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"European Security and the Third World: The Case of the Middle East"

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Bruxelles, 15-18 December, 1982

IAI/34/82

Rome, November 1982

By the end of the '70s Third World contingencies had emerged as a divisive factor within the Atlantic Alliance The eruption of crises in the Third World is not new in itself. The novelty has been the Soviet Union's ability and willingness to intervene in these crises. The Soviets have sent combat troops to Afghanistan and so have done their proxies to Angola and Ethiopia. They have proved to be effective in manipulating a number of political crises in Southern Arabia, Black Africa and Central America. Furthermore, having successfully set up a war navy with global capacities, they have shown a remarkable ability in airlifting their military power to remote countries. Most of all, when thinking of the extremely cautious approach the Soviets have been constantly accustomed to in conducting their international policies, the Westerners have been troubled by their new bold interventionist attitude. Whereas some have labelled it as adventurism, many have concluded that the Soviets could possibly afford it.

At the root of the divergencies within the Alliance on Third World crises there are differences in the perception and appreciation of the USSR's role both within the crises and the global balance of forces. What follows is an examination of these differences between European and American perceptions and appreciations. Clarification of this point is a necessary prerequisite in order to restore a unity of vision and interests among the Allied Western powers and to discern what should be Western Europe's role outside the North Atlantic area.

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To a large extent the European posture outside the NATO area is tantamount to its posture towards the Third World. That posture seems to be presently affected by three main sets of perceptions: a) that of the global strategic balance of power and of overall Western security; b) that of the political and ideological forces which would drive Third World countries; c) that of the intentions and limits of the Soviet power. Let us consider these three points separately.

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The most striking change during these last years has been in the central strategic balance of forces. Whereas the argument for a Soviet conventional superiority may even be challenged, as for nuclear capacities nobody doubts the existence of a parity situation. It is true that the reach and significance in military terms of such a parity has not yet been clarified in every detail and implication. However, its impact on perceptions has been far-reaching and is at the root of the Alliance's present malaise.

Nuclear parity has put into question the Alliance's ability to deter a Soviet attack on Western Europe. The NATO doctrine rests on the theory that the Soviets would never risk attacking Western Europe since the United States would be able to threaten the Soviet while keeping its national deterrence intact. This is no longer true, for an American nuclear reaction to a successful invasion of Western Europe would expose the USA itself to an effective Soviet nuclear response. This is not likely to be accepted either by the American people or by the US President. As a

result, the Alliance's real posture is affected by feelings of a decoupling of Western Europe and the United States. In other words the Americans are not likely to use their nuclear capacity to defend Western Europe because the nuclear parity attained by the Soviets deter them from doing so.

A tentative Alliance's response to such a risk of decoupling has been the decision to deploy the LRTNFs in Europe. Is this the right response to that risk? The fact that such a decision was proposed as a reaction to a single modernization - the SS20s - of the Soviet arsenal has misled the Western debate. True, the LRTNFs are an attempt at keeping the Western defence integrated against the overall Soviet nuclear build-up - which among other things includes the SS-20s as well. Provided that the LRTNFs are actually and timely deployed, will they ensure the integration of the Western security system? There is not a straight answer to this question. For the time being, LRTNFs are too few to be a credible deterrent and responsibility for their use rests on the Americans. Their role within the Western defense is not so clear as to really avoid any feeling of decoupling. It is a weak response to the decoupling issue. What about their possible evolution? Were the European LRTNFs more or less to become an effective deterrent, they would keep the Soviets at a distance irrespective of the credibility of the American deterrent. This means that the deployment of a European theater deterrence would become a way of keeping the Alliance formally united while dividing decisions and responsibility: a more or less covert way of practising decoupling, if not an overt way of remaking the Alliance (1). On the other hand, if the LRTNFs were

to prove ineffective, Soviet decisions would depend on the credibility of the American deterrent. Were the Soviets to perceive the Americans as unwilling to expose themselves to a nuclear strike in order to defend the Europeans, the inter-Atlantic decoupling would again emerge despite any LRTNFs deployment. On the whole, LRTNFs seem to be a very ambiguous response to the challenge that nuclear parity has issued to the Alliance, because they either do not avert decoupling or they actually enforce it.

Significant conventional rearmament would be a further option open to the Europeans (2). It would make it more expensive for the Soviets to check the effective working of the American deterrent as a reaction to a conventional attack on Western Europe. In this sense it would work as a detterent itself. Nevertheless, a conventionally strong Europe is not a sufficient condition to eliminate decoupling from the Alliance. It would not affect the American willingness to deliver its nuclear response whenever required. One has also to point out that a Western Europe with a strong conventional capacity may well induce the Soviets to escalate their attack to the nuclear level from the beginning. Due to its nuclear nature a Soviet attack against a conventionally strong Europe will not change the US basic attitude towards its own involvement in the conflict.

The decoupling basically brought about by the change in the global strategic balance requires a more diffuse responsibility within the Alliance. All we have said so far makes it clear that in the new framework a nuclear and/ or conventional deterrent should in any case be owned by the Europeans. A wider diffusion of military decision-making

within the Alliance, on the other hand, does not necessarily mean the end of the Alliance's unity nor of its effectiveness. Quite on the contrary, it would give back to the Alliance its strength by eliminating a factor of unsolvable political dispute. The remaking of NATO's doctrine - if any - may follow. The reality, however, is that the Europeans do not seem willing to take up the challenge of this wider power diffusion. As for the building-up of an adequate conventional force of defence, the necessary economic and social cost has already been ruled out. As for the setting up of a European theater deterrent, its significance has been dangerously downgraded by the very European initiative of linking its deployment to the new arms control negotiations in Geneva. This gives the Soviets an amazing say on European nuclear modernization. Finally, nobody - with the still unclear exception of the new French government - is asking for changes in the Alliance. What is true is that the feeling of decoupling created by the new global balance of power is reinforcing factors of decoupling already at work within European politics. We have to mention three main factors.

