# AMERICAN STRATEGIC POLICY FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA, 1970-1980

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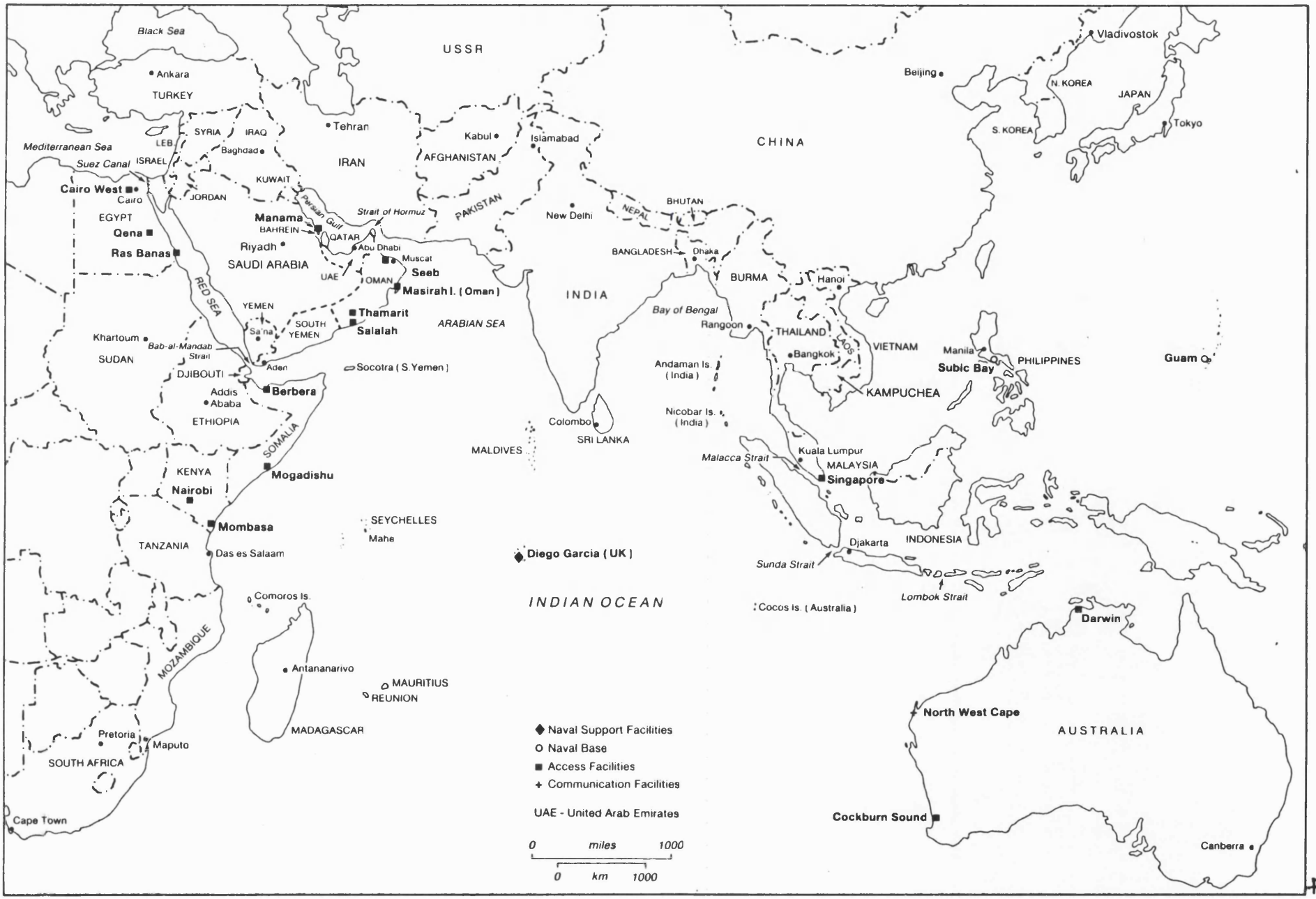
## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area from 1970 to 1980 and assesses the efficacy of its contribution to the US security objectives there of upholding friendly, primarily Persian Gulf states' security and stability, maintaining access to oil, ensuring the safety of shipping and limiting Soviet influence. Minor intermittent naval display succeeded in balancing the Soviet naval presence, the main purpose of American policy until 1979, because that presence was too small to exercise significant influence. The littoral states, however, were ambivalent: they wanted the US to balance the USSR but feared a potential super-power naval arms race. Naval display failed as part of America's indirect threat in 1973-74 to retaliate against friendly Gulf Arab states if they continued the oil embargo caused by the October 1973 Middle East war.

America modified its strategic policy when Gulf security became more precarious after the Iranian revolution in early 1979. It intensified its naval display and began to approximate a land force presence in South-West Asia in order to show greater concern for its interests, to reassure friends about its reliability as a security actor and to enhance the political and military balance against the Soviets. The US emphasized more direct and active deterrence against a potential Soviet or Iraqi attack and preparation for intervention, if necessary, within a friendly Gulf state in order to protect access to oil.

America's modified policy gave some reassurance to friendly Gulf states that shipping would be safe, that, available in the background and if requested in a crisis, its armed forces would help them to cope with likely external threats and that the US was more determined to counter the USSR. But America was also perceived to be a political and potential interventionist danger to friendly countries and to

be of uncertain reliability in the event of "worst case" Soviet or Iraqi aggression because its immediately available combat capability was weak. The US armed forces were unnecessary and virtually inappropriate for helping friendly regimes to maintain domestic stability or for preserving access to oil. America's strategic policy was of little relevance for limiting the USSR's improvement of its political and strategic position in South-West Asia in the late 1970s, and more direct and active US deterrence reinforced marginally at most the Soviet intention not to attack into the Persian Gulf.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Cape Town
Cockburn Sound
Canberra
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■ Access Facilities
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## INTRODUCTION

The United States' strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area from 1970 to 1980 consisted of mainly naval display and, from 1979, more direct and active deterrence and (preparedness for) intervention. That policy was intended to contribute to the achievement of America's security objectives principally in the Persian Gulf region: to promote the security and stability of friendly states, to assure continuous access to oil, to provide for the safety of shipping and to limit Soviet influence.

Those objectives were pursued in the initial context of Britain's virtual military withdrawal from the Indian Ocean area in 1971, the establishment of a small, slowly growing Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean from 1968 and the restraint imposed by the Nixon Doctrine on US security policy for the Persian Gulf, which policy looked to primarily Imperial Iran to maintain regional military security. The strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area originated by the US government in 1970 comprised occasional minor deployments by 7th Fleet detachments, retaining the small Middle East Force of three ships and constructing a communications station at Diego Garcia. US naval forces in a passive, defensive, essentially political role would, it was assumed, be adequate to show America's interest in the area, balance the Soviet naval presence, which was too small to pose a military threat or to exert important influence, and thereby reassure littoral states. America's interest in naval arms control negotiations with the USSR was not reciprocated in practice.

