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# The Superpowers on the Way to a Settlement of Regional Conflicts: A German Perspective

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I

**T**he political developments of the past year indicate that there is much to be said for considering the question of whether the superpowers are well on their way toward a peaceful solution of their regional conflicts.

As we pose this question we are already giving expression to our hope that the world is coming closer to peace. However, as Henry Kissinger has rightly said, "Securing peace is not as easy as wishing for it." Because of our particular historical experiences, we Germans have a tendency to subordinate the realities of this world to our pronounced desire for universal peace. At times we seem to forget that realistic statesmen, both past and present, have always been well advised to heed Max Weber's demand for developing "an educated ruthlessness in looking at the realities of life."

The realities of the relations between the two superpowers are primarily characterized by power and national interests. An answer to the question with which we are concerned will therefore require us to think in these categories, that is, in the categories of power politics and the security of national interests.

I consider it necessary to make these preliminary remarks to my deliberations because we Germans do not have a sufficient strategic foundation for our foreign policy. Nevertheless, we are concerned with the global strategic behavior of the superpowers. Anyone among us who

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condemns the temptations of power politics is sure to be greeted with applause, but we must make an effort to apply a minimum degree of soberminded understanding to the power-political behavior of our most important ally, the United States of America, and its competing world power. After all, power politics can be an important instrument for securing peace.

Starting with their first summit meeting at Geneva, and based upon such an understanding of their respective politics and interests, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev talked again and again about whether and how the potential for conflict in all parts of the world might be reduced to mutual advantage.

The Americans can rightly claim that from the beginning they have always insisted that these issues be addressed, and that the political dialogue between the two superpowers not be limited to problems of disarmament. A disarmament-only approach would have meant that the dialogue between the world powers would have been conducted without any reference to the essential causes of the political tensions, that is, the open and smoldering regional conflicts.

## II

This makes clear that the politics of dialogue between the United States of America and the Soviet Union is designed to strengthen the political and strategic stability between the two world powers. We should, therefore, at this point take a look at the four essential determining factors of this stability and, at the same time, draw a rough outline of the present status and future trends in superpower relations:

- Despite their continuing antagonisms, both superpowers increasingly look for possibilities to get the conflict potential under control and, even more, to avoid armed conflicts. Their intention is to prevent nuclear war between themselves, and to silently respect the sanctity of each other's territory.

- For the present, the two superpowers still determine world security policy. However, the rise of the regional hegemonic powers—particularly in the Pacific area—indicates that within the foreseeable future there will be a multipolar power structure. The United States and the Soviet Union are, therefore, increasingly shifting their interests from Europe to the Pacific region, where they are exerting their influence in a mutual competition.

- Both world powers seek to display worldwide strategic flexibility, and they wish to loosen those ties that are detrimental to this approach without, however, giving up their zones of influence. In this time of rapidly changing conditions, they seek to secure their objectives by a grand strategy that includes not only the achievement of versatile political solutions,

economic potential, and the attractiveness of their state concepts, but also their status as a world nuclear power, world naval power, and power in outer space; and by an arms control policy which is in consonance with all of the above.

● While the Soviet Union and the United States have largely congruent global-strategic objectives, their relations are nevertheless characterized by insoluble tensions. These tensions are caused by the antagonism of their value systems; by the fact that the United States had a better starting position, so that the Soviet Union will never be able to catch up; by the great domestic stability of the United States and its allies, as compared with the Soviet Union and the increasing unrest in the relations between the countries within the Warsaw Pact; by the contrast between the insular geopolitical situation of the United States, on the one hand, and the continental position of the Soviet Union on the other. There is also their different geostrategic situation, which makes the United States less vulnerable but also forces it to split up its forces. In this situation, the Soviet Union not only has the advantage of having a closed inner perimeter, but it is also geographically close to regions of the world which are both potentially unstable and important in the world-political context, so that interventions are not only possible but are sometimes considered necessary.

Against this background we can now ask ourselves the question of how the two superpowers are securing their worldwide interests—both today and tomorrow—in a political climate which on the one hand is characterized by increasing cooperation but on the other hand could revert to confrontation. We cannot rule out such a change in the international climate, particularly if traditional reservations become more prominent again, or if one of the superpowers violates the rules of mutual relations in the nuclear age, which include keeping a careful eye on what seem to be controllable regional conflicts. Certainly it is possible for a conflict with a regional origin to develop into a global one, and thus to fall back onto its originator.

