy, Spain, Egypt, Morocco and Yugoslavia. However, from the perspectives of the United States and the Soviet Union, strategic signifies nuclear and intercontinental. Moreover, until other nuclear powers, singly or together, can challenge the overwhelming nuclear superiority of either superpower, the nuclear deterrent system will remain essentially bipolar and global.

For example, insofar as conventional warfare is concerned, no floating aircraft carrier can be a match for the unsinkable carriers represented by the Mediterranean islands, and by the strategically placed Italian peninsula. The trends of conventional war technologies seem bent on favoring MacKinder over Mahan. Who controls the land, controls the sea. In the Mediterranean, the control of land-based airpower for purposes of naval warfare, for non-NATO purposes, is invariably a political matter.

NATO, Gulf Contingencies and Superpower Rules of Engagement

For the governments of NATO Southern flank countries, decisions involving non-NATO contingencies have been determined, so far, primarily by considerations focused more on isolating Mediterranean countries from U.S. military and diplomatic initiatives in Middle East conflicts than from considerations of crisis management and local conflict outcomes. The decision of France and Italy to join the U.S. in sending troops to Lebanon to help resolve the impasse over the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut surely seems a harbinger of change.

It remains a moot question, nevertheless, whether these policy attitudes would prevail in a Gulf crisis or conflict involving the United States. There are some indications that suggest a possible change in the approach of the European allies of the United States in regard to Gulf contingencies. For the first time in the history of NATO, a security interest outside the traditional defense perimeter of the Alliance has been recognized. In May 1980, the Alliance agreed officially to a plan enabling the United States to divert U.S. forces, assigned to NATO, to deal with emergencies in the Gulf. The following November, the Reagan Administration transferred the command of the Rapid Deployment Force from the United States to European Command (EURCOM) in Heidelberg. EURCOM is under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Allied Commander, or SACEUR.[7]

Thus SACEUR has now become responsible not only for the defense of Western Europe, but also NATO's vital interests outside Europe. Deductively, it is now clear that the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force would expect to rely

on NATO facilities, and the redeployment of supplies and U.S. forces from NATO to a conflict outside the European theater. For practical purposes, this means that NATO's southern flank has been extended from Turkey to the Gulf.[8]

Yet, in the past, the Alliance has known no more divisive issue than the use of its installations by U.S. forces in crises outside the formal boundaries of NATO; connected with threats not directly posed to European security by Warsaw Pact military actions. European governments are likely to continue to apply severe constraints on the U.S. use of facilities in their countries, in cases of direct Arab-Israeli conflicts. Yet, are potential conflicts in the Gulf likely to be so neat in their political and diplomatic aspects, short of outright Soviet invasion?

The crucible of the relationship between European security and conflicts in the Gulf may well be forged in the Mediterranean, and be directly linked to the use of air and sea power. The crucial factor will be the participation of Soviet naval forces and Soviet land-based air power.

An escalation from a Soviet-U.S. naval and air engagement in the Mediterranean, connected with a conflict in the Gulf, to strategic, nuclear superpower confrontation so rapid that the conventional military assets of NATO in the theater, including tactical land-based air power, would become largely irrelevant to the naval battle in terms of its original missions and its contemplated outcomes, could only result from misperceptions or miscalculations, not a deliberate policy choice. If, however, because of the consequences of strategic equivalence and related military and political considerations, escalation, if it occurs, is limited initially to the NATO

southern flank level, the role of allied and U.S. land-based air power becomes the most crucial and dominant aspect of the engagement.

The increasing vulnerabilities to air attack of U.S., allied and Soviet navies in the Mediterranean and the Gulf could bring political disaster, in an area where North-South military conflicts are in the offing like the Sahara conflict and the tensions between Libya and Malta. Advanced aircraft are widespread in the countries of the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The day may not not be far off when land-launched cruise missiles may also be found among the politically shifting states of the Mediterranean. This outcome would blur even further the distinction between the central system of deterrence and local conflicts in an area where the East-West line of demarcation is fluid and conflictual situations, internal and between states, are on the rise.

The repercussions of Iranian Muslim fundamentalism, the Israeli intransigence on the Palestinian issue, exemplified by Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and the Shatt-al-Arab war will merge even further the politics and the security of the Mediterranean with that of the Gulf region. Thus, the confluence of political, economic, and security interests, as an expression of the weakening of the boundary between internal and external affairs can become directly connected with the impact of changing technology on the deterrent, crisis management, and warfighting uses of naval and air power in the Mediterranean basin.

On the other hand, the control of most of the riparian territory by formal, or tacit, allies of the United States creates a major potential air threat to the Soviet Eskadra which should inhibit Soviet incentives

to engage directly American naval and air power in the Mediterranean. In the Gulf, the situation is quite different. This, however, could be only one reason in Soviet calculations. The requirements of Soviet policy in the Mediterranean are broader. Past Soviet behavior does suggest, however, that Soviet decision-makers do take seriously the structure of the military situation.

The pattern of Soviet crisis behavior in Mediterranean and Middle East crises shows a clear disinclination to commit military forces to that area. In each major postwar Mid-East crisis, the Soviet Union seemingly delayed threats of military intervention until a resolution of the conflict was already fairly in sight.[9] Soviet behavior in regard to the current conflict in Lebanon is consistent with this assessment.

Although this approach has been a viable way to avoid confrontation and possible escalation to East-West war in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, it does not follow that the United States or the Soviet Union will give up attempts to limit their adversary's efforts to expand political influence and control or desist from the goal of eliminating its rival from the region.

Soviet and American inhibitions against engaging each other's military forces in the Mediterranean region and the Gulf because of the risks raised by superpower military conflict could survive, nevertheless, the blurring of the distinction between the central and regional conflict systems and the weakening of the boundary between internal and international political systems.

Soviet behavior in past Middle East and Mediterranean crises is, after all, not an isolated phenomenon. It stems from recognizable anxieties

and doubts regarding the ability to control the local conflict situation so that it does not escalate to strategic confrontation. The difficulty of calculating U.S. crisis behavior is also a factor. U.S. behavior during crises has lacked steadfastness and predictability, over time.

U.S. crisis behavior must surely be baffling to Soviet leaders all the more because it has been in the United States, particularly, that refined theories on the calculating use of strategic power and coercive diplomacy have been developed. Some of these doctrines have been incorporated in American strategic policy; like the limited war concepts of Presidential Directive No. 59, and presumably the National Security Decision Document 13.[10]

Similarly, refined theories about the manipulative use of strategic power, like compellence, graduated escalation, and selective nuclear options, have not been developed in the Soviet Union. Soviet reluctance to use military force beyond the immediate periphery of Soviet hegemony are attested by the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in 1956 and 1968, the Sino-Soviet border clashes of 1969, and the more recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.[11] The single exception, the Cuban missile crisis, has been recognized by the Soviets as aberrant and dangerous.

At the same time, it is important to remember that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union can tolerate the decisive defeat of a major ally, or client state, by external forces that are a proxy of the adversary superpower. This is because it would significantly affect its own regional position and its credibility as a patron. This observation explains, in part, why the simultaneous involvement of the superpowers in the Middle East has added a significant dimension to the regional problem rather than simply a means of resolving it.

These facts, coupled with the fluidity of the situation, also underscores why the danger that local war might escalate into superpower, and East-West conflict, remains very real. The concept and the operation of mutual deterrence that has prevailed in Europe is difficult if not practically impossible to operationalize beyond the Southern flank of NATO. Superpower confrontational rules in third areas are all that is available for dampening the prospects of escalation to superpower conflict in the southern reaches of the Mediterranean and the Gulf.

These rules have as their primary objective the avoidance of escalation from local conflict to general nuclear war between the American and Soviet superpowers. The avoidance of direct military engagements between Soviet and American forces in local conflicts, operationalizes this maxim. As a consequence, it has been possible, so far, to keep non-European concerns from becoming central to the American-Soviet rivalry in ways that would threaten military conflict in Europe.

Another tenet that has operated within these rules, since the 1962 Cuban missile confrontation, has been the mutual recognition that the line of superpower competition must be drawn short of the vital U.S. and Soviet interests defined by their respective spheres of political control, with the prerogative of each superpower to protect its interests.[12] But where does one draw this line in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the adjacent Gulf?

The most forthright declaration defining United States interests in this extended region is that of President Carter. It continues to be the keystone of U.S. policy. On January 23, 1980, in his State of the Union

speech he declared: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[13]

However, neither the geographic nor the political boundaries of the Gulf and the Middle East are precise enough to warrant the assumption of a clear demarcation line between East and West, as is the case between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

That line has tended to become obscured during conflicts in the Middle East. For example, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict, Turkey permitted Soviet military overflights and Soviet naval transit through the Dardanelles to resupply Egypt and Syria. At the same time, Turkey refused the U.S. permission to use facilities on Turkish soil, to refuel or reconnoiter during the U.S. airlift to Israel. The Turkish leadership's sensitivities, regarding their independence of action, were more focused on their proximity to the Soviet Union and their reluctance to provoke a Soviet response against Turkey than on concerns regarding their standing with Arab states. The main Turkish preoccupation in an eventual Gulf crisis would be whether it involved an actual or potential Soviet client state.[14]

The prudence displayed by Soviet leaders regarding military initiatives of questionable strategic value is likely to continue to assert itself in situations that could lead to strategic engagement with the United States.[15] On the other hand, visible weaknesses in an adversary's military capabilities have historically created incentives for quick military initiatives. All the more so, if the political payoffs were significant, and timely

retribution difficult to effectuate.