First of all, the fighting of a war, either nuclear or conventional, on European soil is considered unacceptable. The experience of the Second World War, the European population density and the awareness of the destructive power of the new weapons make every European simply rule out war as an option. The cornerstone of European security policy is that war cannot be considered either an option or a possible occurrence. That this is the mainstay of the European security conception is not new. At the time of

the American nuclear superiority, however, the occurrence of a war on Western European soil was basically played down because the Europeans trusted the Americans deterrent. Now that a "limited" war, either at a nuclear and conventional level, on the Old Continent is a possibility, the European strategy of avoiding war is becoming unveiled. This explains the absence of European pressures and proposals for changes in the Alliance. Whatever the change, while it would never bring back the American deterrent, is supposed to set a more precise European responsibility on the ground of its conventional and/or nuclear power. Since this would openly imply that a European "limited" war is possible, no claim of changing the Alliance is made.

As a consequence of the coming up of this basic European security strategy one has to stress the fact that decoupling becomes a self-reinforcing process: the failure of the American power produces a decoupling towards the Europeans; a posture of decoupling is then adopted by the Europeans with the aim of avoiding the risk of getting involved with a power which is declining. Though it is made less visible by the weight and complexity of the political and institutional Atlantic relations, the European reaction is not substantially different from that of the Saudis after the fall of the Shah. As noted by Robert Tucker (3), the Saudis cannot accept the American military presence they wish in the Gulf, for they feel that the USA is unable to guarantee its regional presence at the global level. In these circumstances a local American military presence would only bring about external vulnerability and domestic instability to the Saudis without offsetting it with a last resort guarantee. The difference with the Saudis lies in

the nature of the security which is searched for. Whereas the Saudis are seeking to secure their wealth and power, the Europeans by avoiding a war they perceive as ultimate, wish to secure their basic civilized existence. In the eyes of any allied country, however, the US cannot help shifting from a role of security source to one of almost insecurity, as soon as its power is perceived as declining.

The second factor affecting European politics is the European countries' inability to unite. It is clear that the individual European countries are unable to defend themselves from any Soviet threat. On the other hand, Western Europe has failed to set up an integrated system of defence. As long as the American nuclear deterrence worked, the flexible response doctrine has given the European countries a sense of security even though they continued to be disunited. Now that the American deterrent has been undermined, the European countries' inability to defend themselves cannot be concealed. For this reason, one would expect a new and major European effort to unite. For a strengthening of Western Europe's institutions and the pooling of its resources would make available the economic means to build up a credible European nuclear and/or conventional deterrent. What is more it would allow for a wider diffusion of power and responsibility within the Alliance which - as we noted - may be the way out of the present crisis. Unfortunately the European countries far from undertaking this effort, are fragmented as never before.

Pierre Lellouche (4) wonders why the Europeans are not pushing for a change in an Alliance which is supposedly not giving them the security they need. Besides the explanations he gives, one has to add that they do not ask for

this change because if they did they would consequently have to unite. For only if they unite would they be able to take up the wider responsibilities implicit in the Alliance's change.

In these circumstances one may wonder what is the meaning of the European countries' continuing reliance on the Alliance. Since the flexible response cannot work anymore and the Europeans have failed to revitalize the Alliance by integrating themselves, NATO is becoming more and more a set of barely coordinated bilateral relationships. Perception of the European role within the Alliance is therefore changing in both the American and European eyes. From active contributors to the common defence, Europeans are becoming beneficiaries of an external defence guarantee. The Americans perceive the Europeans as people demanding protection (and quite naturally are questioning the limits of that protection), whereas the Europeans simply expect an American support under NATO's label. In this sense, the European countries' inability to unite is a factor which reinforces the decoupling springing from the change in the central balance of power.

This military asymmetry, on the other hand, is not without political consequences. Turned into an external military guarantee, the Alliance becomes an assurance to the European non-military policies of security (economic cooperation, arms control, détente) at the regional level, which are the basic elements of the avoidance of war strategy which we talked about some paragraphs before. Here again we come to see how close the European politiics is getting to that of the Third World countries. As in the case of these countries, any alliance is bidimensional for

it will be part of a global gear from the point of view of the superpower, whereas it is the under-pinning of local policies from the point of view of the regional countries.

The third factor at work is the German issue. The construction of a European federation was to be for all European peoples the way out of nationalism. For Western Germany it was to be the alternative to the reunification of the German nation. Neither the federalist doctrines nor the European common institutions have grown so much as to represent the necessary alternative to the German nation. Nevertheless, the Federal Republic of Germany has not evolved a new nationalism. Its policy has been that of leaving the reunification option open in the long run. For this reason the FRG has never set in motion a national reunification policy nor any other nationalistic policies. Rather, any policy set in motion has been designed to produce and promote such an international environment as to keep open its long term reunification option. In this frame détente with its paraphernalia (arms control, economic cooperation, etc.) has become the most important component of German international policy. As long as there has been a USA-USSR détente at the global level, the management of a regional détente in Central Europe was not to cause any fundamental problem. Now that the global détente is failing, along with détente in such crucial areas as Southwestern Asia, there is a problem of consistency between both the perceptions and security interests of Americans and Germans. On the other hand, one has to underline that divisibility of détente is shared by other European countries for reasons ranging from domestic constraints, to economic pressures,

to differing geopolitical perceptions. Like the factors already discussed, the European claim that détente is divisible is bound to affect the decoupling trend opened by the change in the central balance. For the interpretation of the Alliance in strictly regional terms cannot allow the survival of a relationship which is supposed to be of a special nature between the USA and Western Europe.