In order to better understand this complex mechanism of congruence and antagonism between the two superpowers, and then to project this relationship onto the current regional conflicts, let us take a close look at the foreign policies of the United States and the Soviet Union.

### III

The national security and foreign policy of the United States has three components: moral-political, economic and power-political. The aim of the moral-political component is to convince the world that it should take America as a model. The economic component's aim is to secure raw materials, energy, and markets. And the power-political component

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provides support for the role of the United States as a world power, by securing strategic positions on a global scale and extending American influence throughout the world.

Depending on the situation, either one or the other of these three components enters into the foreground of American policy to influence both strategic and tactical decision making.

On the one hand, U.S. national security and foreign policy is characterized by a high degree of continuity; it is determined by immutable objectives, by constant political and geostrategic factors, and by a clearly defined constellation of interests. In this context, in which we have made use of the term "continuity," we are reminded of what Thomas Jefferson said: "We act not just for ourselves but for all mankind." And it was Jefferson who wrote, at the time that Napoleon marched into Russia, "Surely none of us wish to see Bonaparte conquer Russia and thus lay at his feet the whole continent of Europe."

Ever since that time, the United States has adhered to a principle which follows from this position—that a potential opponent must never become too strong. The United States has fought two wars in and around Europe to keep us Germans from achieving such a powerful position. The United States has also conducted several wars in Asia to prevent the rise of a single hegemonic power in the Pacific Basin. And it is still true today that the United States will not tolerate the dominance of a single power on the Eurasian continent; because if the Soviet Union were to gain a dominant influence over almost 300 million West Europeans and their resources, China and Japan would have to assume that the global balance of power would definitely change to the detriment of the United States, and this would then have far-reaching consequences for their relations with the United States.

It is not least for this reason that for four decades the United States has made use of all three components of its national security and foreign policy in order to limit the influence of the Soviet Union by political, ideological, military and economic means. However, this containment policy has experienced a great deal of fluctuation, particularly during the seventies and eighties. President Carter started out on a soft tack and in the beginning curtailed defense expenditures and exercised reserve in regional conflicts; the result was that the Soviet Union accelerated its armaments programs and conducted an aggressive Third World policy—among the Arabs, in Central America, in Africa, and in Southwest Asia. President Reagan then shoved the pendulum back to the other extreme at the beginning of his term of office. He increased armaments substantially, and he sought to isolate the Soviet Union and to push it into a corner politically.

Now it is all the more important that in the future the United States not swing back and forth between sabre rattling and unrealistic new expectations, and thus in the end become a factor of uncertainty in world

politics. In his new book entitled *1999*, Richard Nixon has reached the conclusion: "Containment is outdated. Détente has lost its meaning." And he urgently recommends that the new U.S. administration place its relations with the other superpower on a new basis, shaped by a steady long-term policy that combines three elements: deterrence, competition, and dialogue.

Whoever analyzes the mood of America today, including the foreign policy ideas not only of President Bush, but also of his opponent last year for the U.S. presidency, Governor Michael Dukakis, will reach the conclusion that there is now a remarkable consensus in the United States—a consensus jointly articulated in June 1988 by Mr. Nixon, an elder statesman experienced in foreign policy, and Mr. Cyrus Vance and Mr. Kissinger, two former secretaries of state, and confirmed by General Colin Powell, President Reagan's National Security Adviser, in a speech given before the World Affairs Council in San Francisco on 19 July 1988.

It is definitely clear that in the future the United States will continue to protect, with its umbrella of nuclear deterrence, the three regions of the world that are of vital political and strategic importance for America, namely Europe, Japan, and the borders of the Persian Gulf. These areas differ from those of the Third World in which the Americans see themselves competing with the Soviet Union. Now, finally, it is the Third World which the United States in particular will have to consider as the real challenge.

In the United States there is now an increasing awareness of having long been prepared for the most dangerous situation, i.e., a major aggressive act by the Warsaw Pact, while at the same time having paid insufficient attention to the most likely development, namely, crises and conflicts in other parts of the world.