Soviet leaders are not uniquely bound by previous patterns of behavior, notwithstanding their belief in the inevitability of communism and their commitment to Leninist tactics which bridle radical short-term solutions that might undermine long-range strategic goals.

The evident weaknesses in U.S. military capabilities in the Gulf area, and, for the time being, in reserve as well--coupled with the geographic advantages of the Soviet Union--could generate incentives that would erode Soviet caution. This outcome would be facilitated if political opportunities arose sufficiently tantalizing or threatening to perceived Soviet national interests. The experience the Soviets have been having in Afghanistan may be most pertinent in this respect. It may be too soon and too difficult, with the evidence at hand, to assess how critical this factor might be, however, in Soviet decisions during future crises in the Gulf region. Equally critical would be the state of the political relationships that prevailed, at the time, between the United States and its NATO allies, and between the United States and countries in the region of the Gulf.

The very political factors that operate to create binding commitments between the United States and regional powers in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Gulf threatened by Soviet hegemonial tendencies--be they direct expansion by military means or indirect control gained through supporting the overthrow of the governments in these countries--also produce direct links between local turmoil and superpower confrontation by coalescing internal and international politics into a single process.

The southern Mediterranean and the Gulf are regions that exhibit precarious inter-state dynamics because either national identities are at least in part uncertain and even more importantly because the legitimacy of governments is often qualified. Nation-building in these regions, with its attendant necessity for political and economic development, is threatened not only by ethnic fragmentation, but also by an ideological search for the means to achieve a national cohesion that will legitimize the rule that must guide political, economic, and social development into a modern mold, capable of incorporating also the essence of traditional values.

The most critical links between internal and international politics of relevance for international security are forged in this nexus. For it is there that superpower intervention is politically rationalized in the context of rival ideologies by the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as by indigenous ruling élites.

The U.S. intervention in Vietnam, in the 1960's, and the more recent Soviet intervention in Afghanistan are clear examples of the dual nature of the relations between superpowers and local states. From one angle, a clear and firm defensive relationship between patron and client states act as a deterrent to the adversary superpower. From another, if internal political circumstances obscure expectations about that relationship, miscalculations with grave consequences for peace are possible, especially if the military capacity of the status quo superpower is inadequate or severely hampered politically.

It has been pointed out most cogently that the success of the security-related commitments undertaken by the United States to safeguard

the principal oil supply for the Western and industrial world cannot depend on U.S. will alone, nor on primary reliance on military instruments alone. "In an area as fragmented, unstable, politicized, . . . as well as vulnerable to, external intrusions as is the Middle East, a defense policy that relies in the main on a military instrumentality to create collective security is bound to prove inadequate, unless the political foundations on which a multinational effort must rest are solid."[16] Otherwise, the regional use of American military forces can be frustrated in its objectives "in the moment of need by the unwillingness or inability of local governments to do their share."[17]

In effect, deterrence of the possible use of military means to achieve Soviet political aspirations in the oil-rich Gulf region, and the concomitant risks of escalation to superpower confrontation or war depend critically on the military and political viability of U.S. approaches to the situation that prevails in these and in adjoining regions.

Consequently, it is a matter for concern that the juncture effected by the U.S. between the defense of the Gulf and the Atlantic Alliance, particularly with NATO in the Mediterranean, derives from weaknesses in U.S. military posture and the restrictive assumptions of U.S. diplomacy.

To these weaknesses must be added the dysfunctional impact of the disagreements between the United States and its West European allies on the diagnosis of the security threat to the Gulf and the appropriate means to resolve it.

The concrete military elements that make the United States the link between NATO and Gulf security derive, in part, from U.S. handicaps not

easily compensated for by its allies. Setting aside, for the moment, the ways in which U.S. NATO allies could assist the United States as the guarantor for the defense of the Gulf, the main U.S. shortcoming is definable in terms of the availability of appropriate military forces.

Although the establishment of sufficiently equipped facilities in the Mediterranean and the Gulf for use by American military forces is a critical aspect in the defense of the Gulf, an equally major shortcoming is the deficiency in American military capabilities. The decision to create a U.S. Rapid Deployment Force from existing military units, mostly earmarked for NATO and the Far East, has widened the gap between U.S. commitments abroad and the military resources needed to fulfill them. By diminishing the U.S. military capacity in NATO, should threats to the Gulf region require it, the security of Western Europe would be degraded precisely at a time of crisis when it would need to be a strong deterrent against the temptation for possible Soviet pressures.

U.S. military planning notwithstanding, current American force levels make it virtually impossible to deal effectively with a significant military challenge in more than one area.[18] Thus, an intractable problem now faces the West. How is the U.S. to implement a simultaneous force buildup in NATO and the Gulf if prudence required it? U.S. force levels are not sufficient to repel a Soviet assault in the Gulf without jeopardizing the U.S. commitment to the conventional defense of NATO.[19] The war in Vietnam was waged, to a considerable degree by U.S. forces earmarked for European contingencies. In 1980, the deployment of U.S. carrier task forces in the Arabian Sea was made possible by withdrawing U.S. carriers

on station along NATO's southern flank and in the Pacific.[20] Inversely, the current U.S. naval presence off embattled Lebanon has been augmented by U.S. naval forces withdrawn from the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic.

The strategic risks resulting from reliance on U.S. forces committed to both Gulf and NATO contingencies could be serious in the event of a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union benefits from shorter and interior logistical lines of communications, larger military forces and contiguous proximity to the Gulf, as well as Europe. Soviet pressures in one area could divert deployable U.S. forces from the real location of Soviet intent.[21]

It should not be surprising, in view of these factors, that of the problematic relationships which connect NATO's presence in the Mediterranean with the role of the United States in the Middle East and the Gulf, security considerations have been central in American policies and crucial in the relations of local states with the American superpower. Politically, the United States remains the dominant external power in the Mediterranean and the adjacent regions.

The United States plays the cardinal role for Western security in the Mediterranean. It is the only country that has been able to generate sufficient countervailing military power to balance the projection of Soviet military power into the region. Moreover, until recently the U.S. has been the Western nation most capable of discharging the role of conflict manager.

For the foreseeable future, it remains the only major external power with the political capacity, through its bilateral relations within and

outside NATO, to bring coherence to the defense of the area. No European nation seems capable of substituting for the United States in this role. No multilateral viable diplomatic and military mechanisms are politically promising without the participation and the commitment of the United States.

In sum, the risks that could attend the strategic shifts that have occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union--with their potential effects and pertinence for economic relations between the industrial and the developing countries--are important above all for the superpowers' relations with the Third World and their respective allies. Hence, within the Atlantic Alliance, the adverse consequences of the shifts in the East-West military balances in favor of the Soviet bloc concern less "the deterrence of a Soviet attack on the United States than the credibility of extended deterrence through the threat of escalation [or] the danger of a strategic decoupling between the United States and Western Europe."[22]

The military configurations and the particular problems facing the American RDF, that link it to U.S. NATO postures and deployment, could complicate further the problems of U.S. extended deterrence in the 1980's, because the dissonances between the United States and Western Europe on common policies toward the Gulf emasculate any possible countervailing strategies.

II. U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE MEDITERREAN AND THE GULF

It has been insightfully argued that American foreign policy has been torn between universalist policies with reliance on narrow security interest served by military power and "abstention, value judgments and world order."[23]

Insofar as U.S. national interests in the Mediterranean and the Gulf are concerned, geopolitical considerations have by far and large dominated. In fact, it can be maintained that the only real tensions in U.S. policies toward these areas have occurred between the global thrust of American foreign policy and the inevitably local concerns of regional states. Otherwise said, between the requirements of the central, superpower system of deterrence and the difficulties attending regional security, in areas where local enemies are more immediately threatening to regional states than is the military power of the Soviet Union.

These tensions have persisted and lately intensified because the military reach of the Soviet Union has grown in capability. The intimate relationship between the exploitation of regional conflicts for Soviet political purposes and the East-West military balance persists. It will continue to confront the United States with difficult choices about direct involvement in regional crises and conflicts. For it is not readily apparent when U.S. involvement will strengthen the East-West equilibrium in these areas or when it will sap U.S. military capacities, and therefore the diplomatic credibility of the United States.

For all that, basically the United States had viewed regional military balances as critical even before the advent of strategic parity

summoned the fear that the Soviet Union would exploit this condition for probing initiatives in the Third World. And they can be critical in the overall balance of power.

However, shifts in regional balances in third areas are most vulnerable not to superpower manipulation but to internal political changes. The latter are not amenable even to prescriptive superpower military interventions, because they are political outcomes of more complex societal changes, not mere changes in ideology or political regimes.

These the superpowers can exploit but not generate. The fall of the Shah in Iran and the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt, as well as the internal political changes in Afghanistan which confronted the Soviets with the dilemmas and the opportunities that led them to invade, are not primarily explainable in terms of failures or successes of U.S. foreign policy.

The same can be said for the fundamental regime changes that have occurred in Portugal and Spain. On the other hand, a strong argument can be made that Soviet interference was kept at bay by their location in the U.S. security sphere. Similarly, Egypt's situation in an essentially American sphere of influence surely inhibited an aggressive response to Sadat's political volte-face. Even Khomeini's revolution, at least up to the hostage crisis, must have benefited by Soviet calculations regarding the linkages between Iranian national defense and U.S. security interests.