To grasp the full scope of European security perceptions one must also bear in mind the fundamental European dependence on trade and raw material imports, particularly oil. The international economic order assured by the American power and the safe and cheap flow of oil taken home by the American companies until the beginning of the '70s, led the Europeans to endorse their dependence on the USA both for trade and raw material supplies. The decline of American power and the profound changes undergone by the international oil market have forced the Europeans to envisage a larger concept of dependence, namely not only on the USA but on the entire world. For in the absence of a last single resort guarantee the typical insurance against a risk is that of spreading as much as possible both supply and demand. It is not by chance that this is the foundation of the Eurocurrency markets, where a last resort guarantee (a central bank) is missing and consequently the risk is curtailed by spreading loans supply and keeping alive a substantial amount of loans demand. Likewise the Europeans on the one hand have tried to strengthen Third World and Socialist countries as trade partners in order to enlarge and diversify demand and, on the other, have begun to diversify the pattern of their suppliers of raw materials - particularly energy materials - by developing relations with the Soviet Union and gas imports.

Supply security, therefore, is based on policies which bring about a declining relationship with the United States and, conversely, a growing relationship with other partners including the USSR. Although this factor is not of a strictly military nature, on a strategic ground here again one can notice an aspect of the Euroamerican decoupling springing from the change in the overall balance of power.

On the whole the factors discussed so far shed light on a European security perception of growing regional character, based on non-military policies and designed to keep non-conflictual relations with the USSR. This new overall security concept has a number of important consequences on the Western European posture towards the Third World countries:

a) The overwhelming goal of keeping non-conflictual relations with the USSR forces the Europeans to adopt the concept of divisibility of détente. Consequently they are leaning more and more towards either swallowing any Soviet aggressive moves in the Third World - with some remarkable exceptions of France in Africa - or to play down its importance. This amounts to saying that the European posture towards the Third World on the political and military ground is considerably determined by its Central-European relation with the Soviet Union.

b) A first corollary of this crucial constraint on the European policy towards Third World countries is that Europe is showing an increasing propensity to envisage a positive and cooperative role of the Soviet Union in the Third World. The European dissatisfaction towards the Camp David process has been, among other things, also an ackowledgement that political settlement in the Middle East might include the USSR. On the other hand, proposals as groundless as that of giving the Europeans a guarantee on the oil flow from the Gulf (5), do reveal how aware the Soviets are of the European security perception and are a means of encouraging the Europeans to think of the USSR as a cooperative partner within the framework of insecure industrialized Third World supply relations;

c) A second corollary is that Europe is inclined to encourage a certain competition between Third World and Socialist countries in order to obtain economic advantages and most of all security. This explains the European energy import policies - as we have already noticed - but also European soft financial policies. This competition prevents a larger flow of European resources from going to the Third World countries. From the point of view of the long term commercial European interest, this diversion is detrimental. On the other hand, one has to admit that, regarding both oil and money, the Third World countries do not appear as safe as the Socialist countries.

The second set of Euro-American divergencies we wish to consider regards their perceptions of the relative weight in the evolution of Third World crises of Soviet regional involvement, on the one hand, and local factors on the other. Writing on the Middle East, Eugene Rostow (6) has expressed very clearly the American administration's view on this point: "The traditional view of the Middle Eastern experts regards the pattern of events in the area as one of random turbulence inevitable in the aftermath of the empire. People of this opinion consider regional factors as dominant - the hostility of Arabopinion to the existence of Israel; rivalry among the Arab States; and social and ideological conflict (involving differing attitudes towards modernization, secularism, Marxism and other controversial issues) within each Arab state and among Arab people as a whole. For Americans who view the Middle East from this perspective, the Soviet role in Middle Eastern trouble is peripheral and secondary. Indeed they tend to resent the intrusion of Cold War factors into a complex and fascinating field of scholarship peculiarly of their own. The other view - in my opinion the more realistic view - sees Soviet policy as a far more critical element in the conjunction of issues that constitute the "Eastern question" today. Observers of this persuasion believe that the Soviet Union has been exploiting all the indigenous conflicts of the Middle East (...), in an effort to bring the entire area under its own control (...) to add Western Europe to the Soviet sphere by enveloping it from the South, (...) If this per-

ception of Soviet policy is correct, then it follows that the national interest of the United States in the Middle East is vital, and we should be doing whatever is necessary to keep the area out of Soviet hands."

It is true that the Middle East is not the only area of the Third World where the US national interest is at stake. Nevertheless, for a number of evident reasons, it is today a crucial test for both the American policy towards the Third World and the Euro-American relationship. For this reason we will refer to the Middle East in what follows.

Now, "doing whatever is necessary to keep the area out of Soviet hands" is the policy Reagan has launched under the label of "strategic consensus". Consensus would stem from a shared perception of the overwhelming Soviet strategic threat. The US determination to intervene to repel any aggressive Soviet move - a determination which had dwindled in recent years - would encourage Third World countries to face up to the Soviets. The need to counter the Soviets would be recognized in this framework as a priority over any local and/or regional conflict. Up to the Lebanese crisis of mid 1982, the administration's posture on the peripheral nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been stubbornly consistent with this policy.

On the other hand, strategic consensus is not a policy designed to assign a local alliance the task of keeping regional security. The Iran revolution has brushed aside for ever both the Nixon and the twin pillars doctrine, which had left Iran and Saudi Arabia the task of policing the

Persian Gulf and the Northern Tier. Consequently the present policy is based on a direct bilateral American involvement and the building up of the military capacity to intervene. Specific policies to support the development of such a strategic consensus are the creation of a special airborne force, the Rapid Deployment Force - RDF, (which is not necessarily assigned to the Middle East only, but is being set up with this theatre in mind); a larger naval presence in the Arabic Sea; the setting up of facilities, like Masirah in Oman, Berbera in Somalia, Mombasa in Kenya, and Ras Banas in Egypt, besides the existing large base of Diego Garcia; the prepositioning of materials; joint manoeuvres of the allied countries' forces; generous military aid to friendly countries and selective economic support. Needless to say both these policies and the strategic consensus policy itself are related to and conditioned by the success of the effort to restore overall American strategic supremacy, for in the end - according to Reagan's team - the effectiveness of local alliances depends on whether the allied countries view the US as superior in the global balance of power.