Until now, the United States has not had a particularly imaginative or creative Third World policy. However, there are more and more indications that there is an increasing sense of moral responsibility toward the underdeveloped nations and that the economic opportunities and security risks are being subjected to a new evaluation. This is so for several obvious reasons:

- In the Third World, there are an unbelievable wealth of resources and promising possibilities for giving world trade a new impulse. In this context I would point out that the European Community has estimated that by the end of this century China will have a per capita income of \$1,000, and twice that amount by the year 2010. What this development means in economic terms is quite obvious when taking into consideration the size of the Chinese population.

- There is incredible poverty in the Third World. About 600 to 800 million people live in such a state of misery that their despair results in unrest and revolution, encouraging the possibility of radical change.

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- Countries of the Third World carry out their contradictions and conflicts with such vehemence that, so far, 20 million people have become victims of such conflicts.
- In our time, no wealthy industrial nation that is to any extent guided by moral standards can afford to ignore the poverty suffered by large segments of mankind.

The United States can no longer afford to treat the Third World as an object of rivalry between the two superpowers, unless the Americans wish to lose credibility with those peoples of the world who are struggling for their mere survival. The United States simply cannot afford to create the impression that, in effect, its only interest is to maintain the upper hand in the global competition with the Soviet Union. After all, the leaders of Communist subversion are displaying an understanding of the distress of the poor, and they are talking about it. Until now, the United States has talked more about the Communists than about the poor.

The United States will not relent from giving its support to friendly states in the form of money and arms if these states are defending their freedom against Communist subversion or overt attack. And the United States will continue to secure its national interests by maintaining a fleet capable of taking action worldwide. However, today, more than ever, U.S. world policy requires a constructive attitude on the issue of debts, and it requires drastic increases in U.S. development assistance, an area in which Europe is presently far ahead of the United States

### IV

During the Reagan era there were significant changes in the concept of U.S. global maritime strategy. Due to its insular geopolitical position and its worldwide interests, the United States more clearly than ever before gave notice of its claim to maritime supremacy.

From the beginning, the Reagan administration supported this claim with a high degree of priority and gave it the following political definition: "Maritime superiority must first be reestablished and then strengthened. The trend in the U.S.-Soviet sea power balance has been running strongly the wrong way for over 15 years. Reversing the trend and restoring U.S. naval forces to their necessary dominance will require a sustained national commitment of considerable magnitude."

As the Americans understand it, this objective requires naval forces having a quality and strength that will permit the fulfillment of three tasks:

- A worldwide peacetime strength and readiness, with main efforts in those regions that are of particular strategic interest;
- Flexible and effective task fulfillment as a factor for stabilizing regional conflicts; and

- The capability of engaging the enemy in a global war at a time and place which seem most likely to bring about success, while at the same time denying the enemy the same opportunity. This is to enable the United States not only to defend North America far away from its own shores, but also to secure the sea lines of communication for the United States and its allies.

The formulation of such a mission for the U.S. Navy resulted in the development of a gigantic armaments program, the objective of which was the establishment of a 600-ship navy. While it is clear now that the size of the fleet will not reach 600 ships—in fact it is receding from its crest—it will still be, by far, the world's most powerful fleet.

In conducting this program for reestablishing the maritime superiority of the U.S. fleet, the American leadership was primarily guided by two basic ideas: On the one hand, the United States requires sufficient naval forces to be able to maintain a durable peacetime naval presence in all areas of the world that are of vital significance to the United States, without causing an overload on personnel and materiel; on the other hand, in case of war the U.S. fleet requires combat capabilities sufficient for translating this claim to naval superiority into victory.

The political and strategic significance of such a peacetime strength for the U.S. Navy is perhaps due more to the historical experience of the United States as a naval power than to political rationality. This must be kept in mind if we wish to understand the reasons for the increase in recent decades in the ability of the Soviet Union to behave as a naval world power with global capabilities. What was important to the Soviets was not that their fleet should be militarily coequal with the U.S. Navy, either as a whole or in part; rather, what was important to them was the capability to make their presence felt with naval means on every ocean and in each region of the world in which the United States had a naval presence, so that they could protect their interests with military means or intervene in a crisis.