American national interests in the Mediterranean and the Gulf region cannot be understood if they are divorced from the centrality of East-West

considerations in U.S. foreign policy. This is another way of saying that the basic referent for American politics toward these regions has been the containment of the Soviet Union's hegemonial strivings.

Moreover, although U.S. policies have certainly included awareness of the importance of political and economic aspects of regional problems, the emphasis during most of the postwar period in U.S. policies toward the Mediterranean and the Gulf has been on security.[24]

On the other hand, constraints on American military operations have been essentially political. They have derived from the internal politics of Mediterranean and Mid-East countries, and have been applied during conflicts between regional states.

Throughout the postwar period, Washington has viewed conflicts like the Arab-Israeli wars and the Greek-Turkish conflicts in Cyprus as creating opportunities for Soviet diplomacy to expand the political influence and the military presence of the Soviet Union in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

This definition of U.S. national interests in these regions in markedly security terms has had a basic consistency, easily brought out through an historical perspective. Notwithstanding the deviations exemplified by the disfunctional U.S. arms embargo against Turkey, during the late 1970's, and the emphasis of the initial policies of the Carter Administration, American governments have shown a persistent preference for geopolitics and global, or East-West, approaches. The historical record is both clear and instructive.

Security Considerations as a Function of East-West Factors

The past explains the present and may well explain the future. The American military presence in the Mediterranean, and American diplomatic interest in the Middle East, coincided with the transformation of the United States into a global military power with a permanent internationalist foreign policy.

It may be argued, in fact, that the first act of U.S. policy that could be qualified as Mediterranean was the enunciation of the "Truman Doctrine." In 1947, U.S. economic and military aid to Greece, torn by a civil war initiated by Communist insurgency, and to Turkey, under Soviet pressure at the Dardanelles and Turkey's eastern frontiers, became the first concrete acts of assistance to local states, launching U.S. containment. Britain, having given notice to the United States that it would be unable to continue economic and military support for Greece and Turkey, the U.S. government saw this as a situation where the concept of containment was applicable.

Viewed against the events that had occurred since the end of the war, the British withdrawal was seen as giving the Soviet Union a free hand in the Turkish Straits, permitting the intrusion of Soviet influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The $400 million asked from Congress by President Truman was justified in terms of the national security of the United States.[25]

The early postwar period also tied the Mediterranean to the Gulf. While the first concrete U.S. military aid was given to Greece and Turkey,

the very first American-Soviet military confrontation took place in Iran.

In 1946, following the end of hostilities between the Axis and Allied powers, the Soviets refused Allied demands to withdraw Soviet forces from northern Iran. They rationalized their position by the establishment of the "autonomous" republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. The American government induced the Soviet leadership to withdraw by making clear to them that the United States was "too strong to be beaten and too determined to be frightened." [26]

The Soviet withdrawal was all the more significant since drives toward the Mediterranean and the Gulf had figured importantly in Russia's foreign policy during the 18th and 19th centuries.[27]

U.S. geopolitical interests, because of the Soviet Union's proximity to the Gulf and the Middle East, dictated concern about Soviet moves even without national considerations connected with oil. Nevertheless, U.S. preoccupation with Soviet conduct in the Gulf region did not lack awareness of the security implications of oil, even then.

During the decade following the Soviet-American confrontation over Iran, U.S. planning for war assumed that an American-Soviet military conflict would be protracted, regardless of the possible use of nuclear weapons. There was great concern for the security of oil supplies to the West. The United States had been the main supplier of the oil required by Allied combat operations during World War II. But estimates in the late 1940's and the 1950's projected U.S. petroleum reserves indadequate to provide enough oil for a major war, lasting beyond six months.[28]

A Soviet drive toward the shores of the Gulf, combined with the addition of the Middle East to the Soviet sphere of political influence, through pressures on Turkey and diplomatic and subversive penetration elsewhere, would have effectively undermined U.S. and Western influence in these regions. The consequences for the security of oil supplies to Europe, Japan and the United States would have materially resembled the current situation; only before and not sparked by the 1973 October War.

The ultimate goal of containment, as originally defined by George Kennan, was not the bipolar division of the world into permanent Soviet and American spheres of influence. It was rather the eventual emergence of independent centers of power in Europe and Asia.[29] The Yugoslav defection from the Soviet bloc in 1948 was seen as a precedent confirming the assumption that the Soviets would have difficulty in controlling their communist but also nationalist comrades. The United States could coexist and benefit from a diverse and multipolar world in which, besides the Soviet Union and the United States, Great Britain, Germany with central Europe, and Japan, were to be the other centers of industrial and military power. The danger arose only when hostility combined with threatening military capability.[30]

Concurrently, secure spheres of U.S. influence were indicated. On the list were the countries of the Mediterranean, including the Iberian peninsula and Morocco, and the countries of the Middle East, therein included Iran.

The only nation that combined the two basic elements that could threaten United States security was the Soviet Union. At first, it was

believed, however, that the ravages of the Second World War made it unlikely that the Soviet Union would risk another major conflict. Like good Leninists Soviet leaders would prefer to make gains by political rather than military means. Because Kennan had defined the Soviet challenge not only in military, but also in ideological and political terms, his recommendations emphasized economic and political means of combatting this threat to U.S. national interests.

These were the basic tenets for the original policy of containment. But while George Kennan could propose, he could not decide the implementation of the policy. National Security Council Memorandum 68, issued in the Spring of 1950, just before the outbreak of the Korean War, set the specific guidelines for implementation, instead. That document focused American efforts on the Soviet Union's capacity for aggression, whatever its actual intentions.[31]

Consequently, the focus on the Soviet Union's direct and indirect capacity to threaten the status quo, by violent means, combined with the beginnings of a Soviet nuclear capability, shaped the implementation of U.S. containment into a decided emphasis on the military aspects of policy.

The Truman Doctrine's political and military rationales for aid to Greece and Turkey were leavened by this turn of events. Mutual U.S. security treaties were concluded through a bilateral approach that was to define the future orientation in U.S. relations with the countries of the Mediterranean, including those joining NATO, and in the Middle East. The U.S. bilateral accords for naval, air, and intelligence installations,

signed during the 1950's, with Italy, Spain, Morocco, Portugal, Iran, and Libya need no elaboration. Clearly, these were cast in an explicitly East-West mold.

If defined from the perspective of the various American presidents since Truman, the official objectives of U.S. policies toward the Mediterranean and adjoining regions remain essentially those the United States set forth when it first entered Mediterranean and Middle Eastern politics:

- To maintain a balance of power with the Soviet Union.
- To help defend Greece, Turkey, Italy, Spain and Portugal against direct and indirect military and political pressures by the Soviet Union.
- To guarantee the survival of Israel (and after the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt, also Egypt's independence).
- To help assure the flow of vital oil to Western Europe, and the West.
- To keep the Soviet Union and Soviet influence out of the Middle East and North Africa.
- To promote regional stability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.
- To maintain the political cohesion of the southern flank of NATO.[32]

A threat to U.S. interests in the Mediterranean does not have to come directly from the Soviet Union. Regional states can create, on their own, political instabilities and crises affecting security. These include

revolutionary and interstate conflicts that can adversely affect U.S. national interests.

U.S. tolerance for the export of revolution or the use of confrontational tactics and outright military combat by regional antagonists is necessarily limited in a region where a U.S.-Soviet military collision is always possible and where geography and politics link with possible threats to NATO and European security to the north and conflictual oil politics and Soviet expansion to the south.

Thus, the original premises of the Truman Doctrine and the first containment policies linking indigenous communist political forces and Western security in these areas were never abandoned by successive American administrations. Only once, at the outset of the Carter Administration, but fleetingly in regard to Eurocommunism, did the U.S. approach deviate. Even then, however, the change was in tactics not strategy. In any case, the main U.S. concern about Eurocommunist parties was always security.[33] The Carter approach was predicated on a permanent division of influence along East-West lines in Europe and the Mediterranean. As intractable as the issue of Eurocommunism has been for U.S. foreign policy, its resolution has demonstrated the strength of the traditionalist outlook in U.S. policy toward the Mediterranean.

The centrality in U.S. Mediterranean and Gulf policies of the rivalry with the Soviet Union, with its emphasis on the political uses of military force, has inevitably cast the United States in the role of ultimate guarantor against Soviet military threats to the security of the Mediterranean countries of Europe and Turkey, members of NATO, and Israel

and West-leaning Arab countries.

Political turbulence in these regions has also forced the United States to become crisis manager and the mediator in regional conflicts--lest the security of the area be undermined by providing the Soviet Union with diplomatic and subversive opportunities.

These U.S. roles have not merely operationalized in forceful fashion American policy objectives in these conflictual and politically unstable regions, they have been--and will continue to provide--tests for the viability and success of U.S. national interests.

An admittedly terse summary of the past record of the United States in the role of security guarantor and conflict manager and mediator suggests the United States has successfully managed these roles, until the mid-1970's.

The 1974 Greek-Turkish conflict in Cyprus, and its aftermath, have cast a long shadow over American capability to mediate Mediterranean conflicts among allies. The radical changes brought by the fall of the Shah in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Shatt-al-Arab war have seriously questioned U.S. capabilities both as security guarantor and conflict manager in the Gulf. Only in the Middle East, U.S. ability to perform as a conflict manager and mediator remains purposeful. It is a moot question how the conflict in Lebanon will affect this role in the future. As for an American security shield against possible Soviet military encroachments in the Eastern Mediterranean, U.S. resolve has not been tested since the 1973 October War.