The Administration has worked hard to implement its policy. Apart from the continuing overwhelming support to Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have emerged as privileged American partners. Egypt has received an enormous amount of military and economic aid. Furthermore, an RDF contingent has performed manoeuvres twice with the Egyptian army. Sudan has also received a remarkable amount of economic and military aid. Both countries have been assured by the tough US

policy towards Libya. The same policy was meant to be a signal of support to Morocco against the Khaddafi-supported Polisario Front. At the same time, Carter's reservation on the Western Sahara issue has been dropped and a military agreement has been signed between the USA and Morocco. Along with the Azores Islands facilities, those in Morocco would be very important for any airlifting towards the Eastern Arab area. Besides the other facilities we have just mentioned, we should remember that normal American military and political relations with Turkey seem to have been restored. Though of a different nature, the presence of the Multinational Force in the Sinai combined with the AWACS aircraft deployed in the Gulf on Saudi demand must be included as an important element of the picture. To conclude, mention should also be made of the setting up of joint defence committees with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt and the military and economic assistance agreement with Pakistan at the eastern end of the arc of crises.

A high point in the implementation of the strategic consensus policy has been the President's successful action in making available to Saudi Arabia a number of AWACS aircraft and conformal fueltanks designed to increase the fighting range of the Saudis F-15s. Since this equipment makes the Saudi capable of striking on Israel and of timely informing other Arab countries on its moves, such a transfer was a test of the US confidence in overcoming local conflicts to reach strategic consensus in the region.

Whereas the American attitude towards the Middle East is consistent with the preferred Rostow view, the Europeans are definitely close to the view which Rostow ascribes to the "experts". The European countries are used to giving local factors a decisive importance. In their eyes local perceptions of security rest more on regional, local and domestic factors - such as the Palestinian issue, the Iranian tendency to project arms and ideology outside the country, the social and economic under-development, the cultural and political frustration which is at the origin of the Islamic revivalism - than on a Soviet threat. It is the inability to cope with these factors which opens the way to Soviet (and Western) intrusions. Soviet opportunities are produced also by inadequate Western policies and attitudes. Western pressures for policies of accelerated, Western-like economic development and for alignments according to East-West priorities weaken these countries and make them more and more dependent on foreign support - on Western as well as on Soviet support. Therefore Europeans tend to promote policies designed to strengthen the autonomy and the capabilities of the Third World countries, including those of the Middle East. Viable countries, with a larger degree of economic and national cohesiveness, would be able to stand up to an external threat on their own. At the same time, most of the non-aligned countries would probably trade mainly with Western countries and almost certainly would be members of the IMF. In the long run this would not go without consequences.

It is true that the two differing sets of perceptions and policies do not coincide with the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean; rather they cut accross both Americans and Europeans. In recent years, however, the governments - and presumably the majorities - so are aligned and this has given way to a sharp debate. The Euro-American debate on the matter has been conditioned and misled by the diverging global security perceptions we discussed in the previous section. The unfair American insinuation is that the priority the Europeans give to the local factors is nothing but a way to practise their division of détente. By downgrading the importance of the Soviet role in Middle Eastern security the Europeans are allegedly willing to give the Soviets a free hand elsewhere in return for security in their own region. Another unfair insinuation - normally coming from Israel - is that the European preoccupations with the local issues, such as the Palestinians, are dictated by their subservience to the Arab oil-rich countries. On the whole the Europeans are seen as opportunistic people either licking Arab boots or leaving to the American boys the task of keeping the Soviets off the oil they need. However, even if the Europeans are right in attributing greater importance to the local political factors of Middle Eastern politics, what is unfair in the European attitude is that they overlook their /military responsibilities in the Middle East and South-western Asia.

As for American insinuations, it may well be that Europe's attitude towards the Middle East is affected by its present regional security perceptions. It was definitely so in the case of Afghanistan. It is much less so in the case of the Middle East. Fouad Ajami (7) reports a very expressive comment by a West German analyst: "It would be grossly unfair to ascribe specific European policies to boot-licking the oil princes. The EEC's stand on the Palestinian question rests on the merit of the case; it is not the result of Arab pressure". In any case the objective evolution of Middle Eastern politics seems to be an evidence in favour of the European perception.

Without going into a detailed, structural analysis of the determinants of the local Middle Eastern security perceptions (8), it would suffice here to observe that the Soviet threat is so far away from these perceptions that the Israelis have been able to wage an all-out war against the Syrians and the PLO in Lebanon despite the fact that both of them were supposed to be officially supported by the Soviets. Some are now claiming that Soviet passivity was the result of the strengthened American presence in the region following the implementation of the strategic consensus policy. The reality is that at the moment it broke out the Lebanese war was considered by everybody in the NATO countries as a classic Middle Eastern conflict which would have evolved along a dangerous East-West line. Quite the contrary, there was nothing more regional!

Another lesson stemming from the Lebanese war is that the Reagan administration went to be fully engaged by an issue - namely the Arab-Israeli conflict - which it had at the beginning contemptuously considered as peripheral. As a matter of fact, once again US influence in the Middle East and particularly in the moderate countries of the region is going to depend on its ability to solve an Arab-Israeli conflict where PLO's impact may have been weakened but which is now more entangled than ever by the tremendous increase in Arab frustration and by Israeli expansionism.

The possibility of building up a strategic consensus and enjoying increased military access to the region for strategic purposes depends on this diplomatic job within the region and the local actors and not on the Soviet threat.

The so-called "Reagan plan" may be the way to capture a number of unique opportunities now available in the Middle East. The decisions made by the Arabs at the Fez Summit make it possible to overcome the Camp David impasse and pave the way to a more comprehensive negotiating process.