For the United States, this meant that in each situation in which it was thinking about military intervention, it had to keep in mind that intervention could at any time lead to a conflict with the other world power that would be difficult to keep under control.

## V

It is not least this condition that has recently influenced the Soviet deliberations on global strategy. It is generally true that for years the Soviet Union made unmistakably clear that its self-image as a nuclear and naval world power did not permit parity in only one of these two attributes of a world power, while accepting the superiority of the United States in the other. Admiral Gorshkov, the creator of the Soviet fleet, emphatically



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pursued this political objective with a concept of worldwide operations. He was primarily supported in the pursuit of this program by Leonid Brezhnev.

During the Gorbachev era, the peacetime mission of the Soviet fleet included three primary elements:

- Balancing the influence gained by the United States with its globally active navy;
- Improving the Soviet Union's image as a global naval power and as a power with worldwide interests;
- Supporting political and strategic objectives in areas of the world in which the Soviet Union had important interests.

Since General Secretary Gorbachev has assumed power, there are distinct signs that changes are taking place in Soviet naval policy. While it is true that Gorbachev also regards the element of equality as an essential and determining factor in the superpower relationship, he nevertheless considers it less and less meaningful to pursue political goals in the Third World with military means. Moreover, he is becoming more and more aware of the economic consequences of an expensive naval arms buildup and a worldwide naval presence. According to American sources, Gorbachev therefore seems to have reduced the Soviet fleet activities for the time being from their political and strategic dimension to the operational and tactical level. This has been accompanied by a drastic reduction in the funds devoted to readiness (5 percent of the 1986-90 budgets, compared with 29 percent of the U.S. Navy budget), and by changes in the Soviet naval presence and naval exercises, which will now be concentrated mainly in waters close to home and on the wartime mission.

The expense of naval armaments and the global presence of the Soviet navy is not the only burden on the course of Soviet reforms. In addition, there are the large sums of money with which the Soviet Union supports its proxies, both directly and indirectly. Each year, these sums amount to \$3.5 billion for Vietnam, almost \$5 billion for Cuba, around \$3 billion for Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia, and almost \$1 billion for Nicaragua. In other words, each and every day the Soviet Union pumps out about \$35 million to support the regional conflicts of this world.

Certainly, this is one important motive for Mikhail Gorbachev's effort to redirect Soviet policy and to develop a new policy toward the Third World. It is evident that Leonid Brezhnev's approach no longer suffices. Brezhnev's only aim was expansion; his intent was to widen Soviet influence and weaken the U.S. position by means of a combination of the well-aimed application of military assistance, state-sponsored trade, diplomatic support for his clientele, and a worldwide naval presence. And all of this was to take place particularly in those areas where Soviet economic and security interests complement each other: in the Soviet Eurasian glacis as well as on the shores of the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and the South Atlantic. In

this context it is of interest that in 1987 alone, the Soviet Union increased its arms exports to the Third World by about 30 percent as compared to the previous year. The points of main effort were the Near and Middle East and India.

## VI

This outline description of the global-strategic behavior of the two superpowers already provides a good basis for evaluating their behavior in the individual regional conflicts, be it in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, or southern Africa. We can therefore keep our observations on specific regions short.

Not until the last summit meeting in Moscow in May 1988 was it possible to achieve a real breakthrough on the issue of regional conflicts, and this occurred only after the Afghanistan agreement had provided a historical prerequisite. While the main interest of the German media was focused on the solemn inauguration of the Washington INF Treaty, the fact that in Moscow it was possible for the first time to talk constructively about the whole gamut of regional conflicts was the item of real political significance. In these talks, however, each side clearly and emphatically stated its interests. Although it was not possible to overcome the differences in these interests, it was possible to overcome the inability to reach compromises. The Soviet Union's ability to achieve compromises was evident particularly in those areas where Moscow would not gain anything by continuing to exacerbate the conflict, and would thereby lose more than it would gain. At the same time, we must not overlook the fact that Moscow is by no means the master of events in all of the regions concerned.

In Southeast Asia, the primary bones of contention are Cambodia and the Philippines.