The United States made a minor adjustment to its strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area in late 1973 and 1974, responding to the oil embargo (October 1973-March 1974) caused by the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 and to the Soviets' perceived greater willingness shown during that war to use their armed forces abroad. It began regular naval

deployments to the Arabian Sea and it proposed to expand Diego Garcia into a logistic support facility. From late 1973 into 1975 America made veiled threats of retaliation against "friendly" Gulf Arab states should the oil embargo continue indefinitely and, later, of intervention if a new embargo were imposed.

By 1977 political conditions in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean area, relations between the US and the USSR and the level and activity of their naval presences were stable enough for the super-powers to enter into negotiations for naval arms control. But in early 1978 the Americans postponed those talks indefinitely, not because of the serious bargaining difficulties rooted in the asymmetry between each side's force posture and operational practices but because of the USSR's intervention in the Ethiopian-Somali war and the doubling of its naval presence.

In 1979-1980 the United States made a major modification in its strategic policy: it undertook more direct and active deterrence against the Soviet Union, suggesting that it might anticipate a Soviet attack into the Gulf region with pre-emptive movement by the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) created in 1980, spread a conflict with the USSR to other regions or resort to tactical nuclear weapons, in view of its weak conventional capability. Deterrence applied also to Iraq, against whom the US was prepared to intervene, if necessary and requested, in support of a friendly Gulf Arab state under attack. Intervention in the event of unrest within a friendly Gulf state in order to "save" a regime or to "protect" access to oil became a legitimate policy option. Display was important for balancing politically as well as deterring the Soviet armed forces and for reassuring littoral states about the reliability of America's contribution to their security. The US enlarged its naval presence to two continuously deployed aircraft carrier task groups and augmented that display with visits and exercises in South-West Asia by land-

based forces from America. It began to expand anew Diego Garcia and gained access to military facilities in Oman, Somalia, Kenya and, informally, Egypt in order that it could support better its naval forces and the RDF in crises. These changes in policy were caused by the Iranian revolution in January 1979, which increased tension, uncertainty and instability in the Gulf, and were accelerated by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan from December 1979. That intervention intensified America's sense of the potential Soviet military threat to its Persian Gulf interests. Concerned that the USSR might use its regional military superiority to influence the Gulf states and potentially to seize Iranian territory and oilfields, thereby exerting immense economic leverage on the West and shifting the global balance of power decisively in its favour, President Carter declared in January 1980 that

> [a]n attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.[1]

Implicit in America's devising and later modifying its strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area was the assumption that the display, threat or use of the armed forces was necessary and useful for helping to achieve its regional security objectives. But that policy did not seem to be very necessary in "normal" conditions (1970-78) for contributing to security and stability in the Persian Gulf, maintaining access to oil, protecting shipping or countering the moderate Soviet naval presence. Also the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean states opposed a potential dangerous super-power naval arms race. The relative unimportance of naval display, the primary US strategic role for much of the 1970s, was suggested by US

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[1] United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, U.S. Interests In, And Policies Toward, The Persian Gulf, 1980, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, p. 469.

Administrations' interest in 1970-71 and 1977-78 in negotiating an arms control agreement with the USSR. In more unsettled and crisis conditions (1979-1980) intervention by American armed forces was judged to be inappropriate for "protecting" a regime or access to oil endangered by severe domestic unrest, and the presence of US land-based forces on friendly states' territory might worsen more than contribute to their regional, and internal, security. US strategic policy had not prevented the Soviet "encirclement" of the Arabian peninsula in the late 1970s and America's credible deterrence of a major Soviet or Iraqi attack was in doubt because the US did not possess the ready conventional capability to defeat it.

This thesis attempts to analyze America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area from 1970, when it was created, to 1980, when a much modified policy gained general definition. It seeks to explain what that policy was and why it was needed and to evaluate its usefulness. The thesis outlines the United States' interests, the threats to them, the setting in which they were perceived and America's objectives and commitments as set forth by its security policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area which guided strategic policy and itself changed in 1979-1980. It examines in detail US strategic policy, its origin and evolution; its modes - display, deterrence and intervention - and the assumptions justifying them; its elements - naval deployments, bases and facilities, the Rapid Deployment Force, logistic forces, arms control and the role of friends and allies; American strategic policy's difficulties and weaknesses and its effect upon the main littoral states of the Indian Ocean area and the Soviet Union. The central proposition of this thesis is that America's strategic policy contributed efficaciously to achieving its security objectives for the Indian Ocean area.

This thesis investigates a super-power's policy for essentially the political use of the armed forces in a distant

area and assesses the utility of that policy. It considers the role of the armed forces in peacetime and crisis without necessary recourse to physical violence and evaluates their efficacy as a means to influence other states and benefit the deploying power's regional security policy.

Chapter One provides an analytical survey of the historical setting, from 1945 to 1970, of the United States' strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area and it explains the part of display, deterrence and potentially intervention in America's pursuit of its security objectives. Chapter Two discusses the creation in 1970 of that policy, the influences upon it and the response to it by littoral states and the USSR. Chapter Three explores the minor modification of policy in 1973-74 and America's indirect threats to use force against Gulf Arab states. Chapter Four analyzes the background, substance and outcome of the naval arms control negotiations between the US and the USSR in 1977-78. In Chapter Five is investigated the beginnings in 1979 of America's major adjustment of its strategic policy and also its security policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. Chapter Six discusses America's modified strategic policy as it was elaborated in 1980. The response of the Soviet Union and principal Indian Ocean states to the United States' adjusted strategic policy is the subject of Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight presents findings and conclusions about the efficacy of that policy's contribution to the achievement of America's regional security objectives.

## The Indian Ocean Area/South-West Asia, Its Strategic Definition

Historically strategic unity was imposed on the Indian Ocean area from outside, by European powers, principally Portugal and, above all, Britain, which in the nineteenth century achieved command of the Atlantic and the

Mediterranean, colonized India and gained control of the far approaches to it.[2]

> To generations of British policy-makers the Indian Ocean and the British territories bordering it formed a coherent strategic system. As the British consolidated their position in India the trading settlements and naval stations stretching from the Cape and Aden eastward to Singapore took on a broad strategic significance, and albeit slowly, a system was fashioned in which India's defences began at oceanic gateways far removed from the subcontinent itself. ...[T]he parts were interdependent; Indian security depended on maintenance of the British position at these gateways; and to a less extent Britain's ability to hold them and to dominate the sea depended on control of the Indian subcontinent and its ports, communications facilities, and manpower resources.[3]

Although Britain's Indian Ocean "strategic system" lost its raison d'etre when India and Pakistan became independent in 1947, it did not disintegrate into its remaining regional parts. The "east of Suez" area remained a sphere of British strategic interest and pre-eminent if declining power. The limited strategic integrity given the Indian Ocean area by Britain's presence and by its bases from Simonstown in South Africa to Singapore ended in late 1971 upon the UK's operational military withdrawal from the Persian Gulf and its Far Eastern Fleet's departure from Singapore. In the meanwhile there had not arisen to replace the British "system" trans-oceanic security relations among Indian Ocean states

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[2] Auguste Toussaint, History Of The Indian Ocean, trans. June Guicharnaud (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966) surveys the area's history from Pharaonic times through its European epoch. The strategic aspect of the latter period is examined in G.A. Ballard, Rulers of the Indian Ocean (London: Duckworth, 1927).