Critical tests of the formulation as well as the implementation of American policies and of the capacity of the United States to guarantee the defense of these areas--in tandem with the successful management of their political crises--will surely come in the years immediately ahead.

Current American Policies: A Traditionalist Outlook in a Dynamic Environment

With the demise of the Soviet-American détente, U.S. foreign policy rationales have come to reflect a reassertion of the fundamental definitions of the containment policies of the 1950's.

Of significance, for the security of Europe and the Mediterranean, are two aspects of current U.S. policies. The first, and potentially most crucial, is the acceptance of the feasibility of nuclear war--however limited or contingent may be its definition in American strategic doctrine.

Although there are major differences in the operational aspects of Soviet and American nuclear doctrines, they both accept the feasibility of fighting nuclear wars, and possibly winning them.[34]

Obviously, this does not mean that either superpower prefers nuclear war to deterrence. But it does mean that strategic arms control, with its political consequences for East-West relations, is no longer the keystone of the relations between the United and the Soviet Union.

Arms control doctrines, by giving priority to the deterrence of nuclear war itself, as opposed to the deterrence of a strategic attack by the adversary superpower, had provided for U.S. foreign policy the only concepts peculiarly associated with the nuclear age. The attempt

to return to the premises of the 1950's is an affirmation of the traditionalist outlook in U.S. foreign policy. Hence, it may now be said that during most of the postwar period, the foreign policies of the major powers have been marked not so much by the belief that nuclear weapons have created an unprecedented situation as by strivings to return to traditional views about the part played by war in international politics.[35]

The second aspect is the renewed emphasis on the ideological rationales for U.S. foreign policy. This too is a reaffirmation of the traditionalist U.S. outlook. During the détente, U.S. policy was characterized by attempts to find a mutually acceptable U.S.-Soviet political modus operandi that attentuated ideological rivalry, as well as making the avoidance of nuclear war the highest goal of U.S. foreign policy.

The mutual Soviet and American blurring of the distinctions between war and peace, which the mating of war-fighting doctrines with ideology brings about, has had yet another consequence for international politics. If qualitative political change in international relations is more important than the quantitative elements of war outcomes, what is striking is the way nuclear doctrines have become the instruments of ideological convictions for both American and Soviet national leaders.

International terrorism has added a major factor that U.S. policy must cope with. However, the context in which U.S. policymakers have framed it stipulates the matrix for terrorist actions in the policies of the Soviet Union through surrogates, like Libya. The bipolar perspective of U.S. perceptions remains therefore undisturbed.

Once more, there is a focus on the threats to regional stability created by the possible Soviet exploitation of political unrest through the revolutionary overthrow of regimes aligned with the United States, or explicitly anti-communist.

In the words of former Secretary Haig, "The Soviet Union does not create every international conflict, but it would be dangerous to ignore Soviet intervention that aggravates such conflict . . . . A regional approach that fails to appreciate the strategic aspect of Soviet activity will fail ultimately to resolve regional conflicts as well."[36]

There are no doubts in the minds of Reagan Administration officials that the world is essentially a single strategic stage, where regional conflict systems are inevitably linked to the central East-West system of deterrence. Their top policy priority is the restoration of American strategic capability, hand in hand with the strengthening of the regional capabilities of friendly states. The belief is strong among these officials that U.S. strategic superiority had redressed regional Western inferiority from Europe to the Gulf. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would not have occurred, they would argue, if the United States had not lost strategic superiority.[37]

If one considers that the greatest political and territorial gains made by the Soviet Union were achieved when the United States either had a nuclear monopoly or was overwhelmingly superior in nuclear forces, this assumption becomes itself arguable.

But this should not be puzzling, if the impact of expectations on perceptions is considered. In foreign policy, as in everyday life, the

interpretation of an adversary's behavior is conditioned by predispositions that lead policymakers to notice certain aspects to the neglect of others, and to find it difficult to consider alternative explanations.[38]

This approach to perceiving is itself rational, and is reinforced by the fact that, in the area of defense, the Reagan Administration is either staffed, or advised, by individuals who were influential in shaping the perceptions on which the original containment was based, and their disciples. Many were, some are still, Democrats. They may be conservatives in foreign policy but do not represent partisan Democratic or Republic party positions on defense.

They share, instead, a common ideological outlook on East-West relations that strongly influences the Reagan Administration's attitudes toward U.S. military doctrines, its judgments on arms control, and the assessment of détente; consequently, the definition of U.S. national interests.

Most believe that military power is the sine qua non for political power and influence. Afghanistan is seen as a confirmation of this thesis.[39] The political polarization of the international system is reasserted, with a somewhat ambivalent acceptance of Communist China. The globalist approach in U.S. foreign policy based on the fundamentals of containment strategy has been firmly established.

In practice, what has this return to the original tenets of U.S. containment meant for the security and politics of the Mediterranean and the Gulf?

Tests of policy are always difficult and contingent upon the assumptions that govern analysis; even when policies having been implemented have become history. Historical explanations themselves can hardly satisfy the

requirements of science. How much less sure must analysis be when the implementation of U.S. policies toward these regions has hardly begun?

Just the same, it is becoming evident that the strongly traditionalist outlook of current U.S. policies will have to adjust its political rationales in order to synchronize its East-West emphasis with the changed dynamics of North-South factors in these regions.

Adjusting to the changed dynamics of these factors is required most of all in regard to Western Europe's relations with the oil producing states of the Gulf, and the structural changes that have occurred in the political regimes of Mediterranean countries allied to the United States.

To date, American insistence on defining relations with the countries of the region on the one hand almost exclusively in East-West terms, and on the other primarily within a security focus has increased the malaise in U.S. relations with countries in the Mediterranean on issues regarding the Gulf, and intensified political dilemmas for local states. This has been true for both the Southern European and the moderate Arab countries. The approach reduces the possibility that the United States can utilize the assets it has available through NATO in the Mediterranean.

At first glance, the assets available to American diplomacy in the Mediterranean are impressive, and endowed with a degree of permanence not matched by the Soviet Union.

Italy, a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance, has highlighted its commitment to the West, in recent years, by the acceptance of NATO by the major opposition party, the PCI, and by the active, and critically needed support by the Italian government for the modernization and

deployment of Eurostrategic weapon systems, on Italian soil. Moreover, quiet and effective Italian diplomacy has undercut both Libyan influence in and the potential for conflict with Malta. This outcome has also diminished the prospects for the Soviet Union's influence in the island republic.

Greece and Turkey have survived their bitter 1974 conflict over Cyprus to return to full-fledged NATO membership. The severe strains in their respective bilateral relations with the United States, resulting especially from the U.S. arms embargo against Turkey and the election to power of the Greek Leftist opposition have given way to renewed agreements for the operation of U.S. military installations in those countries.

In spite of prolonged debate and strong dissent from the political opposition, Spain has joined NATO and is engaged in negotiations to renew the bilateral U.S.-Spanish security treaty. This has added to Western assets in the Mediterranean. The continued participation of Portugal in NATO was not put in jeopardy by the revolutionary change in the country's governance. Portugal remains a steadfast U.S. ally.

Rapprochement between the United States and France on East-West security perspectives, begun under the Giscard government, has continued, even intensified, under President Mitterand. The new French and American administrations do have greater dissonance in regard to policy approaches toward the Maghreb and North-South relations. Nevertheless, French participation, jointly with the United States and Italy, in the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut shows that France is ready to cooperate with U.S. initiatives in the Middle East, when they do not violate the premises of French policy in the region.

There is little question that these Mediterranean assets derive their saliency and strength and permanence in the first place from their being directly tied to membership in the Atlantic Alliance. The basic security character of the Alliance, preeminent from its origins, anchors NATO in the Mediterranean to the East-West axis of contention. The permanent strength of these assets can hardly be credited to any U.S. administration. They derive essentially from the irreplaceable U.S. security role and the confluence of basic security interests between America and Western Europe.

When circumstances in the regional environment mute East-West security factors by threats to political stability generated locally, East-West military considerations must yield to political ones in U.S. policy. This is so even when military conflict actually takes place between regional antagonists.

For in the end, as the siege of Beirut and the Iraqi-Iranian War will probably show, there are no military solutions to the political problems of the area. Any neglect of regional political factors in American diplomacy tends to undercut the value of Mediterranean assets for Western and U.S. policies toward the Gulf. It also tends to complicate U.S. relations with its NATO allies in the Mediterranean. The effects are adverse to the very security policies the United State seeks to promote. In fact, the United States has had its greatest successes when, as conflict manager and mediator, it has sought political solutions to local conflicts. The Camp David agreements and the resolution of the 1964 and 1970 Cyprus crises are the best examples. The Habib mission is a current example.

Undue emphasis on military aspects and the military means of U.S. diplomacy, like military aid, will obscure the assessment of political factors most of all in the U.S. approach to impending or actual regime changes. There, U.S. policies are constrained, generally, by unduly restrictive ideological prescriptions as well.

The greatest strains in U.S. relations with Mediterranean members of NATO have arisen, therefore, from the intra-alliance Cyprus conflict and Arab-Israeli wars and from actual or impending regime changes in Mediterranean NATO countries. The political issues have been the more trenchant in their effects. And it is in the political dimension that the traditional U.S. approach to relations has been most troubled.