The aim of the United States in Cambodia has been to help a subjugated nation that was being bled to death, even though America might have only a limited influence on the formation of Cambodia's ultimate government. Moscow has been interested in a solution corresponding to China's expectations. This is because Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia was one of the three obstacles to a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. At the same time, the Soviets were not in a position to apply pressure on Vietnam at will, since they wished to retain their influence there as well as their naval bases. Vietnam's withdrawal of 50,000 military personnel from Cambodia, for a start, has begun a process which is to return home all Vietnamese invasion troops by 1990. However, in view of the total political, social and economic collapse of Cambodia, the situation will require particular massive outside aid. Only in this way will it be possible to overcome the present Cambodian

infant mortality of 21 percent, the life expectancy of 41 years, and the annual individual income of only \$70 to \$80.

In the Philippines, U.S. and Soviet interests are far apart. For the United States, these Islands constitute a first-class strategic position, not least due to the optimal location of Clark Air Force Base and the U.S. naval base at Subic Bay. The United States will continue to need these positions for its naval presence in the Pacific Ocean and as a basis for any power projection in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. Being well aware of this, in May 1988 the Soviet Union urged President Aquino to close the U.S. bases. And this was done at a time when the president of the Philippines was conducting two battles, one against economic disaster and the other against the New Communist People's Army. On 16 September 1988 the Soviet General Secretary added a remarkable new variant to this initiative: As a *quid pro quo* he offered to relinquish the base at Cam Ran Bay in Vietnam.

In Africa, the regional conflicts are primarily in Angola/Namibia and in Ethiopia.

The Moscow summit prepared the ground for the skeleton agreement, reached on 21 July 1988, to give Namibia its sovereignty and its right to self-determination, to liberate Angola of Cuban troops, and to terminate the intervention of South Africa. With a view toward the tenth anniversary of U.N. Resolution 435, which was passed on 29 September 1978, and which had thus far been unsuccessful, the two superpowers agreed that there should be some movement. At last, U.N. Resolution 435-78, which points in this direction, is coming to its realization. The United States has both economic and strategic interests in Angola and in all of southern Africa, primarily with respect to the wealth of resources there, such as platinum, manganese, and chromium, as well as with regard to the foreign-policy problems besetting South Africa, which is having difficulty in mastering its domestic social conditions. Together with the four other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—France, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union—the United States is one of the powers providing the guarantees for the peace process.

For many years the Soviet Union made use of the social problems, the apartheid policy, and the problems caused by the rapid process of decolonization in southern Africa to establish Communist governments and to exercise its subversive influence. Now, the United States has successfully mediated in this complex regional conflict, and the Soviet Union has helped to find a solution through its constructive influence on Cuba and Angola. It remains to be seen whether the Soviet Union will now also cease to train members of the African National Congress in guerrilla warfare and terrorism in order to fight against the regime of South Africa, and whether it will cease to give massive financial aid to that Congress.

The Soviet Union is also the main supplier of arms to Ethiopia; neither at the last summit nor thereafter did it indicate that it might be interested in changing this. The Ethiopian Communist regime uses hunger and a scorched earth policy as a method for suppression, and it is systematically maneuvering the country into a massive catastrophe. The Soviets are in a position to stop this development; however, so far they have not done so, even though at the Washington summit they took upon themselves the obligation "to support the parties involved in regional conflicts in their search for peaceful solutions designed to promote their independence, freedom and security."

While the Soviet Union, as a member of the United Nations Security Council, helped make possible the acceptance of the U.N. armistice resolution for the war between Iran and Iraq, it did so with some reluctance. In the end, Iran accepted negotiations and the armistice because it had reached the end of the road, both politically and materially. However, later, it has been reported, the Soviet Union informed the United States why Moscow had been so reluctant: In view of the Soviets' problems with the Islamic population in the southern Soviet Union, particularly in Azerbaijan, they had been afraid of further complications that might result from the reactions to be expected from the fundamentalist ayatollahs in Tehran. The United States was also concerned about a possible spread of Iranian fundamentalism; in this respect both superpowers were in agreement with the Arabic countries adjoining the Gulf. And finally, the United States and the Soviet Union were in agreement concerning their estimate of the great dangers emanating from this region in the proliferation of hazardous weapons such as ballistic missiles and chemical arms.