[3] Phillip Darby, British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. xii. India could be approached also by land. Britain's policy for its defence in the north-west sought to maintain buffers - Persia/Iran and Afghanistan - against the influence and forces of imperial Russia/the USSR and of Germany and to thwart enemy operations which could threaten India or jeopardize British naval supremacy in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

involving the significant display, threat or use of their naval forces over time necessary to endow anew the Indian Ocean area with strategic coherence.[4] Thus when America created in 1970 a strategic policy for the "Indian Ocean area"[5], there was latitude for that concept to mean what the

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[4] A degree of strategic unity has been bestowed on the area by India, which since the 1970s has been developing a capability for maritime operations beyond the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Note, for example, Gary L. Sojka, "The Missions of the Indian Navy", Naval War College Review 36 (January-February 1983), 2-15; A.J. Tellis, "India's Naval Expansion: Structure, Dimensions, And Context", Naval Forces, (September-October 1987), pp. 36-49; Jerrold F. Elkin, Major W. Andrew Ritezel, U.S. Army, "New Delhi's Indian Ocean Policy", Naval War College Review 40 (September-October 1987), 50-63.

[5] The Indian Ocean area consists of "the Indian Ocean itself, its natural extensions, the islands thereon, the ocean floor subjacent thereto, the littoral and hinterland States and the air space above", according to a meeting at the United Nations in 1979 of states deliberating about the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. (United Nations, General Assembly, 34th Session, Report Of The Meeting Of The Littoral And Hinterland States Of The Indian Ocean Supplement No.45 [A/34/45], p. 13.) The Indian Ocean and its extensions encompass all bodies of water between the Suez Canal and Cape Agulhas in South Africa south to 60° south latitude, thence east to the southern entrance to the Strait of Singapore, to the western coast of Sumatra and the southern coast of Java, Sumba and Roti islands in Indonesia south-east to Cape Talbot in north-western Australia and to the western perimeter of Bass Strait between Australia and Tasmania and the western shore of Tasmania to South-East Cape south to 60° south latitude. (This definition draws from that offered in Annex IV in UN Report Of Consultant Experts On The Indian Ocean - 1, United Nations document A/AC. 159/1, May 3, 1974, in Indian Ocean Power Rivalry, ed. T.T. Poulose [New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1974], p. 291.) The International Hydrographic Organization proposes that the Indian Ocean reaches the shore of Antarctica. (See United States, Central Intelligence Agency, Indian Ocean Atlas [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976], pp. 4-5.) Besides all the Indian Ocean islands, the Indian Ocean area consists in the west of the states from South Africa to Egypt, including Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda; in the north of the countries from Israel and Jordan to Bangladesh, including Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan; and in the east of the states from Burma to Australia. A study of The Geographic Constrictions of the Indian Ocean: Canal, Channels, and Straits is provided by Viv. L. Forbes (Perth, Australia: Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies, Curtin University of Technology, 1989).

US government defined it to be according to its own strategic outlook.[6]

The Indian Ocean area did not become even a nominal subject of American strategic policy until the 1960s. Because of British strategic predominance there, the US did not view it as a place where major military operations might be necessary, except perhaps in Iran and Saudi Arabia (see Chapter One). During the Second World War the area provided a line of communication for supplying, via the US Persian Gulf Command in Iran, the Soviet war effort against Germany and for moving Allied forces between the European and Asia-Pacific theatres. After the war the western Indian Ocean area (including East Pakistan) was where three American naval vessels (the Middle East Force, stationed in the Persian Gulf from 1949) paid representational port visits. The Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East and from 1953 the "northern tier" (Turkey, Iran and Pakistan), not the Persian Gulf region or the Indian Ocean area, were the identified theatres of potential land operations against an attack by the Soviet Union upon the territory and oil of contiguous Iran. The northern Persian Gulf, mainly Iran and Iraq, would have been the base of allied operations and logistic support. Facilities in the southern Persian Gulf and around the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden would have provided rear logistic support; the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean would have been a line of communication. "Indian Ocean area" began to be used by the US government from about early 1960. It was a convenient general term for describing the regions from East

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[6] For discussions of the Indian Ocean area as a strategic entity, consult William L. Dowdy and Russell B. Trood, "The Indian Ocean: an emerging geostrategic region", International Journal 38 (Summer 1983), 432-458. The Indian Ocean as a political and economic as well as a strategic unit is assessed by Ferenc A. Vali, Politics of the Indian Ocean Region The Balance of Power (New York: The Free Press, 1976), pp. 24-43, and William L. Dowdy, "The Indian Ocean Region as Concept and Reality", in The Indian Ocean Perspectives on a Strategic Arena, eds. William L. Dowdy and Russell B. Trood (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), pp 3-23.

Africa to South Asia near which the US Navy would begin, it was intended in 1963-64, regular display in support of American foreign policy and also where US land and air forces might be needed to intervene and "police" internal unrest or local conflicts.

From 1970 the United States considered the Indian Ocean area as a potential theatre of naval operations, however modest. Emphasis on the "Indian Ocean area" was appropriate because, first, the safety of shipping, an important US interest, the potential threat to it from the new Soviet naval presence and America's strategic response - resuming visits, if only upon occasion and on a minor scale, to the Indian Ocean by detachments from the 7th Fleet - were all on the sea. Second, on land the Soviet military threat to Iran was latent and the US was not prepared to take primary strategic responsibility for security and stability within the Persian Gulf. More precisely and in practice the "Indian Ocean area" meant the regions and seas of its north-western or Arabian Sea quadrant, where littoral states, particularly in the Persian Gulf, the seat of US interests in the area, were subject to American naval display and where the US Navy countered politically the Soviet naval squadron. But there was too the "greater" Indian Ocean area, extending eastward outside the ocean to the Philippines. Subic Bay naval base, Cubi Point naval air station and Clark Air Base were the base of operations and logistic support for American naval task groups, patrol aircraft and supply aircraft respectively. By giving passage through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore or through Indonesian straits for task groups and by providing overflying or staging posts through Thailand for aircraft going to Diego Garcia, the "greater" Indian Ocean area, incorporating maritime South-East Asia, served as a zone of access and transit to the Arabian Sea.