This prospect may also be an excellent opportunity to coordinate the Euro-American postures in order to avoid new oppositions such as Camp David vs. Venice Declaration. Anyway, the Americans after 18 months of one-sided strategy

consensus

policy seem to be on the verge of adding a European-like dimension to their Middle Eastern policy. Therefore the time might come very soon for the Europeans to add to their Middle Eastern policy the military dimension it is presently lacking.

Albert Wohlstetter (9) has very aptly pointed out that "it makes little sense to ask whether an attack on the Gulf is less important than an attack on the European center. An attack on the Gulf would amount to an indirect attack on the center". Presumably - as Wohlstetter makes clear - the real threat would not be that much a military attack but a political control over oil. In other words the Soviets could become able, through policies of intimidation and/or alliances, to set quantities and prices and possibly to deny oil. This would materialize an extreme dependence of Western Europe (and Japan) on the Soviets.

In order to avoid this evolution the West should first of all - according to the European point of view - help the regional countries to consolidate both regional and domestic stability. Any insistence on imposing a Western military presence must be avoided to the extent that it is felt by the regional countries as a regional blow to their stability, Nevertheless an essential contribution to their stability would be the building up of a military capacity to intervene. The existence of this capacity would be perceived by the regional countries as a deterrent towards the Soviets and as a guarantee to their own security. The Europeans - very critical and sceptical about any military moves - should bear in mind that it will have the nature of a deterrent. It should be a political factor meant to stabilize the region and not a direct military presence. On the other hand, the Americans should not overlook the political significance of this military capacity.

This capacity is to date very weak and fading. The time for the RDF to be ready is very long. In any case one has to stress that for this military force to be credible to the parties involved, it must add to the existing forces. The ability to airlift forces presently deployed on the central front would not be sufficient for them to work as simultaneously as a guarantee and/or as a deterrent in favour of both Western Europe and Southwestern Asia. How could the Europeans contribute to set up this additional Western military capacity? They should either take on greater military responsibility in Europe or deploy up new European forces on the southern flank or both. Some steps in this direction have been taken, such as the European participation into the Sinai Multinational Force and, now, into the Multinational Force in Lebanon. An important development is that Italian military policy is gradually acquiring a Mediterranean dimension (10). France has traditionally played a role in Northern and Central Africa from both a military and political point of view. Interesting as these policies may be, they are no more than tentative and uncoordinated approaches. The only military coordination so far, outside the NATO area, has taken place informally in the Arabic Sea among the operational forces dispatched there at the moment of the Afghanistan crisis. A European military policy towards Middle Eastern and Southwestern Asia is yet to come.

Will it come? Were the Europeans to stick consistently to the regional security vision we discussed in the previous section, they might accept even the extreme dependence situation of a Soviet control over the Gulf oil. In this case no European military contribution will be forthcoming in the Middle East as well as in Europe itself. This even-

tuality cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless one cannot help remarking that Euro-American relations, far from being set, are undergoing profound transformations. A European initiative to change the Alliance by taking on greater responsibility along with greater independence - as hinted by Mitterrand - could modify the American perception. Achange in the American perception coupled with the adoption by the USA of more flexible and political-minded policies could in turn affect the European security perception. For one should never overlook that the militaristic American stance is in itself a factor of insecurity to the Europeans (and the Saudis).

In conclusion, I would say that the opposition asserted by Rostow between experts' and a realistic view in relation to the Middle East - and to the Third World in general - is a false dilemma. The"Experts-Europeans"are right in pointing out that the best way to keep the Soviets out of the region is to give it stability, confidence and inner coherence by paying attention to the local factors of conflict and insecurity. The"Realpolitiker-Americans"are right in asserting that an adequate military capacity must be set up (but not in the region!) in order to deter the Soviets and assure the allies. The mutual willingness to discuss the mix and the readiness to take up related responsibilities is the way to change perceptions and assuring the Alliance's unity of vision in facing the new challenges coming from outside the NATO area.

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Let us now finally come to the third set of perceptions we promised to discuss: what are the purposes of the Soviet power, its nature and its limits? This discussion is logically related to the meaning of détente and use or misuse of it by the Sovietswhich recent American governments may have permitted.It is a very controversial issue. Related to an inevitably deceiving ideological analysis, it gives way to bitter debates. The following comments are therefore only an overview of the issues at stake in the discussion of the conflicting Euro-American feelings of the Soviet role. in the Third World.

Let us start on a non-ideological ground by analysing the material constraints on the intentions of the Soviet Union. As subject to shortcomings as it may be, an analysis of the evolution of the Soviet economy is nevertheless crucial to any definition of the intentions of the Soviet power, its nature and its limits. In essence, there are two explanations for the relationship between the USSR economy and recent Soviet expansionism in the Third World. Both of them contend that the relation is strong even though for different reasons. The difference is by no means negligible.

The Soviet industrialization has been planned according to three stages. The first was the creation of basic industries and capital goods-producing industries. The second was the spread of industrialization by means of the producer goods made available by the industries set up during the first stage. In the sixties modernization of the whole industrial sector was to start. Modernization was bound to change the "extensive" character of the Soviet economy. Soviet growth had been based, from its beginning

until the fifties, on the ready availability of factors of production (manpower and raw materials) rather than on their efficient use and productivity. By the sixties these factors began to get scarce and regionally unbalanced. Population projections suggested that in the 1980s the rate of population growth would have fallen and that the highest growth would have been in the relatively scarcely industrialized regions of Central Asia. Furthermore, primary inputs demand - including energy - tended to outstrip supply for Western resources were being exhausted. The mainstay of the Soviet mining industry should have shifted eastward for demand to be met, a shift made difficult by technological, economic and climatic factors. To this it must be added that the high demand for raw and energy materials was determined, not only by the structure of the Soviet industry but also by the role of primary goods exporter which the Soviet economy performed in the international division of labour. One must remember that up to the mid-70s the terms of trade for raw materials were not favourable to raw materials. Hence the need to give the economy an "intensive" character with labour and energy saving lines of production.