The end of the war between Iraq and Iran has changed the strategic situation in the Near and Middle East, that is, in the region between Afghanistan and the eastern Mediterranean and between the southern border of the Soviet Union and the Arabian Sea, which has for so long been explosively charged. However, the end of this war did not at all change the interests of the two world powers.

Of particular significance for the political-strategic stability of this region will be Iraq's behavior toward Israel and Turkey's behavior in the conflict with the Kurds: both Israel and Turkey are protégés of the United States. The Iraqi army, which is battle-tested and highly armed, is the most important military factor on the Arabian peninsula. Today, Iraq has seven army corps with 40 divisions; and it has 4,000 tanks, 3,000 artillery pieces, and about 500 combat aircraft. However, only eight divisions have a state of mechanization that would qualify them for far-ranging operations. This limited mobility, and the necessity of having to continue to secure its borders against Iran, diminish the threat to Israel, which surpasses Iraq in combat

effectiveness. However, much will depend on whether and to what extent Iraq will continue receiving war supplies from its main supplier, the Soviet Union, which in 1987 alone delivered weapons with a value of \$3.5 billion.

The Soviet Union, which is contractually bound to both Iraq and Syria, has a particular responsibility for peace and stability in the Near East. It is in a position to both provoke and resolve conflicts. Apparently, the Soviet Union considers it to be in its interest to establish itself for the future as a power that is as a matter of course involved in the developments in the Gulf area—be it in a conference on Palestine, in the protection of shipping, or in better relations with Iran.

The United States has a vital political, economic and strategic interest in the Persian Gulf area owing both to the Gulf's large resources in oil, and to the U.S. obligations to Israel. In view of the diverging interests of the two superpowers, the continuing mistrust between them, and particularly the unpredictable behavior of the Arab and Islamic world, there is little room for taking joint action.

However, in this explosive political environment, both superpowers have come to realize the risks that would result if they were to deploy their troops in the pursuit of their political objectives. This realization moved Gorbachev to do away with the political inheritance he had assumed in Afghanistan. There, the Soviet Union lost a great deal of money and almost 50,000 dead and wounded. Nevertheless, the Soviet retreat from Afghanistan turned out to be difficult. At the summit meeting in May 1988, General Secretary Gorbachev energetically and emphatically issued a warning against any further involvement in this process by U.S.-supported Pakistan. The United States rejected Gorbachev's warnings and threats with equal emphasis, and clearly assumed a protective posture over its client.

Finally, it is impossible to say how the Soviet Union will behave in the area which is of particular interest to the United States: Central America. Here, the United States is determined that the Communist superpower will not gain a beachhead on the North American continent. The problem for the United States is that Nicaragua has a Communist regime which both sharply limits freedoms within the country and attempts to export its ideology outside its borders. The United States expects the Soviet Union to stop the supply of weapons. It is very probable that the Soviet reaction will determine future U.S. behavior in the solution of regional conflicts. Washington would surely be glad to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union that would neutralize Nicaragua for the time being as a destabilizing factor in this part of the world. However, it is not yet possible to say whether the situation will develop in this direction. For the Soviet Union and even for Gorbachev himself, there may be quite a temptation to make use of the lack of a consistent U.S. policy toward Central America and of the permanent quarrel between the Congress and the administration, while at

the same time retaining important political positions and levers for exercising future influence.

## VII

It is apparent that particularly during the past year the two superpowers have been unexpectedly successful in the peaceful solution of some regional conflicts. However, it is equally obvious that their rivalry has not yet become a matter of history.

This view is supported by both the continuing antagonism between the systems of values and the diverse interests of the two superpowers—even if the admirers of Gorbachev would prefer to hear something else. So far, important quarters in the United States still regard Soviet foreign policy as a dangerous mixture of traditional Russian expansionism and an ideologically supported drive to achieve a world revolution. The pessimistic view is: It is an imperialism with a dual thrust.

Forty years of U.S. experience in dealing with the Soviet Union have resulted in this evaluation. These experiences concern the Soviets' aggressive use of military power in the service of expansionism—be it in Eastern Europe, in Greece, in Iran and Turkey, or in Berlin, Korea and Southeast Asia, or even in the Middle East and further in the Caribbean and in Africa. The United States has again and again concluded agreements, treaties and understandings with the Soviet Union, particularly with regard to the difficult situations in Israel and Vietnam. The Soviet Union has not adhered to these agreements.