Beginning in 1979 America viewed the Indian Ocean area for the first time as a potential theatre of both land and sea

operations, because of a perceived more active threat to its interests in the Persian Gulf from the USSR's land-based forces and because of unrest within that region after the Iranian revolution. Although the Soviets' capacity for maritime combat had grown in the 1970s, the primacy and gravity of potential conflict on land made apposite the term "South-West Asia"[7], which embraced the states from Pakistan to Kenya. "South-West Asia" was employed for treating part of several regions - the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and South Asia - as a strategic unity also in order better to manage American land-based and sea forces and their logistic support. But although it was one strategic theatre, until Central Command was established in 1983 it was split between two US military commands: Pacific Command had responsibility for Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Arabian Sea; European Command held responsibility for Egypt and the rest of South-West Asia, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

South-West Asia was part of a larger strategic system. The Carter administration recognized, as had previous administrations, that a super-power conflict in the Persian Gulf could spread to Europe. Indeed it kept open as a means to deter potential Soviet attack the policy option of deliberately spreading a conflict to Europe or East Asia, perhaps both. (Conversely, it was understood, war in Europe could spread to the Persian Gulf.) South-West Asia's

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[7] Largely but not completely coextensive with the Indian Ocean area (that is, its Arabian Sea quadrant), "South-West Asia" was defined in January 1981 by the US Department of Defence to include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, North Yemen, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya. (United States, Department of Defense, Report Of Secretary Of Defense Harold Brown To The Congress On The FY 1982 Budget, FY 1983 Authorization Request And FY 1982-1986 Defense Programs [January 19, 1981], p. 190. (DoD annual reports are referred to below as U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 19--.) Maritime "South-West Asia" encompassed all the seas north and west from Diego Garcia. Egypt, an important de facto part of "South-West Asia", Jordan and Sudan were not added to that area formally until America created the Central Command in 1983.

strategic relation with Europe, Asia and the United States itself was given authoritative acknowledgement by the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in early 1981. Having noted that "the defense of European and Pacific allies, including protection of access to Southwest Asian oil vital to their security", was the second priority in America's strategic policy after deterrence of a Soviet nuclear attack on the US and its allies, it stated that

> [I]n effect, the Western Hemisphere and the three regions of greatest importance to US extra-hemispheric interests - Western Europe, Northeast Asia, and Southwest Asia - comprise a system of interconnecting and inextricably linked strategic zones. As US security is closely tied to that of its allies in Western Europe and Northeast Asia, and as all depend on continued access to the oil resources of Southwest Asia, so US strategy in one zone must be supportive of and supported by that in the others.... It is no longer practical to design autonomous regional strategies, for a threat on one strategic zone will almost certainly have a serious impact on the security of the others.[8]

Understanding the substance, evolution and utility of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area from 1970 to 1980, by which latter time that policy had gained great importance as a "zone" in global US strategic policy, is the purpose of this thesis. A full understanding of America's Indian Ocean policy must include an analysis of its rudiments and because those rudiments were manifest in the twenty-five years up to 1970, Chapter One will survey the history of their development.

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[8] United States, Department of Defense, Organization Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff, United States Military Posture For FY 1982: A Supplement To The Chairman's Overview, (n.p., n.d.[1981]), pp. 3-6. (Referred to below as U.S. OJCS, United States Military Posture FY 1982 Supplement.)

# CHAPTER ONE

## RUDIMENTS OF POLICY

Although the United States did not create a formal strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area until 1970, the rudiments of that policy, especially as it evolved in 1979-1980, developed in the late 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s. Those rudiments were display, deterrence and (preparedness for) intervention. Display began in 1949 when the Middle East Force was created in order to show American interest in states from Portuguese Mozambique to East Pakistan. The US decided in 1964 to increase its display in the Indian Ocean area by way of initiating regular aircraft carrier task group deployments but that "policy" was cut short by the Vietnam war. In the 1950s America assumed principal responsibility for deterring a Soviet attack against Iran. It emphasized the political declaratory aspect of deterrence, with the possibility of nuclear retaliation in the background, because the perceived direct Soviet military threat to Iran and America's conventional capability for defence there were small. The United States' concern about a potential Soviet land threat became latent in the 1960s. From 1961 the US was prepared to intervene in conflicts between Indian Ocean area states and to intervene in internal conflicts in order to prevent from seizing power forces whose feared pro-Soviet orientation would enable the USSR to gain influence at the West's expense. In 1968 intervention was discarded as a policy option.

This chapter investigates the historical setting of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. It summarizes the United States' security interests in the Persian Gulf region, characterizes the threats to them and traces the development of the informal US military security commitment to Iran, the one country of the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area contiguous to the Soviet Union. It examines how,

in light of regional states', Britain's and America's incapacity for adequate defence against the USSR, the US proposed in the late 1940s and in the 1950s to deter a potential Soviet attack into the Persian Gulf. Next it considers the difficulty facing the US in generating credible deterrence and reviews how early American contingency planning envisioned dealing with a Soviet attack. Then is discussed the interventionist/limited war role of Strike Command (created in 1961), the American government's interest in the middle 1960s in naval display in the Indian Ocean and the US Navy's interest in an interventionist role there. The chapter concludes by detailing the Navy's unsuccessful quest to establish a logistic support facility at Diego Garcia and its changing reasons - support for intervention, then countering the new Soviet naval presence - justifying that quest.

## Context of "Policy"

From November 1947 the American government considered that

> the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and of the Middle East is vital to the security of the United States; that the security of the whole Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East would be jeopardized if the Soviet Union should succeed in its efforts to obtain control of Iran; that the United States would assist in maintaining the territorial integrity and political independence of Iran....[1]

Should Iran come under Soviet domination, the independence of all states in the Middle Eastern land bridge between Europe, Asia and Africa, the West's access to the oil of Iran, Iraq and Arabia and important military and naval bases and lines of communication between Europe and the Far East would come under

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[1] From Report of the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Iran in United States, Department Of State, Foreign Relations of the United States 1949 vol. 6, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 546. (Referred to below as State, FRUS 19--.)

direct threat. Specifically, according to the National Security Council in 1949,

> the USSR would (1) acquire advance bases for subversive activities or actual attack against a vast contiguous area including Turkey, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; (2) obtain a base hundreds of miles nearer to potential US-UK lines of defense in the Middle East than any held at present; (3) control part and threaten all of the Middle Eastern oil reservoir upon which the western (sic) community draws to conserve limited western hemisphere resources; (4) control continental air routes crossing Iran, threaten those traversing adjacent areas, and menace shipping in the Persian Gulf, and (5) undermine the will of all Middle Eastern countries to resist Soviet aggression.[2]

The "extension of Soviet control over the Middle East would mean a violent shift in the world balance of power"[3], found a draft study by the NSC in late 1951 on American policy towards the Middle East. And in January 1957 President Eisenhower spoke of the "near strangulation" of the economic life of Western Europe, which was "peculiarly dependent" upon Middle Eastern oil, should the Middle East be "dominated by alien forces hostile to freedom...." The "free nations of Asia and Africa, too, would be placed in serious jeopardy" and "[a]ll this would have the most adverse, if not disastrous, effect upon ... [America's] economic life and political prospects."[4]

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[2] Ibid., pp. 545- 546.