At times, rigid American insistence on the priority of East-West considerations has impacted negatively in increasing measure on the internal politics of the Mediterranean members of NATO. In France, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, this American stance helped to polarize internal politics during the 1970's on defense and foreign policies, contributing to the shift toward the political Left.

American insistence on framing its relations with Mediterranean allies in oversimplified and ideologically derived communist/anti-communist political equations, has itself become part of the problem in U.S. relations with Mediterranean Europe. This was the case with Eurocommunism in Italy and with respect to the Portuguese revolution.

Convenient oversimplification along East-West perspectives, gauged by a security focus, has also prevailed in U.S. foreign policy where the politics of oil tie the Mediterranean region to the Gulf through U.S.

relations with local states; members of NATO or in North Africa and the Middle East. Pertinent--sometimes crucial--aspects of internal politics and diplomacy have been sometimes sacrificed to eclectic preferences for East-West ideological and security-first formulations.

The result has been a potential weakening in the domestic bases of political support for the policies aligning these countries with the United States on the defense of the Gulf against eventual Soviet moves. The exception is Italy. There the adroit maneuvers of the Socialists on defense, as members of the coalition government, have deflected the influence of the Communist opposition. The latter is inhibited by its support of NATO anyway, and its decline in electoral power. The examples are Tunisia and Morocco.

The situation for the Maghreb countries is aggravated by the conflict in the Sahara, whose intra-regional aspects that include Algeria and Libya--and less directly Spain and France--outweigh considerations specifically tied to the Gulf. Nor can they be framed solely in East-West and communist/anti-communist frames of reference.

Morocco should be the object of particular attention (in regard to the linkages between domestic politics and external affairs) because a victory in the Western Sahara by the Polisario guerrillas or a prolonged and costly stalemate could bring the fall of King Hassan's regime. The consequences for the just renegotiated use of Moroccan airfields by the American RDF, for Gulf contingencies, could be the jeopardy or outright elimination of such use.

Another factor that could eventually help undermine the regime stems from the character of current U.S. policies themselves. The trade-off between increased U.S. military aid and sales to bolster Moroccan capabilities against the Polisario and Morocco's grant of facilities to the U.S. military could spark an enlargement of the war, and increase the risks of its internationalization.

Current U.S. policies have already stalemated the progress in Algerian-U.S. relations that followed in the wake of Algeria's successful mediation in the American hostage crisis. A consequence has been the aggravation of a central dilemma that has afflicted traditional U.S. diplomacy toward the Mediterranean. That is, the avoidance of stark choices between a U.S. globalist position of support for regimes friendly to the United States--regardless of indigenous realities--and a U.S. regionalist position that adapts to local circumstances--regardless of their international implications.

American policy fixation on East-West military conflictual relations, in an almost exclusively ideological frame of reference, risks camouflaging essential political factors of the regional reality. Political relations between the United States and local governments will tend, therefore, to encourage a U.S. approach to local governments that is so narrowly partisan, in ideological terms, that it offends authentic nationalist sentiments.

This brings, in its wake, a narrowing of the options in U.S. policy, for dealing with the internal political opposition and with political successor governments. It can be also divisive within; by hedging the

host government's support for U.S. diplomatic initiatives. Over the years, the constraining impact of such an approach has been demonstrated at various times in American relations with Turkey, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.

There have been notable exceptions, two of them involving Mediterranean powers. When Western security positions are clearly at stake, the United States has tolerated the subordination of U.S. ideological preferences. Ever since the Cold War years this has been the case with Yugoslavia. Starting with détente, a rapprochement has been effected with Communist China. This, in spite of the long history in U.S. domestic politics of opposition to its recognition. Today, the Reagan Administration finds it possible to obscure the issue of Communist participation in the French Socialist government, because the latter is unmistakeably supportive of American security policies toward the Soviet Union in Europe.

However, in China and Yugoslavia, national independence from Soviet foreign policy control was well established, together with the permanence of their Communist regimes. In France, Gaullism had shown the viability and strength of French foreign and defense policy independence from the weight of U.S. hegemony in the Alliance. The orderly transition to a Socialist government has also shown the solidity of democratic institutions in the Fifth Republic. Thus, ideologically inspired American intrusions of a partisan nature have been effectively barred.

These exceptions fit, nevertheless, in the East-West emphasis of U.S. foreign policy, and have traded ideological prescription for security interests. They did not include political considerations that were not tied to major East-West issues.

The international environment in which U.S. policy must operate regarding the defense of the Gulf includes, instead, important elements of a North-South nature, not easily defined in exclusive East-West terms, or by reference to military security against Soviet threats. Even in the security sphere, their implementation is severely hobbled by political factors that take meaning only in a regional context.

Although geopolitics demands a viable American, and Western, defense of the Gulf against Soviet military expansion, it is the regional, and domestic, political variables that are likely to be the most crucial. It is, moreover, at the interface between politics and economics that the United States could be aided most significantly by its NATO allies in the Mediterranean and moderate Arab states there and in the Gulf. The known difficulties[40] inherent in achieving an American military posture in that region adequate to deter additional Soviet territorial expansions, demand compensations achievable only through U.S. diplomacy that enlists political factors in the defense of the Gulf.

Starting with the enunciation of the "Carter Doctrine," the U.S. approach to the security problems of the area has shown an almost singular concern with the military aspects. This single focus has been intensified by the Reagan Administration, so that the energies of American diplomacy have been expended almost exclusively on trying to acquire facilities to be used by the RDF, in the Mediterranean and the Gulf region.

There have been attempts to set up strategic enclaves in the eastern and the western Mediterranean. Those in the east would pivot on Egypt, Israel, possibly Turkey. Those in the west would include Morocco,

Portugal and Spain. Attempts have been made to both warn and isolate Libya, treated as a Soviet surrogate.

The enclaves in the eastern and western Mediterranean are both rationalized by the projected needs of the American rapid deployment force. Seventy percent of the U.S. military aid program for fiscal 1982, or $6.87 billion, has gone to countries in the eastern quadrant of the Mediterranean. Egypt and Israel have been the largest recipients.[41] Turkey also has received increased military and economic assistance, and Greece.

In the west, Portugal, Spain, and Morocco have been singled out also for increased security-related aid. The United States has extended military assistance to the Sudan and Tunisia to withstand pressures from Libya.[42]

Of particular interest for the Mediterranean and the Gulf, and suitably fitting into established U.S. security approaches to the Mediterranean, is the renewed concern with the size and readiness of the U.S. Navy. The present U.S. Administration insists that because U.S. allies are mostly across distant oceans, the U.S. must have naval superiority over the Soviet Union, a land power. A substantial naval budget has been passed through the Congress for cruisers, battleships and aircraft carriers, to be built or modernized during this decade. $3.8 billion was budgeted for fiscal 1982.[43] Presumably, the future will see the strenghthening of the U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, with corresponding greater use of host facilities.

All this is necessary, if U.S. credibility as a bulwark against Soviet expansion, by military means, into the Middle East and the Gulf

area is to be credible. The United States is the only Western nation that is capable of playing this role. Military assistance to Mediterranean allies of the U.S. and other West-leaning countries does help to achieve this objective. For example, the air defense systems the United States helps to develop in regional states could one day serve as a prepositioned shield under which American, possibly Western, relief forces would move. In addition to Saudi Arabia, one could envision Turkey, Egypt, and barring political constraints, Israel.

For a superpower, there is no diplomatic credibility without sufficient and flexible military capabilities. Nevertheless, to exclude from U.S. policies the need to adapt to the institutional, economic and social changes in the national societies and regional intergovernmental relationships of the Mediterranean and the Gulf is to risk making U.S. policies archaic rather than traditionalist. The dynamics of political, economic and social change demand a U.S. policy that updates the perceptions and the approach of early containment.

III. ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

"Sharing the danger as we do, we share
the right of speech . . . ."*

This right may best justify the attempt to judge the issues that link the role of the United States with Mediterranean NATO and the defense of the Gulf. But it provides neither skills nor comfort in forecasting

*The words of Jason in assembly with his Argonauts. The Voyage of Argo, p. 114 (cited in Herbert Goldhamer, The Adviser, Elsevier, New York, 1978).

political developments. Accordingly, analysis of the prospects should not be taken as predictions.

The Militarization of Regional Superpower Policies

The conspicuous militarization in the foreign policies of the Soviet Union and the United States is a basic factor that cannot be neglected in the articulation of issues. This militarization has had important consequences in the developments that have combined to make the southern shores of the Mediterranean and the Gulf conflictual regions.

Superpower emphasis on the use of military instruments for diplomatic purposes there--illustrated well by the transfer of substantial quantities of sophisticated weapons--has aggravated the regional political problems. No political problems have been visibly resolved by the influx of Soviet and Western arms. On balance, neither can it be said that either the Soviets or the Americans have uniquely gained in their security by arms transfers to the area. On the contrary, the quantum increase in the weapons available to local belligerents, states and sub-national groups, has intensified regional strife and conflict. The awesome cost in human life and property has been unmatched in the modern history of the Mideast.

Based on the evidence, it would be difficult to maintain that the input of Soviet, American and West European weapons has helped to maintain political stability. In fact, the frequency of armed conflicts in the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf seems to have been spawned as much by this influx of weapons as by the political incentives which generated them. It can hardly be said that war has been deterred, even

through the existence of local military balances. The Iraq-Iranian War, the Sahara conflict, and the 1973 October War also suggest that local wars of attrition may become the norm when quantities of weapons and materiel are available. Some of the lightning Israeli battlefield actions are exceptions which qualify but do not invalidate this trend.