The Soviets planned to modernize their economy and change their role in the international economy by importing Western technologies to enhance productivity in the manufacturing industries and by increasing their exports of energy and raw materials in order to finance the technology imports. - Western, especially US, cooperation for the exploitation of Siberian mineral deposits was then assigned a key role in this plan. The USA-USSR Trade Agreement of 1972 was supposed to be the first step along this road.

Later, the enactment of the 1974 Trade Act, calling for a link between the most favoured nation clause and freedom to emigrate, coupled with the new regulations prohibiting Eximbank from financing any form of exploitation of Soviet energy resources, made it impossible for the Soviets to continue to rely on the USA for their modernization project. Following the American steps, the USSR felt forced to go back even on the 1972 Agreement.

The drive to modernization and the failure to obtain the USA cooperation is the background to both the explanations we are considering. The first one places emphasis on a growing structural imbalance between demand and supply of energy and stresses the USSR's need to acquire oil from abroad. According to this line of reasoning - apart from political pressures on demand such as supplies to CMEA countries - the modernization of the economy will call for increased energy inputs. The sequence, as illustrated by Maddock (11), implies increased energy demand as a result of the mechanization and electrification of tasks previously carried out either by hand or using simple tools. Higher productivity means higher wages and thus increased demand for consumer durables (cars, household appliances). Higher wages also imply better food. The need for improved productivity in agriculture will inevitably signify increased demand for energy and chemical inputs.

Is the Soviet oil industry capable of meeting this increased demand? Generally speaking, supply is thought to react only sluggishly to demand, this being implicit

in the nature of the Soviet planning system. The price system gives no efficient measure of relative scarcities. The prices established for the oil sector do not, in other words, reflect the "rent" element. What is more the organizational structure of the sector is characterized by the separation (in both operational and accounting terms) of drilling and well exploitation. As a consequence those productive units engaged in exploitation find it easier to meet their production targets by resorting to new wells rather than by continuing to exploit old ones (which have a higher marginal cost). Under-exploitation is worsened by Soviet backwardness in techniques of secondary and tertiary exploitation. It should also be remembered that whereas the wells in the Volga-Urals region (where 80% of Soviet energy is consumed) are under-exploited and are nearing exhaustion, 80% of oil reserves are in Siberia, where consumption is low, exploitation and transport difficult and investment expensive and necessarily long-term.

The inability of the Soviet oil industry to meet demand would thus explain the USSR's growing interest towards Third World oil exporting countries, particularly those of the Middle East. In relation to its modernization project - and to any other purpose - any form of control of Middle Eastern oil would perform the same task. The American cooperation was supposed to do in unleashing the Siberian energy resources. The Soviet energy prospects, however, have grown into a very controversial issue. An earlier CIA study (12) concluded that by the beginning of the 1980s the USSR would face a decline of production with all its implications. This conclusion was challenged by a Swedish think

tank (13), according to which at the beginning of the 1980s there was nothing but a short-lived crisis. After recovering from it thanks to a production reform under way, the USSR was once again going to have large oil supplies available to it. The CIA, moreover, has quite recently revised its 1977 forecast. According to the new estimates the Soviets are supposed to meet the slight rise in oil production worked out in the 1980-85 plan. It is true that the discussion on the Soviet energy prospects seems inconclusive and so appears the relationship between those prospects and the Soviet drive in the direction of the Gulf (14). Their drive - if anything - does not seem necessarily determined by poor energy prospects.

The second explanation of the relationship between the Soviet economy and USSR expansionism towards the Third World is more complex. The Soviets'failure to obtain American cooperation and the tremendous increase in oil and other raw materials prices after the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 may have combined in convincing the Soviets to pursue an overall policy of raw material management. This is the way Carlo Boffito (15) has presented the Soviet strategy: "In the course of the later seventies the role assigned to raw materials both in domestic and in foreign economic policy undergoes a radical change. The USSR no longer presents itself as a large, semi-developed economy aiming to complete its own economic development through economic integration with the more advanced economies of the West. Nor does it aim any longer at increasing exports of manufactured goods to the Western market. Rather the Soviet Union establishes itself primarily as raw-materials exporter or, better, as a country conducting an intricate commer-

cial administration of primary products". It is to implement this policy that the Soviet Union does evolve a growing interest towards Third World countries and does not hesitate to make aggressive moves. This new attitude was supposedly first reflected in the 1975 Angola intervention and then in the various Southwestern Asia activities up to the Afghanistan invasion. In conclusion, it is certainly an area larger than the Middle East which seems concerned by the Soviet drive. This drive in turn seems motivated by a policy related to raw materials in general and not only to oil. Finally, one should bear in mind that this policy implies a growing Soviet role as producer of raw materials and not only as an exporter, importer and re-exporter. In this sense the Soviet's great interest in concluding the gas deal with Western Europe is evidence of the complexity of the raw material policy being pursued by the USSR.

The suggestion that the Soviet drive towards the Third World is springing from raw materials rather than an oil policy should not go without influencing the Soviet threat perception of the Western countries. In the case of "oil hunger" the ensuing expansionist policy would be focussed on a single area, very sensitive in terms of the Western strategic interests. The major character of such a policy would be its competitiveness with the West. A policy designed to manage raw materials in general would also be competitive with Western Europe and Japan but within a frame so diluted as to include many different geographic areas and peaceful trading interests. Such a policy may even turn out to be complementary to the economic interests of the Western countries as in the case of gas supplies

to West European countries. In other words, a worldwide policy designed to produce and trade raw materials may be aggressive and may bring about some unsecurity in supplies, but ostensibly very much less so than a policy aimed strictly at controlling Persian Gulf oil.