[3] From The Position Of The United States With Respect To The General Area Of The Eastern Mediterranean And Middle East in State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 258.

[4] "President Asks for Authorization for U.S. Economic Program and for Resolution on Communist Aggression in Middle East", Department of State Bulletin 36 (January 21, 1957), 84. (Referred to below as DoSB.) For another discussion of the expected consequences of Soviet domination of the Middle East, see Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of South Asian Affairs on "Considerations In Support Of Policy In Respect Of The Eastern Mediterranean And Middle East Drawn Up After Consultation With The British Group" in State, FRUS 1947 vol. 5, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 577.

But although the USSR could easily occupy Iran[5], according to the Secretary of State in 1947, and although it would

> continue to apply strong political and psychological pressure against Iran in an effort to force the government of that country into submission, it is ... unlikely that the Soviet Union would be willing to resort to direct armed intervention...[6]

unless the Soviet government had "decided to unleash a new world war and the occupation of Iran should be a first step in the process."[7] Similarly, in January 1953, the Secretaries of State and Defence found that an "armed attack on the Middle East could be made only by Soviet forces and is highly unlikely except as one phase of a general war."[8] And in urging Congress in 1957 to take "steps to prevent international communism taking over the Middle East", John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower's Secretary of State, characterized the "Soviet military threat" as "latent" and "potential".[9] The most probable danger from the Soviet Union was "indirect aggression" such as anti-Western propaganda, the use of the armed forces to exert pressure and political support for Marxist and other "radical" groups.[10] This was the US

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[5] State, FRUS 1947 vol. 5, p. 924.

[6] State, FRUS 1949 vol. 6, p. 548. "In the absence of such armed intervention", the NSC noted, "Iran is expected to maintain successful resistance to Soviet pressure and to strengthen its western (sic) alignment, provided it continues to have confidence in U.S. support." (Idem)

[7] Ibid., p. 550. See also State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 258.

[8] From Report to the National Security Council by the Secretaries of State and Defense and the Director for Mutual Security in State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 2, National Security Affairs, pt. 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 220.

[9] "The Communist Threat to the Middle East", DoSB 36 (February 4, 1957), 170-171.

[10] According to a typical evaluation of "Soviet Capabilities and Intentions in the Middle East",

government's abiding assessment, from the 1940s onwards, of the nature of the "Soviet threat" to the Middle East.

From the end of World War II the Americans' "general strategic concept" for military security in the Middle East against the Soviet Union was that Britain and the Commonwealth took primary responsibility for defence of the region, except for Turkey (from 1947) and Saudi Arabia. Encouraging the United Kingdom to maintain its military role and position was the cornerstone of US strategic thinking. At the "Pentagon Talks of 1947" between Britain and America the latter expressed its preference that

> the British should continue to maintain primary responsibility for the defense of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East as part of an overall concept of resistance to Soviet aggression, and that, in order to implement that responsibility, the British should have bases from which to operate in time of emergency. The maintenance of such bases, together with the right of reentry in an emergency, requires in turn that the British would have mutually satisfactory political and economic relations of a long-term nature with the countries of the area, as a foundation for their military position.[11]

America, the State Department noted in 1949,

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> Soviet rulers probably estimate that Western influence is declining, that economic and political deterioration will continue, and that the general situation will become steadily more favorable to the expansion of Communist influence. Soviet rulers may conclude that the area can be effectively denied to the West without being brought under direct Communist control and without forcing the USSR prematurely to accept full responsibility for supporting Communist regimes in the area. (From a National Intelligence Estimate on "Conditions and Trends In The Middle East Affecting US Security" in State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, The Near And Middle East, pt. 1 [Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1986], p. 339.)

[11] From a State Department memorandum in State, FRUS 1947 vol. 5, p. 579.

> should continue to coordinate the handling of our common strategic interests ... with the British as it would be unrealistic for the United States to undertake to carry out its policies unless the British maintained their strong strategic, political and economic position in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean and they and we follow parallel policies....[12]

But in talks between the UK and the US in 1950, while the Americans "pointed out that the defense of Iran must be primarily a British responsibility", the

> British representatives pointed out the difficulties considering the forces now available, of their assisting, other than to a certain extent with air forces, in the defense of the outer ring of the Middle East, that is, primarily Iran and Turkey. In spite of the fact that the loss to the Soviets of either of these countries might have a fatal effect on other countries, such as Iraq, the U.K. would be obliged, in case of general war, to concentrate on the defense of the inner core which is centered in and about Egypt.[13]

Britain's "difficulties" were summed up in a memorandum to the Secretary of State from his Assistant for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs: "the UK, which has primary responsibility for the defense of the area, lacks both manpower and resources successfully to defend it and has no plans for defense of the Saudi Arabian oil fields and the Dhahran Air Base"[14], which were paramount American regional economic and strategic interests respectively. The UK's political influence in the Middle East was declining and, the US feared, a too rapid abandonment of its economic and military positions by Britain "would leave a military vacuum

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[12] From a Memorandum by the Politico-Military Adviser in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs ... on "U.S. Strategic Position In The Eastern Mediterranean And Middle East" in State FRUS 1949 vol. 6, p. 59.

[13] From Agreed United States-United Kingdom Memorandum of Discussions on the Present World Situation in State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 190.

[14] State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 4.

which the US would have difficulty in filling, and which would accentuate insecurity and create further opportunities for Soviet or local Communist exploitation."[15] In particular Britain's waning influence was harming its negotiations to retain access to military bases such as those in Iraq but, above all, at Suez in Egypt. Britain's definitive loss of access to Suez in 1956 led Dulles to remark early in 1957 upon a "change in the possible deterrent role of certain Western European nations. Until recently they provided a serious deterrent to Communist aggression against the Middle East. But ... this no longer meets the needs."[16] There was "now no adequate deterrent"[17] against potential Soviet attacks.