One upshot is the radically decreased defense capabilities of NATO nations in the Mediterranean relative to the other regional states. For example, Turkey must now not only cope with the military disadvantages it faces vis-à-vis the Soviet Union--where she is outnumbered greatly in modern major weapon systems and combat divisions--but also in regard to Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Iraq and Syria, well equipped with many modern Soviet, and in the case of Iraq also French, weapons could deploy about four divisions apiece against Turkey. They could have a four to one advantage in tanks--while retaining substantial forces for combat with Israel. The situation in the air is even worse for Turkey.

A comparison with Iran would show similar disadvantages, this time due to the massive transfer of American equipment. Turks have had to resign themselves to relatively high levels of defense expenditures with only marginal hope for the retrieval of their defense posture from increasing obsolescence in armor and air power.[44] The losses of Iraq and Iran in the Shatt-al-Arab War, and of Syria in Lebanon will attenuate this condition, but probably not in the long run.

Although Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Spain (except for Ceuta and Melilla) do not have contiguous territorial frontiers to guard, a comparison between the major weapon systems available in their inventories

(and in some cases, manpower too) will show the relative loss of qualitative and quantitative military capacity these countries have suffered because of the unprecedented growth in military capabilities in the southern Mediterranean and the adjacent Gulf region. Israel has become the major military power in the Mid-East.[45] The temptation to resolve the essentially political Palestinian issue by military force can hardly be separated from this superior military capacity. France also must consider the altered correlation of forces in the Mediterranean region.

This is not to suggest that there are, at this time, intentions for war between members of NATO and other Mediterranean countries. Nevertheless, the expanding interrelationships between these states in economic, political, and security affairs can couple with the weakening of conflict boundaries to make these force comparisons timely and pertinent to an analysis of the political prospects for this area.

No one doubts the necessity of military power for the defense of national interests, and its utility in the diplomacy of power politics. However, when interstate politics are forced into a primarily military cast of mind--which also frames political intentions with unmitigated ideological presuppositions--the very political calculations that rationalize the use of military force are forced out of strategy.

Grand strategy becomes mystique instead of praxis. Diplomacy can no longer cogently serve the national interest or aid in establishing and preserving international stability for lack of definite political goals and assigned political priorities. The precepts of Clausewitz and Lenin are inverted, and politics becomes an adjunct to war. There

are no political solutions for military problems, only immediate or eventual military solutions. With diplomacy as an obsolescing tool of policy, the neglect of the political and economic aspects by the USSR has become a crucial issue in the policies of the major powers in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Gulf.

The Middle East, Gulf and Maghreb regional states have also succumbed to this logic, in imitation of the superpowers' approach or because their own, often tribal, traditions have given war the place of pride in their external relations. Practically, they could follow suit, because the politics of oil proffered them the means to acquire weapons inventories limited only by their capacities of absorption. The major exceptions, Israel, Egypt and Syria, as principal combatants in the Arab-Israeli conflicts, have been sustained in their military capabilities by the superpowers, which rationalized their support by the East-West competition.

Military conflicts can achieve rational political goals at many levels of military hardware inventories. Qualitative asymmetries are today more threatening to the achievement of battlefield objectives than even quantitative disparities. At any rate, the tremendous increase in the human and materials costs of regional conflicts in the Middle East and the Gulf have not wrought lasting political solutions.

The transfer of arms to the area in visibly excessive numbers[46] has promoted a penchant for total war among regional antagonists that has created a local threat to the sources and the supply of oil for the industrial world that far outweighs any immediate threats to oil resources

by the Soviet Union. The impact of arms transfers with sophisticated technology has created threats at both the inter-state regional level and in terms of local insurgency.

While the Soviet Union seeks a military solution to an elemental political problem in Afghanistan, and the United States is engaged in diplomacy almost exclusively focused on the development of a military capability with a local logistical infrastructure to meet a potential Soviet threat, the leaders of Arab oil-producing states in the Gulf are focusing concerted efforts to face up to the political consequences of the militarization they have, themselves, helped to create.

Increasingly, leaders of the Gulf states are convinced that the real threat is not Soviet armed forces slicing through Baluchistan to occupy the shore of the Gulf. They see, instead, the immediate threat in the form of the internal subversion of the traditional monarchies of the area, and the danger of regional wars initiated by a militantly fanatic Iran.

Since it was U.S. policies that originally endorsed the role of Iran as the major regional power, endowing it with the military muscle it has, these states are not comfortable with a permanent and major U.S. presence in or near the Gulf. Moreover, the practically unqualified U.S. support for Israel also militates against their acceptance of a visible American military presence, lest they be labelled by their internal political opposition as U.S. puppets. Their focus is pointedly on Iran because that country embodies for them the joint threats of external aggression and internal subversion.

Early in the Reagan Administration, the U.S. stressed a "strategic consensus," allegedly shared by Israel, Egypt, and the conservative Arab states of the Gulf. It is becoming clear that this strategic consensus is not quite what the U.S. had in mind. There has been, instead, a developing consensus about how to meet the regional threats just indicated, without the direct involvement of the U.S. forces.[47]

The bombing of a Kuwait oil-storage facility and the willingness of both Iraq and Iran to bomb each other's oil fields have exposed the vulnerability of oil resources to air attack. An Iranian strike against oil fields in Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing states could be devastating economically and politically, for the NATO Alliance as well as the Gulf states. The U.S. RDF, as presently designed, would be irrelevant.

Undue emphasis on military solutions has begot increasing use of military force in the Gulf; even if it is not according to superpower prescriptions. Since deterrence of conflict has never worked in this area, plans for regional defense may not decrease armed conflicts, regional in origin.

The Politics of Regional Threat Definition

The newly formed Gulf Cooperation Council has been transformed from a vaguely defined body for economic cooperation to an avowed council for defense.[48]

If the various resolutions and plans of the Council are related to each other, the following objectives emerge: the creation of a regional military alliance, through bilateral agreements, composed of Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman; the development of a regional integrated air defense and control and communication system; the establishment of an indigenous Gulf rapid deployment force; strengthening cooperation on internal security; the possible creation of a joint naval force to patrol the Straits of Hormuz, based on the Saudi and Omani navies; "hardening" oil storage tanks underground, and construction of new pipelines to carry oil to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Oman; strengthening ties with Pakistan, Jordan and Egypt which include understandings with Pakistan and Egypt for the defense of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Oman; and the increasing use of Pakistani and other Arab military forces in the Gulf states themselves, where manpower is insufficient (and sometimes not politically reliable).[49]

Since the countries of the Gulf continue to spend lavishly on weapons and related equipment, an attempt to rationalize these armaments into a regional defense system may possibly help to control local inter-state conflict, and help defend the area from external attack. Once materialized, the system could be useful to the United States, as well, in defending against possible Soviet expansive moves. Perhaps, it will inhibit Iranian territorial ambitions. This is the external threat most feared by the members of the Council. Nevertheless, the behavior of Iraq and Iran, and the motivations that led to the outbreak of the war cast some doubts about rationales that echo deterrence concepts valid for the European security situation.

The Council plans reveal a logic inspired by American and European approaches to conflict in the area which are not questionable in their

technical content. They can also fit usefully within a frame of East-West conflict should it occur. Its greatest merit resides, nevertheless, in its attempts at autonomy, or its separation of potential Soviet-American conflict in the Gulf from possible aggression by Iran, in direct or indirect forms.

This decoupling is the Council plan's greatest political asset. It is ironical, therefore, that the most direct menace to the approach taken by the Gulf Arab states should come from a Reagan Administration review of its Gulf policy that attempts to come to grips with those aspects of the threat to the region that do not emanate from the military capabilities of the Soviet Union, and are generated by local political factors not articulated primarily by requirements for national defense against threats from without the region.

Reportedly,[50] after this review the Pentagon has put top priority on finding ways to protect friendly Arab governments from being toppled by radicals and to warn Iran against using its military forces to threaten Oman and other Gulf conservative states. The U.S. would help Oman to modernize its army, navy and air force. Implied is the sale of American weapons. The transfer of modern weapons with a training cadre has become the usual major power approach to political influence. Most interesting is the fact that the United States is planning elaborate air, land and sea military maneuvers in and around Oman.

Presumably, this will reassure Gulf nations that American forces could hurry to their assistance in an emergency caused either by Iranian attacks or by insurgencies or coups directed against their governments.

It is said that the defense of the oil fields is now regarded only as a secondary mission in the Pentagon's revised war plans.

If these reports are accurate, the United States would intervene to engage Iranian and insurgent forces in combat, relegating considerations of possible Soviet military intervention in the Gulf region to the background. True, the United States could airlift an airborne battalion or a brigade from the United States to the Gulf in 48 hours. Combat elements of a light U.S. division (about 16,500 men) could be transported there in two weeks. Some equipment in the stocks of local states and their infrastructure could be utilized, especially by tactical fighter aircraft flown to air bases in Saudi Arabia and other states to provide air cover for the American forces.[51]

Apart from the combat viability of the U.S. forces which would undertake actions against Iran and indigenous insurgents, there is also the issue of their arriving in time to be useful, especially against coups. The more important issue is, however, whether this U.S. strategy might not complicate the local political situation to the point of being politically dysfunctional. Even more laden with problematic aspects is the U.S. being cast in the role of the military guarantor of the political status quo in the Gulf. Can this be a viable strategy for the United States and the West? Or, is this another military solution to a political problem that carries its own seeds for failure?