At the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1971, Andrei Gromyko declared, with a view toward the Third World, that there were no issues worth mentioning in international politics which could be decided without or against the Soviet Union. And in 1978, Leonid Brezhnev declared at the 25th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party that the socialist countries' influence on history was growing ever greater, and that détente was related to changes in the international constellation of forces. In 1979 it seemed to Brezhnev that the risks of intervention in Afghanistan were bearable.

But now, even skeptical Americans have come to realize that General Secretary Gorbachev has made a new and different evaluation of the situation, and that he has made some changes in the Soviet political and strategic priorities. This is because the relationship between investment and gain in the Soviet Third World policy has changed. There is no longer any political profit in positional gains; they have simply become too expensive.

However, there is still a great deal of uncertainty concerning the effects which “perestroika” and the “new thinking” in the Soviet Union will have

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on the United States. Thus, Under Secretary of State Rozanne Ridgeway stated at a hearing of the U.S. Congress in June 1988: "On things that matter to the United States and our allies and how to deal with the changing Soviet Union, it is a confused picture." The picture is very confused indeed. It is confused because we evaluate the Soviet Union almost exclusively by using the person of the General Secretary as our yardstick, and not by what the Soviet Union wants or can do. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Russian October Revolution, the General Secretary unmistakably stated: "In October 1917 we severed our ties with the old world. . . . We are marching into a new world, the world of Communism."

We are quite aware of what the Soviet Union can do politically and economically, and what its strategic options are. That is why we know that the Soviet Union will need economic reforms. However, what we do not know is what the Soviet Union will do once these reforms have been crowned with success. Despite this uncertainty, these words of Baron Richard von Weizsacker, the German Federal President, retain their validity: "Power politics will remain with us, but its methods will change. The destructive power of modern weapons technology, which is inimical to mankind, forces the major powers to exercise their influence by means other than purely military ones. With their weapons the superpowers are able to deter each other, as well as threaten other powers; however, they are not able to conduct a war against each other, nor are they able to employ their sophisticated weapon systems to bring about decisions in regional conflicts. This is the lesson we have learned from Vietnam and Afghanistan, from Nicaragua and Angola. Power politics now requires other capabilities."

In these changed surroundings, and under these new political-strategic conditions, it is not only the superpowers that will have to think about new ways and means of solving regional conflicts. The Europeans are also affected, both directly and indirectly, be it in the Middle East, in southern Africa, or in Latin America. However, Western Europe has not developed its own strategic identity and is now hardly present as an actor in world politics. The role of Europe is to an excessive extent restricted to that of an observer of international developments. This contradiction between worldwide obligations and interdependencies on the one hand, and an attitude of celibacy in world politics on the other, is particularly evident in Germany. At a time of increasing security-policy stability in Europe and an equally increasing probability of new conflicts in other parts of the world, we Germans should be aware that we are no longer in a position to limit our security-policy thinking to the narrow confines of the Nato Treaty area and to the East-West antagonism. However, because of the political status and the historical burdens of our country, we would certainly be overextending ourselves if we should try to go it alone in living up to the

expectations held by many countries of the Third World, or to try to play an independent role in the management of international crises.

Nevertheless, there is a clear need for a significant European contribution in the stabilization and economic growth of underdeveloped regions. From the perspective of the Third World countries, Europe is in many ways preferred over the two world powers. Therefore, two things will be necessary: On the one hand it will be important to accelerate the integration of Europe and to give a European foreign policy a sharper profile, so that Europe can appear on the scene as an equal partner of the two superpowers; and on the other hand the Europeans will have to give their security policy a global dimension by including their North-South policy within its framework.



“ . . . The irony of survival can be expressed this way: men, being mortal, aren't going to survive anyhow; what might survive are values, principles; by concentrating on survival we bury the values and principles which alone have a chance to survive; the absence from policy making of these values and principles weakens our practical action, thereby probably reducing our life expectancy.”

Max Ways, *Beyond Survival*  
New York, Harper & Brothers, 1959  
(p. 79)