Rather, the most important question posed by this role of raw materials supplier opted for by the Soviet Union in the international division of labour is whether it may not be inherently destabilizing. How stable can an economically backward superpower be? Economic backwardness may be the factor which makes for the Soviet Union's tendency towards aggressiveness.

What is at stake here is the whole role of economic cooperation. The differences in the Euro-American perception of the Soviet intentions seem to rest on the role economic cooperation is meant to perform in shaping these very intentions. In the European view, whatever might be the determinants of the Soviet Union's drive towards Third World countries - either poor energy prospects or the implementation of a complex raw material management policy - Western economic cooperation is bound to foster Soviet development and then to contain the USSR's tendency to aggressiveness. From a historical point of view, one may maintain that the extension of the American economic cooperation in the 1970s might have prevented the Soviets from undertaking their raw material policies and as a consequence also their Third World adventurism. Today, the Europeans, as was made evident by the stubborn way in which they are pursuing the gas deal with the USSR, continue to be confident in the long-term positive influence the economic cooperation may have in shaping the intentions of Soviet power. This also means that the Europeans willingness to cooperate with the

Soviet Union is not dictated only by the growing regional character of its security perception.

A more abstract way of looking at the same problems is that of discussing the nature and intentions of the Soviet power from an ideological point of view. It is the everlasting and most inconclusive discussion on the point of wheter the Soviets are pursuing a grand design or whether they are plainly seizing the opportunities given by the course of events. Just to sketch out the issue, let us consider the following points:

- The Soviets seem convinced that they have developed a power sufficient to deter any attack against them. On the ideological grounds this posture means that war is no longer "inevitable", for capitalist imperialism is by now firmly contained by the development of the military and political power of the Socialist bloc;
- The eventuality of a nuclear war, however, cannot be ruled out, because the contradiction between different social regimes is still very sharp. It seems the opinion of the Soviet leaders that the nuclear character of the warfare would not be sufficient to prevent war (16), for the political and social factors which would make it break out still persist. Thus, while the military forces must be prepared to sustain any kind of conflict, the socialist countries work against this eventuality by supporting anti-imperialist and peace-loving forces everywhere in the world, with the aim of affecting and changing those political and social factors which may bring about a war with the capitalist countries despite its "inevitability". In this frame the Soviet Union, as a state, coexist peacefully with the capitalist states, whereas, as the leader and a

part of the international communist movement, it intervenes actively to assist and develop the anti-imperialist forces.

In this sense détente is to be looked upon as a stage of more limited and passive support to the Third World and anti-imperialist forces owing to a less favourable global balance of power. The stance became more aggressive and active when the central balance of power changed (as the correlation of forces changed, to use the Soviet concept, which very aptly includes military as well as social and political factors). This view tends to play down the relation between the USSR's economic performance and the Soviet attitude towards the Third World. Rather, economic cooperation, the navy and the airlifting capacity appear as the updating of the long term support the USSR is committed to giving to the antimperialist forces. In this respect one may remember Breznev's report to the 24th CPSU Congress, when he declared that the development of economic cooperation with the Western countries did not imply that the Soviet Union would have renounced support of the liberation struggles of peoples oppressed by imperialism.

- True, it is difficult to determine to what extent the Soviet leadership is committed to supporting Third World antimperialist forces from the evidence of the late 1970s. It is worth recalling the thesis (17) according to which the particularly aggressive Soviet attitude of that period would have been forced by a Cuban policy of fait accomplis, as presumably their intervention in Angola. Whatever role the Cuban "factor", has played, it is clear that the USSR considers the Eastern European countries as irreversibly belonging to their "Empire", while it is less

clear how firmly in the Soviet perception such countries as Afghanistan and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen belong to the same "Empire". According to Hélène Carrère d'Encausse (18) the crucial factor isterritorial contiguity: an Afghan communist regime would be considered irreversible, while the overthrowing of the South Yemeni leadership would be countered only to a low risk extent.

Though somewhat attenuated by the latter remarks, what emerges from this analysis is the long term aggressive and expansionist nature of the Soviet regime. The value of this conclusion is nevertheless very limited. The eschatological character of the marxist-leninist way of thinking makes its ideological analysis inescapably self-fulfilling and tautological: a grand design is inherent in the very system of thinking and its pursuit may be acknowledged at the seizing of every opportunity. On the other hand, no political entity is so senseless as to seize opportunities just for the sake of doing so. The search for any advantage is rooted in some long term project. The ideological analysis helps to illuminate the rhetoric of the Soviet decision-making but cannot be a useful and credible instrument for anticipating the USSR's short and long-term policies. It is the reverse mirror-image of the new conservative American leadership and certainly a factor bound to mislead the Euro-American debate for it tends to mortgage the European security pereption and to deny USSR-Western Europe economic cooperation.

To give the discussion on the intentions and nature of Soviet power a less treacherous foundation, besides the remarks already developed on the role of the Soviet economy, one has to refer to two more points. First, one has to remind Vernon Aspaturian (19) remarks on the possible evolution of the Soviet "Empire" towards a more flexible and decentralized model. On the basis of what a Soviet analyst - Kapchenko - maintains on changes in the international policies of the socialist countries as the correlation of forces does change, Aspaturian concludes: "This notion of an international system restructured in accordance with Leninist norms should not be compared with the crude Soviet ideological approach of earlier years that sought to stimulate world revolution to achieve world communism. Revolution and communism will continue to be supported and promoted, but only in areas where they are supportable and promotable. As the paramount global power, the USSR would make appropriate adjustments to both the developed capitalist world and the underdeveloped Third World - and although the Kremlin would coordinate and manage all three worlds, it would pursue separate policies with respect to each". As we already observed when talking about the cooperation the Soviets offered Western Europe in the realm of Persian Gulf oil management, this image of Soviet flexibility is being widely advertised. Comfortable to be believed in times of difficult decisions and intellectual ambiguity, this Soviet image may be borrowed by bewildered Western Europeans. Were it to enter the European security perception, it could concur to trigger off a European attitude of appeasement.