Within the Middle East there was only a weak political basis for strategic cooperation against the USSR among the regional states and among them, Britain and America because the "divisive elements ... exceed the integrative forces."[18] Most Arab states and Iran were politically, socially and economically unstable and there were many rivalries among them. The existence of Israel since 1948 was a major source of regional conflict. Nationalism, pan-Arabism and "neutralism" (non-alignment) had engendered strong and growing political movements, championed chiefly by Egypt after its revolution in 1952. Middle Eastern states sought to protect their independence and eliminate as far as possible Western influence, troops and bases. Britain was the principal subject of anti-Western sentiment but America was resented for its association with the UK and also France and for being the main creator and supporter of Israel. These "unfavorable trends", the National Security Council concluded in 1954, were

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[15] State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 339.

[16] DoSB, 36 (February 4, 1957), 170.

[17] Ibid., p. 171.

[18] From State Department Draft Minutes of Discussions at the State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, January 30, 1951 in State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 30.

a greater "current danger to the security of the free world ... than the threat of direct Soviet military attack ...,"[19] and they led by way of opposition from Egypt to rejection of the British and American proposal in 1951 for a Middle East Command organization. That attempt to obtain Arab military cooperation for defence against potential Soviet military action in the Middle East was "also handicapped by the fact that the Arabs do not feel immediately threatened by the Soviet Union or recognize an immediate personal stake in the East-West struggle."[20] Accepting Western military support against the Soviet Union when the Israelis and other Arabs were the main political and military foes would sustain Western domination, compromise their independence and hinder use of the USSR as a counterbalance against the West. The above "unfavorable trends" accounted for why only one Arab state, Iraq, joined the Baghdad Pact (discussed below) and why it underwent a nationalist, republican revolution in July 1958 and withdrew from the Baghdad Pact. Iraq's withdrawal further weakened that already brittle organization by removing the territorial base for "defence in depth".

Unstable and given to rivalry, the regional states were also unable to contribute substantially to their own or their mutual defence. "Middle East armed forces", it was clear to the US, "are incapable, individually or collectively, of effectively resisting attack by a major power"[21] because they had "learned neither the value of unity nor the collective strength they might attain by banding together."[22] Of the regional members of the Baghdad Pact, Turkey, whose forces

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[19] From Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on "United States Objectives And Policies With Respect To The Near East" in State, FRUS 1952-1954, vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 526.

[20] Ibid., p. 339.

[21] Ibid., p. 342. Indeed "local forces [we]re not even capable of manning and maintaining adequate bases for quick and effective use by Western forces in the event of war". (Idem)

[22] State, FRUS 1951, vol. 5, p. 260.

were dedicated to NATO, would only look after its own territory; Iraq was weak and, as noted, withdrew from the Pact; and Pakistan, too far away to give more than minor support, was preoccupied with India. Only Iran was left and its "plan of defense ... outlined by ... the Shah envisage[d] a delaying action" against a Soviet attack towards the Persian Gulf, "making maximum use of mines, demolitions and other defensive means, with a final withdrawal to a defensive area in the rugged Zagros mountains in the southwest"[23] from where guerrilla warfare would be conducted. The Americans did not think that Iran could delay a large Soviet attack for more than a brief time. Even with a "long and costly" US military aid programme "involving considerable training and equipment", "effective Middle East defense will continue to depend for the foreseeable future on substantial Western force contributions."[24]

The United States, however, was unable to make up the deficiency between possible British and regional force contributions and those needed for "effective defense" against a Soviet attack. Moreover, it was unwilling until 1957 to commit itself to defence of the Middle East although, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) acknowledged in 1950, "the Middle East in war is of importance second only to Western Europe

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[23] From Memorandum by the Chief of Staff, United States Army, to the Secretary of the Army in State, FRUS 1950, vol. 5, p. 508.

[24] From a National Intelligence Estimate on "Prospects For Creation Of A Middle East Defense Grouping And Probable Consequences Of Such A Development" in State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 519. Similarly, in Ibid., p. 342, "defense of the Middle East against Soviet Bloc aggression will ultimately depend on employment of Western armed forces." In the case of Iran, US military aid, intended primarily to help the government uphold internal security, was meant as well to give it confidence to resist temporarily Soviet military pressure and action short of an "all-out" attack.

...."[25] In 1949 the US told Iran that "in the event of war with the Soviet Union involving both Iran and the United States, Iran may count on all assistance compatible with U.S. resources in a global conflict" but that it was "not in a position to make any commitment as to action if the Soviet Union should take aggressive measures against Iran...."[26] And "[s]o far as the State Department [wa]s aware" in early 1950,

> the Department of Defense is not prepared to plan on giving any military assistance to the Iranian forces in time of war and does not have a very high opinion of the potential effectiveness of those forces. Furthermore, we are not prepared to enter into any political defense arrangement with Iran.[27]

In October 1950 the JCS informed their British counterparts "that the US 'will be unable to commit forces to [the Middle East] during, at least, the first two years of war.'"[28] In the view of the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, "this statement" by the JCS

> clearly implies that the United States contemplates the abandonment, without even a token defense, of most if not all of the Middle East in time of global war.
>
> The JCS decision rests, of course, on the unpleasant fact that United States capabilities are inadequate to protect our vital interests everywhere at the same time: the Middle East has been written off reluctantly in favor
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> of theaters of higher priority. ...[P]lans to abandon the Middle East fail to provide for our security interests

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[25] From Record of Informal United States-United Kingdom Discussions, London, Thursday Morning, September 21 in State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, p. 611.

[26] State, FRUS 1949 vol. 6, p. 547.

[27] From Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs to the Deputy Under Secretary of State in State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, p. 474.

[28] State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 8. (Brackets in text.)

there....[29]

Preoccupied with Western Europe and East Asia, America lacked the troops, money and equipment to fight in the Middle East[30] and "present US planning" was based on the assumption that Persian Gulf "oil would not be essential for the Allied war effort for the first two years of a global war."[31] But "present plans to do without Middle East oil are based not so much on an estimate of oil requirements as on the fact that whichever side might hold the area the oil fields would be neutralized through air bombardment."[32] The oil would not be available to either the Soviets or the West. Further, the US Army Chief of Staff commented in 1951, even if the Americans

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[29] Idem.

[30] See remarks in June 1952 by General Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Department of State Minutes of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting in State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 239.

[31] State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 8. The strategic value of Middle Eastern oil was a major issue in the "protracted debate between the State and Defense Departments and among the three branches of the armed services over the issue of whether the Middle East is 'vital' or merely 'critical' for purposes of US strategic planning...." The

> position of the Defense Department is motivated in part by two tactical considerations. In the first place, Defense hopes that by adopting a lower priority for the area than the British do, the result will be that the UK will exert itself to do more for the defense of the Middle East than would otherwise be the case. In the second place, the priority assigned to the Middle East substantially affects the ... competition between the ... armed services for ... military appropriations. Thus, if the Middle East is deemed 'vital' and ground forces are committed to its defense, the Navy would require very considerable equipment and facilities to supply and defend the sea and air lanes on which such ground forces would be dependent. Such an increase in the Navy's share of appropriations would be at the expense of the other service branches. (Ibid., pp. 10-11.)