Without the direct intrusion of the United States into the Gulf Council's generally autonomous approach, the chances the plan will work are likely to be greater politically, even with regard to an Iranian

military threat. As for a Soviet takeover of the Gulf, no elaboration is needed to assert that only the United States, with help from its allies, can meet this threat; provided there is cooperation from local states.

Whether the Council's approach will also safeguard the dynastic rulers of the Gulf from Islamic fundamentalism, and from pressures for political and social change--the gravest threat to the political stability of the Gulf--is the critical question. For among other things, it is in this context that the Soviets generally find the more viable opportunities for expanding their influence. Is an abundance of major weapon systems, at hand in these countries, the most effective way to cope with subversion, or rebellion against, the established order?

What did quantities of sophisticated weapons do for the Shah? Or, for the Saigon government? Would the Mecca revolt have been prevented or handled better with tanks and airplanes, and a sophisticated C^3 system?

What an abundance of arms can promise in internecine conflict is very high casualties especially for civilians. This has been established by all regional conflicts in third areas, including the Middle East, during the postwar period. Furthermore, numerous and indiscriminate civilian and military casualties aggravate political problems. This reduces the options available for political solutions.

The logic of superpower deterrence, which requires considerable military capabilities, may have avoided nuclear war between the superpowers and stalemated major conventional war in Europe. It is a requirement of interstate politics among the major powers of the global system. Its logic and application extends to the superpowers' alliance systems

in Europe and elsewhere. But it is hardly applicable to regions where inter-state equilibriums, based on accepted spheres of influence, have not been achieved because the very existence of some of the local states is not accepted politically. The several Arab-Israeli wars attest to this.

Besides concepts of deterrence, to be implemented by means of military instruments, designed for battlefield use against other armies, are particularly ill-suited for coping with revolutionary threats that take life from political, economic and social unrest in countries that are in the process of evolving into nations from tribal societies. This is certainly the case, with the exception of Egypt, for the Arab countries of the Mediterranean region and the Gulf. There, the coup d'etat by politicized members of the armed forces, or by former nationalist guerrilla leaders has become the norm for political and social change.

The intractability and the failure to resolve the Palestinian question by political means will probably reinforce this trend with the dispersion of battle-seasoned, politicized Palestinians throughout the Arab world. Strongly implicit in the inaction of Arab governments during the invasion and the relentless Israeli attacks against the PLO in Lebanon was a recognition of the threat to the political status quo of Palestinian nationalism. King Hussein of Jordan had already materially experienced this in 1970. The difficulty of finding asylum for the PLO fighters in other Arab countries is another expression. As for the battles between Israeli and Syrian troops in Lebanon, they too can be explained primarily in the Palestinian context.

Certainly, in the Gulf region, the substantial build-up of local armaments did not take place until after the invention of oil politics

by the Arab states and cannot be mainly credited to initiatives by the superpowers. In addition, the Soviet Union has not been involved, except in regard to Iraq, where the transfer of Soviet arms fits basically within the Arab-Israeli context and with Soviet arms transfers to Syria.

Also noteworthy are the periodic attempts by the United States to initiate, and unilaterally practice, a policy of reductions and qualitative arms control toward these conflictual regions. Neither the Soviet Union nor the European allies of the United States have cooperated to abort the regional arms race. It could be argued that the very failure of U.S. efforts at arms control have themselves contributed to the renewed emphasis in U.S. policies on the military means.

All the same, it may be argued that the emphasis on direct and indirect military solutions is a consequence of political failures in the policies of the United States, and its allies, most of all in regard to Israel's conflict with its Arab neighbors, long in the making. The origins of this problem can be said to be exemplified by the 1955 Czech arms deal, its antecedents and its aftermath.[52] That conflict became the first major arena in which the Soviet Union and the United States, and their respective allies, first experimented with competitive arms transfers for diplomatic purpose. An involvement in the use of arms transfers which has led to the current situation. The outcomes should raise serious concerns regarding the impact of arms transfers on the political control of client states in the minds of Soviet and American leaders.

Who controls policy, the patron or the client? There is ample evidence to suggest that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union have

been able to prevent regional conflicts by means of arms transfers, or even influence significantly the conduct of war by manipulating the supply of spare parts and ammunition. The Middle East and the Gulf provide not the only but the best evidence for this thesis.

Moreover, in Third World situations involving possible U.S.-Soviet confrontation, there is no significant relationship between relative effectiveness in achieving the political objective and either the overall strategic nuclear balance or the size of the forces explicitly deployed on the scene of the conflict. The credibility of commitments in the political use of military power seems to be the determining factor.[53]

These observations should not lead to the conclusion that there is no use for the actual or diplomatic use of military power by the Soviet Union, the United States and regional powers. The legitimate defense of the homeland and the safeguarding of national interests cannot be achieved without the threat or the use of military force, at certain times.

The issue is the appropriate use of military force. Especially for the United States and the West, to allow a military approach to dominate policy toward the Mediterranean and the Gulf is to give the Soviet Union a relative advantage, and to exacerbate the inevitable political and economic transformations in local states. At this juncture of history, there is but one foreign policy instrument in which the Soviet Union has an advantage: the acquisition and the use of military power. It is thus to the West's advantage to seek to define the terms of the competition, in the Third World, in ways that de-emphasize military aspects.

The United States and the Atlantic Alliance, especially its Mediterranean members, can create advantages for their relations with

countries to the South in sectors where they not only have relative advantage vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, but where the application of policy weakens local conflictual factors, thus reducing their security risks.

The exercise of American and Western military power, in the Mediterranean region and the Gulf, should not be a substitute for broader, long-term political strategies which utilize a variety of policy instruments to take advantage of the strengths of the industrial democracies, while reflecting realistic assessments of political and economic conditions in the developing countries of these areas.[54]

Prospects for the 1980's

The Soviet Threat

Although the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan galvanized U.S. security policy toward the Gulf, it is unlikely that another territorial expansion by the Soviet Union will occur in the years immediately ahead. This would not be because the Soviet leadership had changed their view of the utility of military force to achieve national purposes, but because the context of circumstances is not likely to present the Soviet Union with the appropriate opportunity.

Neither in Hungary, 1956, nor in Czechoslovakia, 1968, was there unrestrained use of force. While Soviet actions in Afghanistan show a qualitative political change in foreign policy by the application of the "Bhreznev Doctrine" to peripheral areas outside Europe, the massive use of force is a consequence of a miscalculation regarding native resistance, not a new policy. This will not be a negligible factor in Soviet calculations toward the Gulf region.

Soviet history has much evidence to show that like other major powers, historically, the Soviet Union--like Czarist Russia--has used military force decisively to achieve important national objectives. Thus, following the pattern of Czarist expansion into non-Slavic areas, it was the Red army that completed the incorporation of the Caucasus and Central Asia by intervening with force in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbajan. It is important to note that in all cases, Soviet military intervention followed alleged calls for assistance from local revolutionary elements.

On the eve of World War II, the Soviet Union annexed outright Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, some Polish territory, and a part of Finland, the last through war. The presence of Soviet troops on the soil of Eastern European countries at the end of World War II led to their incorporation into the Soviet bloc. The exception was Yugoslavia, with its well-known political consequences. Recent Soviet inclination to promote foreign policy goals by sponsoring military interventions by proxy in Angola, Ethiopia and Cambodia are another expression of the Soviet belief in the political utility of military power;[55] being, however, of a different order because not in contiguous territory.

Almost all annexations of foreign territory or extensions of Soviet political control in the shadow of Soviet military might occurred in times of regional political strife, of impending or actual wars in areas contiguous to the Soviet Union--where Russia, the land power, had a relative advantage. But the heroic resistance of the Finns stayed the Soviet hand toward Scandinavia even beyond Soviet victory in the Second World War. The invasion of Afghanistan took place under circumstances of regional strife also, and at a time when Iran had been lost to the sphere of

influence of the United States because of internal political upheavals.

The obdurate resistance of tribal Afghanis and the ferocity of the Iranians in the Shatt-al-Arab war should have an impact on Soviet policies toward the Gulf similar to that produced by the 1939 Winter War with Finland. It should be remembered that no direct or effective help was given Finland by the Western Powers during the Soviet invasion, just as the West is not substantively assisting the Afghanis today. Both Pakistan and Iran have Islamic fundamentalism, terrain, tribal enclaves which are factors that assimilate them to Soviet calculations that unavoidably inject the experience of Afghanistan. In addition, their military capabilities and manpower far exceed those of the Afghanistan rebels. Finally, the situation in Poland adds another inhibition.

The United States cannot avoid the geopolitical requirements of a superpower. It must find ways to develop a military presence in the area to serve its unavoidable global interests. After the loss of Iran from its local sphere of influence, because of the continuing inhibitions on American policy flowing from Congressional restraint, the uniquely special U.S. relationship with Israel, a permanent U.S. military presence in the Gulf region (or one by proxy), will be difficult to achieve beyond naval deployments, and local stockpiling. Even these will be vulnerable to Soviet interdiction, some Iranian air and sea actions, and in the case of prepositioned stockpiles, insurgent activity in Gulf states.

In terms of staging from the U.S. and distance from the locus of potential conflict, the best stockpiling locations are in Israel, Egypt, Somalia and Turkey. They all suffer from political restraints arising

from regional politics, and in the case of Turkey from concern about possible Soviet pressures.