On the other hand, one cannot help remarking that events in Africa, Southwestern Asia and elsewhere in the Third World do not absolutely confirm a Soviet evolution towards a more flexible model. Contrary to what Aspaturian seems to assume, Third World countries' "deviations" from communist orthodoxy are due to their growing nationalism and not to a growing Soviet flexibility. The way the Polish crisis is being managed is not significant either, for it is the result of the weakness of the Polish Communist Party and the USSR and not of the unflexible. So, we come to our point, namely to the limits of Soviet power, whatever its purposes may be.

Any Soviet expansionist drive is inescapably flawed by fundamental shortcomings. The Soviets' inability to provide Third World countries with an effective economic cooperation is bound to undermine any political and military acquisition. Both past and recent experiences show how feeble and perishable their influence on Third World countries and clients is. A recent book edited by Robert H. Donaldson (20) gives a detailed analysis of these limits in the various areas of the Third World. One of the contributors concludes thus: "The evidence abduced in these studies is that Soviet influence in the Third World remains limited. Where a country heavily mortgages its military establishment to the Soviet Union as Cuba and Vietnam have done, the fact of Soviet influence is undeniable. But otherwise Moscow has rarely been able to compel a Third World government to adopt a policy that it was not inclined to pursue anyway" (21). Soviet limits have been unveiled quite recently by the Lebanese crisis. What one is led to suspect here is that behind Soviet passivity there is a cumulative set of

economic and domestic difficulties combined with changing priorities (arms control talks and economic cooperation with Western Europe) in addition to a plain inability to support Syria and the PLO at a regional level. In this sense one is also led to look upon the late 1970s as the flaring up of a crisis which is now ending without any long-term implication.

In conclusion, we have a pragmatic European perception of Soviet power versus an ideological American perception. This is a divergence which cannot be bypassed, for on practical grounds the difference is that according to the European point of view, Soviet power can be influenced whereas it can only be opposed and contained according the American view. From the point of view of Euro-Amerian relations, the risk is that the imposition on the Europeans of this ideological vision may put them in a posture so difficult as to force them to stress the ambiguities of their relations with the Soviets. By contrast, the emerging limits to Soviet power in the Third World and elsewhere confirm the European perception. This is a situation in which the Europeans should firmly defend their postures for the sake of the Alliance's future.

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Notes

(1) A point of view over the remaking of the Alliance is in Irving Kristol, "Reconstructing NATO: A new role for Europe", The Wall Street Journal, August 12, 1982

(2) See the assessment of the conventional balance in Central Europe in The Economist, July 31, 1982, pp. 30-31: "Do you sincerely want to be non-nuclear?"; see also Pierre Lellouche, "A Revolution in NATO Strategy", Newsweek, November 1, 1982 and Neville Brown, "The Changing Face of Non-Nuclear War", Survival, Sept.-Oct. 1982, pp. 211-219.

(3) Robert W. Tucker, "The Purposes of American Power", Foreign Affairs, vol. 59, No. 2, Winter 1980-1981, p. 252 and 254.

(4) Pierre Lellouche, "Does Nato have a Future? A European View", The Washington Quarterly, Summer 1982, pp. 40-52.

(5)

(6) Eugene V. Rustow, "The Giant still sleeps", Orbis, Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 1980, p. 311

(7) Fouad Ajami, "Between Pax Americana and the European Sensibility: Implications for the Middle East", The Arab Perspective, (Amman), No. 2, February 1982, pp. 16-30.

(8) Roberto Aliboni, "Sicherheitsproblems in Nahen und Mittleren Osten - von Ihnen gesehen", Europa-Archiv, Vol. 36, No. 19, October 10, 1981, pp. 567-578.

(9) Albert Wohlstetter, "Meeting the Threat in the Persian Gulf", European Ministry Institute for Security Research April 1981, p. 1.

(10) Maurizio Cremasco, "Situazione internazionale nell'area mediterranea e problematiche del modello italiano di difesa (International situation in the Mediterranean and the Italian defence posture issue"), Istituto Studi e Ricerche di Difesa, Gli indirizzi della difesa italiana, proceedings of the meeting held in Rome on 15 April 1982, 1982.

(11) R.T. Maddock, "Oil and Economic Growth in the Soviet Union", The Three Banks Review, March 1980, pp. 27-40

(12) CIA, "The Interntional Energy Outlook to 1985", Washington, 1977

(13) Petro Studies Co., "Soviet Oil Production Reform of 1980 and its Potential", Stockholm, 1979

(14) A. Yodfat, M. Abir, "In the direction of the Persian Gulf", Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1977, expressed the thesis of a Soviet drive towards the Gulf because of poor energy prospects

(15) Carlo Boffito, "Factors Orienting Recent Soviet Foreign Policy on Raw Materials", Lo Spettatore Internazionale (Rome), Vol. XVII, No. 1, January-March, 1982, pp. 29-49.

(16) David Holloway, "Military Power and Political Purpose in Soviet Policy", Daedalus, Vol. 109, No. 4, Fall 1980, pp. 1330, Fondation pour les Etudes de la Défence National, Les Fondations doctrinaux de la stratégie soviétique, 1979, Chapters III & V

(17) J.F. Hughes, "Soviet Leadership in Transition", The Brookings Institution, 1980, pp. 166-167

(18) H. Carrière D'Encausse, "La politique extérieure de l'URSS: continuité et rupture", Politique Etrangère Vol. 45, No. 2, June 1980, pp. 363-375

(19) Vernon V. Aspaturian, "Soviet Global Power and the Correlation of Forces", Problems of Communism, May-June 1980, p. 18

(20) Robert H. Donaldson (ed.), "The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures", Croom Helm, London, 1981.

(21) Joseph L. Nogee, "The Soviet Union in the Third World: Successes and Failures", in Robert H. Donaldson, op cit, pp. 450.