[32] From Memorandum of Conversation, by the Regional Planning Adviser for the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs in State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, p. 233.

"lose temporarily in the Middle East and hold on to Western Europe we will be in a satisfactory position. Once the job is done in Western Europe, we can go down later to the Middle East and clean up whatever problems we find there."[33]

US involvement "in a Middle East security pact or in a commitment of combat forces..." was ruled out too by the Secretary of State.[34] His Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs was proposing at the turn of 1950-1951 to take new measures to safeguard "vital" US security interests in the Middle East and thereby to reverse the deterioration of regional states' support for America after the start of the Korean war. That decline had been caused by their perception of its relative indifference to their defence in war. But a proposal to "prove" America's interest in regional defence and its determination to assist in it - to station soon "a battalion of US Marines at Dhahran Airfield in defense of the air field and oil wells, as a means of meeting [Saudi Arabia's] needs for American assurances and for the morale effect upon the Near East generally"[35] - was

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[33] State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 39.

[34] From The Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense in Ibid., pp. 22.

[35] Ibid., p. 5. The proposal for stationing a US land force in the Persian Gulf originated in Britain, which in talks with the Americans in 1950 tried to persuade them "to give the Middle East a higher priority, particularly in the cold war stage", and to play a larger role in defence of Iran and Iraq. The UK wanted America to station troops at Dhahran for the "tremendous psychological benefits which U.S. forces would bring about in the Middle East" and for "the importance of their presence there in time of war." The US would need stationed forces for "when the Soviets really put the heat on the area." If they could come into a "Korea-like situation" quickly, "a strong area reaction could be assured ... which would help to prevent such a situation from arising and help to prevent the outbreak of global war" and the loss of the Middle East. A small American contribution to a British brigade dispatched near or into Iran in the event of internal unrest there perhaps involving the USSR would be useful as a demonstration and would exert a stabilizing influence. State,

turned down. Nor would the US take up a proposal to "show the flag" by sending US Air Force formations on visits to the Middle East and occasionally deploying US aircraft carrier task groups to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

While avoiding a direct strategic commitment to Middle Eastern defence, the United States sought in the 1950s to reassure regional states about its interest in their security and to contribute to it by indirect means. It intended by way of economic and military aid to help Iran and other countries cope with and reduce domestic instability, the principal threat to their security, and embark upon economic and social development. In consequence, it was hoped, the USSR would be less able to exploit internal unrest and anti-Western forces would not gain power and turn towards the Soviets. Because of the weak capacity on the part of all parties for defence of the Middle East against the USSR, the US initially (1951) had sought to organize that defence on a collective basis. However, after proposals for a Middle East Command[36] or a Middle East Defence Organization, in which the US had intended to participate, were rejected by Egypt and other Arab states,

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FRUS 1950 vol. 5, p. 232; United States Minutes of United States-United Kingdom Political-Military Conversations, Held at Washington, October 26, 1950 in State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, pp. 234-235.

[36] By promoting in 1951-1952 the Middle East Command America wanted to coordinate through one organization British, American, other Western and regional defence programmes under a concept of defence of the Middle East as a whole against external (Soviet) aggression. The Middle East Command would "assist and support" regional states in developing their military capability and its "task" "at the outset" would consist primarily of "planning, the provision of advice and training missions to the Middle East states upon request, and the coordination of arms supplies and the training programs for Middle East nationals...." From Draft Statement of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa on the Basic Principles of the Middle East Command in State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, pp. 241-242. A more informal American purpose for the MEC was to encourage Britain to maintain its leading role in regional defence while easing the burden of its responsibility and keeping America's role secondary.

America encouraged from 1953 the "northern tier" states - Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan - to form with Britain the Baghdad Pact. Created in 1955 and called formally the Pact of Mutual Cooperation, it obliged the contracting parties simply to "cooperate for their security and defence". America's main reason for sponsoring the Baghdad Pact was to create a political and ultimately a military barrier against Soviet influence and power[37] and fill the gap in "containment" between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the South-East Asia Collective Defence Treaty organization, SEATO.* A "loose regional defense grouping", the US understood, would not result in a sizable "reduction of the area's military vulnerability" to the Soviet Union. But "backed by US military aid programs", it would "create greater opportunities than in the past for reducing Middle East defense deficiencies. The requirements for outside ground forces might eventually be significantly reduced."[38] American military aid, an inducement notably to Iran to join the Baghdad Pact, would in time enable it better to resist Soviet aggression until the US made an appropriate response. The Americans refrained from joining the Baghdad Pact, only liaising with its Military Committee, because they wanted the Pact to be viewed as an "indigenous" security initiative and because they hoped to reduce friction in their relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel and India, which opposed it. They probably hoped as well to reduce the Soviets' opportunity to take advantage of that opposition and increase their influence. But by staying out of the Baghdad Pact the United States suggested that the states objecting to the Pact were more important to it than those which had joined it, that

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* SEATO and also the Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) security treaty were oriented towards South East Asia and the Pacific respectively, not the Indian Ocean area.

[37] For the expected immediate "primarily political and psychological" effects of the inchoate (1954) Baghdad Pact, see State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 519.

[38] Idem.

regional politics were (in fact, correctly) more important than the USSR, that the Soviet Union was not really an urgent military threat and that political competition with the USSR to influence regional affairs was more important than the purpose of the Baghdad Pact. By not joining the Baghdad Pact America undermined it and failed to reassure its member states.

The United States' sponsorship of the Baghdad Pact and its refraining from joining it were essentially political in purpose, and so were in 1957 the enunciation of the "Eisenhower Doctrine" and the US Congress's "Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East" (House Joint Resolution 117). By declaring its preparedness to use the armed forces in order to help regional states resist Soviet aggression, the US government made its first major public expression of commitment to defence of the Middle East.* Fearing the advance of Soviet influence into the "vacuum" left by the decline of British deterrence after the Suez crisis in autumn 1956, America assumed primary responsibility for deterring a potential attack by the Soviet Union. It considered deterrence to be a long-term precaution rather than an immediate requirement in expectation of an imminent attack. In a "special message" to Congress on January 5, 1957 President Eisenhower judged the "greatest risk" to be

> that ambitious despots may miscalculate. If power-hungry Communists should either falsely or correctly estimate that the Middle East is inadequately defended, they might be tempted to use open measures of armed attack. If so, that would start a chain of circumstances which would almost surely involve the United States in military action.[39]

America was ready to cooperate with its friends in the Middle

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* The Truman Doctrine of 1947 had proposed to give economic and indirect military assistance to Greece and Turkey.