Were unrestrained military and political cooperation with the United States by local Arab states to be forthcoming, the material impact on U.S. military capabilities would not be sufficient, nevertheless, to overcome Soviet military advantages in the area.[56]

The upshot is that a U.S. military presence in the Gulf would be a triggering mechanism for coupling a U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the Gulf to the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, by raising the risk of East-West nuclear war. However, the present stalemate in the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance is unlikely to be overcome by the Reagan Administration's defense build-up before the end of the 1980's. Even more important, the days when strategic superiority, like the one the U.S. had in the Cuban missile crisis, are irremedially gone. While this coupling should certainly figure in Soviet calculations as a risk, it will lack the credibility to deter the political, or indirect use of military capabilities in the adjoining regions of the USSR. There, the Soviet advantages are more substantive than in the NATO-Warsaw Pact balance.[57]

To summarize, there seem to be few prospects for the Soviet leadership to attempt territorial conquests in the Gulf region during the years ahead, even without a permanent American military presence. The easiest military operation that would enable them to reach the shores of the Gulf, a lightning seizure of Baluchistan, would surely alert not only Iran but India as well to Soviet intentions and possibly raise the risk of nuclear war with the United States. It would also add to Pakistan's incentives to go nuclear.

The political costs to the Soviet Union in the Third World would increase steeply. The Soviet Union can reap much greater political gains, while keeping its foreign policy options open with Iran, by continued support of Baluchi irredentists, and by indirectly supporting the revolutionary threat against the dynastic rulers of the Gulf states. Attempts by the United States to use U.S. military forces in the area to intimidate Iran would create additional useful options in future Soviet relations with Iran.

The Iranian Regional Threat

The potential instability of the Khomeini regime, and the psychological aspects of political Islamic fundamentalism make the projection of Iranian national policy in the region more ineffable.

It is useful to remember, however, that the hegemonic shadow of Iran pre-dates the Islamic revolution, and Iran's withdrawal from the American sphere of influence. Equally useful is remembering that the Iraqi-Iranian war was started by the invasion of Iranian territory by Iraq, itself a state with hegemonic aspirations in the Gulf. The saturation of the Middle East and Gulf conflict systems with advanced weapons from the superpowers and other industrial states is another contributing factor that must be taken into account. Whereas revolutions derive their basic thrust from their political persuasiveness, regional territorial ambitions are critically shaped, today, by the content and reach of available military capabilities. The increase in weapons balances has not reinforced deterrence factors locally.

On balance, if another local conflict occurs involving Iran, it will be the result of the dynamics of the regional political and

ideological situation more than the consequence of Iranian territorial ambitions. The U.S. policy approach to Iran, in the context of the use of force in the region, is a crucial factor, hard to predict given the inchoate form of U.S. policies in this respect.

But U.S. involvement by military means in regard to Iran is unlikely to deter Iranian behavior seen as threatening by Arab states like Saudi Arabia for at least two reasons. The first is the inept military handling of the American hostage crisis, combined with the shadow of Soviet power. The second is that the most acute menaces to Gulf dynasties are ideological subversion and insurgency which do not take sustenance from Iranian military capacities.

It is conceivable that the human and material costs of the Shatt-al-Arab War, particularly the degradation in oil production and shipment, will restrain Iranian leaders from the use of inter-state war in the 1980's. On the other hand, while the selection of targets and the precise form of applying force to achieve the goals of coercive diplomacy are not a simple matter, they might be tempted to use air strikes or naval raids to make a political point.

The proxy use of Islamic fundamentalism could be the most effective tool to achieve Iran's particular brand of foreign policy. Since it is likely to be the most effective and indirect means, it is likely to be used, as long as a theocratic government runs Iran.

The survival of this kind of government is the imponderable and key issue. The death of Khomeini will be its first test. Outside powers may be able to exploit its aftermath but there is little they will be able

to do, especially through the use of force, to control Iranian policies in the Gulf region.

As the Iraqi-Iranian war has already shown, this kind of conflict, or insurgent sabotage, are the gravest threats to the oil supplies of NATO. This is especially so for members of the Southern Flank, Turkey, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy, which are either crucially as heavily dependent on oil from the Gulf region.

Although a cut-off of oil because of damage or destruction to oil wells and facilities would severely affect the security of NATO--not to mention the severe economic and political impact it would have in its Mediterranean members--diplomacy, not force, would be the primary tool available to them. Diplomacy would have to be backed by technical expertise and perhaps economic arrangements. It is, in fact, diplomacy and well wrought economic relationships between the countries of the Gulf and Europe, in and out of the Mediterranean, that will provide the only possibility for preventive actions to avoid this outcome. Even then, it is crucial that American and European approaches not compete with each other, even if they cannot be cooperative and coordinated.

U.S.-European Relations

As security and economic interdependence become even more blended, the interface between East-West and North-South interactions will increase the problems of political cohesion between the United States and the Mediterranean members of NATO. Certainly, the 1980's will test whether the differences between the United States and its European allies transcend issues of style and personalities and reflect, instead, opposing and enduring conceptions of the national interest.

The exacerbated U.S.-European dispute over the Soviet natural gas pipeline to Western Europe may be a harbinger of the 1980's in Europe. But the most severe tests of U.S.-West European relations--with the energy crisis sparking broader issues of North-South economic relations--are likely to come where the Mediterranean bridges politics and economics into the Middle East and the Gulf. For there the tests may be forged by violent conflict and radical politics.

Because NATO in the Mediterranean, U.S. national interests and the defense of the Gulf are directly tied through the role of the United States, the clash between the competitive elements of American and European national interests may impact with greater severity in the Mediterranean countries of Europe and Turkey. The Mediterranean members of NATO combine the weakest political economies with proximity, in the eastern Mediterranean, to the sources of conflict.

The NATO southern flank is also afflicted by the unresolved Greek-Turkish conflict over Cyprus, the problematic nature of Spanish participation,[58] and the peculiar vulnerabilities faced by Turkey because of its Muslim legacy and its geographic location. Political and economic vulnerabilities also exist in Arab states in the Mediterranean. But vulnerabilities in the Arab Mediterranean countries should not mask the weaknesses of the southern European states. The economic dependence of the Mediterranean members of NATO limits considerably their foreign policy freedom toward the Middle East and the Gulf. They are prisoners of their energy policies which force them toward a search for an uneasy neutrality in regard to each of the oil-producing countries, on the score of intra-regional conflicts.

Thus European countries in the Mediterranean will continue to resist official association with potential U.S. military actions in connection with regional conflicts in the Gulf. Quite beyond the fact that Western military actions could be considered an interference in internal Arab questions, such an initiative would result in the possibly complete interruption of oil supplies.[59] An eventuality no European country of the Mediterranean, or Turkey, can countenance because of its probable impact on their internal economies and politics.

These kinds of constraints are shared with other West European countries. In the case of Italy, national energy and economic policies will continue to be shaped crucially through participation in the European Community, as well by those of Greece. When Spain and Portugal join the Common Market (and if Turkey does so), their policies will too. As a consequence of the requirement to shape common European economics, and concomitant political policies toward both the United States and the Third World, increased polarization between the U.S. and its Mediterranean allies in policy dialogues on the conflictual political, economic, and military issues of North-South relations may take place. Lacking organizations centered in the Mediterranean as a whole and having but a week reed in the Euro-Arab Commission, the Mediterranean members of NATO could suffer in their relations with the U.S. from such polarization.

Several factors directly affecting the United States may increase the contentious elements of U.S.-European relations toward the Middle East and the Gulf. The economic wealth and power of the United States are becoming increasingly tied to external factors such as imported materials,

fuel and non-fuel, and to expanding markets abroad for U.S. products. The rapidly expanding U.S. export trade in the Third World is becoming a significant growth and employment factor in the American economy.[60]

The Mediterranean members of NATO are the least capable of competing with the U.S. in the conflictual regions under discussion. Their bilateral relations with the United States in the area of Mediterranean security as they relate to the Gulf may be victimized by increased economic competition. They have little protection from the constraints that derive from the growing role of economic and monetary factors.

When the East-West dimension can be extricated from obscuring North-South conflictual aspects, U.S. relations with its Mediterranean and European allies will lead to cooperation if not outright collaboration. This will be likely in regard to a visible Soviet military threat toward the Gulf. The initial steps taken in NATO to recognize the relationship between the security of Europe and the defense of the Gulf against the Soviet Union suggest it.

In the event of such a clear-cut military threat, a collective NATO response is possible. Except that it will most likely take the form of allowing U.S. military forces to stage through host countries installations, and of logistical support. Britain and France may even "show the flag" in modest contributions to U.S. naval task forces operating in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The nature of the challenge to U.S.-European relations in the context of Mediterranean security and defense of the Gulf is unlikely to take this form. Neither will European security be tested in conjunction with

an attack on the Gulf by an intentional and calculated Soviet strategy that combines the objectives of a conquest of the Gulf with advances in Europe. There are evident reasons why the geopolitics of the nuclear age do not favor the expansion of Soviet control in Europe through wars of conquest.[61] The test of U.S.-Soviet relations will probably be less dramatic yet more lasting in its effects on the political cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance as it faces challenges both to the East and to the South, in the 1980's.

The future security of the Mediterranean will be decided more in the crucible of American and European politican and economic relations, as they clash or converge with each other, toward the developing countries of North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf than by the correlation of military forces between the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective alliances--as critical as these will surely be for the security of Europe. The increasing conflicts between the United States and West European countries in their respective foreign and economic policies[62] dim hopeful prospects for the decade ahead.

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