[39] DoSB 36 (January 21, 1957), 87.

East in defence of their independence and territorial integrity and the very fact of proclaiming clearly and promptly its willingness to do so would, Eisenhower believed, "serve to halt any contemplated aggression."[40] He sought legislative support from Congress because, according to Dulles, the Soviets would feel more deterred and the Middle East states more reassured and secure if Congress spoke and cooperated with the Executive in showing unity of national purpose.[41] In March 1957 Congress passed House Joint Resolution 117 authorizing the President

> to undertake, in the general area of the Middle East, military assistance programs with any nation or group of nations ... desiring such assistance. Furthermore, the United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East. To this end, if the President determines the necessity thereof, the United States is prepared to use armed forces to assist any such nation or group of nations requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism: Provided, that such employment shall be consonant with the treaty obligations of the United States and with the Constitution of the United States.[42]

After Iraq announced in 1958 its withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact, America signed in March 1959 with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan identical bilateral executive agreements, "Agreements of Cooperation", which it intended would reinforce House Joint Resolution 117 and reassure the signatories. In its agreement with Iran the US acknowledged the preservation of Iran's independence and integrity "as vital to its national interest and to world peace" and both parties agreed that

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[40] Idem.

[41] DoSB 36 (February 4, 1957), 173; "Middle East Proposals", DoSB 36 (January 28, 1957), 129.

[42] "Congress Passes Joint Resolution on Middle East", DoSB 36, (March 25, 1957), 481.

> [t]he government of Iran is determined to resist aggression. In case of aggression against Iran, the Government of the United States of America, in accordance with the Constitution of the United States of America, will take such appropriate action, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon and as is envisaged in the Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East, in order to assist the Government of Iran at its request.[43]

The "Agreements of Cooperation" did not create new obligations for the US. They and House Joint Resolution 117 were only very "loose" commitments to the security of the regional states: America was not bound automatically to take specific military action in the event of a Soviet attack upon Iran, for example. In effect it had simply to be prepared to use its armed forces as agreed with the state requesting its help.

In order to show from 1957 a somewhat more active "commitment" to defence of the "northern tier" states against a potential Soviet attack, the US joined the Military Committee of the Baghdad Pact (renamed the Central Treaty Organization, CENTO, in August 1959). The Military Committee's principal purposes were "joint contingency planning for regional defence against aggression, the coordination of national defence plans for that purpose, and assistance in training and equipping regional forces."[44] The general planning concept was that Turkey, Iran, Iraq until its withdrawal and Pakistan as

> 'indigenous forces' were to have the principal initial role in meeting any Soviet attack on the ground, but they would be stiffened with Western (British) forces already based in the Middle East and supported by American and British air and sea power. In time, additional Western

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[43] "U.S. Signs Agreements of Cooperation With Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan", DoSB 40 (March 23, 1959), 417.

[44] Guy Hadley, CENTO - The Forgotten Alliance A Study of the Central Treaty Organization ISIO Monographs First Series, Number Four, Institute for the Study of International Organization, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex, 1971, p. 7.

> forces could be brought in. For practical purposes the plans were built around holding, as a minimum, eastern Turkey and the natural barrier of the Zagros Mountains.[45]

The Military Committee's planning was unrealistic, because without an integrated command structure, a fully agreed strategic concept, combined forces and joint bases and without Arab political, military and logistic support or readily available reinforcements from Britain and America, CENTO could not contrive a credible policy for conventional deterrence and defence against a large Soviet attack.

From the 1950s into the 1960s and 1970s the political directive on which military planning in CENTO was based depended

> on hopes of deterrence embodied in America and/or British nuclear retaliation, and in this CENTO plays only a very small part. Its military requirements and proposals are embodied in a series of agreed defensive plans, but the nuclear decisions in London and Washington, and the choice of targets, are determined as part of a wider defensive strategy which embraces NATO.[46]

CENTO lost much of its raison d'etre in the 1960s, when there was detente between the USSR and Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, making the likelihood of Soviet aggression in the Middle East quite remote, and when the latter states became even more preoccupied with regional security issues. But it continued to hold annual exercises such as SHAHBAZ, for air defence, and

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[45] John C. Campbell, Defense Of The Middle East Problems of American Policy rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 188. Campbell, Idem, observed that

> planning based on defense of the Zagros rather than the Elburz Mountains would leave most of Iran on the undefended side of the line. The Iranian Government has therefore found it necessary to state the purpose of the [Baghdad] Pact as the defense of all the territory of its members, and thus to disavow a strategy not based on defense of the Elburz, at least initially.

[46] Hadley, CENTO, p. 8.

MIDLINK, for maritime operations in the Persian Gulf or Arabian Sea, in which the US participated. It organized study groups on topics such as mountain warfare.

## Levels of "Policy"

From the latter 1940s through 1960 American strategic "policy" consisted of deterring, mainly by threat of nuclear retaliation, a Soviet attack upon Iran and, secondarily, Saudi Arabia and demonstrating modest US interest in the area from Portuguese Mozambique to East Pakistan. The US never stationed land or air forces in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere in the Indian Ocean area; its only continuous operational presence was the three-ship Middle East Force, which was established in 1949 and which had access to logistic support facilities at HMS Jufair, the Royal Navy's base at Manama, Bahrain. Among the MEF's "missions" were preservation of the freedom of the seas, search and rescue, administration of military assistance programmes, communications and intelligence gathering. Its more active roles, when needed, were escort and protection of shipping and help with emergency evacuation.[47] As suggested by its negligible fighting capability, the Middle East Force's pre-eminent purpose was political and representational: by paying port visits, it helped to show America's attentiveness to regional states and its wish for good relations with them. Saudi Arabia allowed the United States use of the air base at Dhahran until 1962 and the US used the large Kagnew communications, monitoring and, later, satellite tracking and relay station near Asmara in the Ethiopian province of Eritrea. Pakistan provided monitoring and air reconnaissance facilities to America into the 1960s.

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[47] See Beth F. Coye, ed., "An Evaluation of U.S. Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean", Naval War College Review 23 (October 1970), 46.

The United States gave relatively little emphasis in the 1950s to armed intervention as an option for dealing with conflict between or within states of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean area and it did not possess a significant capability for intervention there. The prevailing strategic concept of "massive" strategic nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union discounted the possibility of "little" wars and many states, in the Arabian peninsula and East Africa, were still under British protection. Internal security was the responsibility of the central government of a state and, according to Dulles, US "military force was not a proper weapon against Communist subversion of a Middle Eastern country."[48] American support for friendly governments was given mainly through economic and military aid but clandestine intervention was not precluded, as shown pre-eminently by the Central Intelligence Agency's restoration of the Shah of Iran to power in 1953. Earlier, in 1950, the US had considered sending an aircraft carrier task group to Iranian waters as part of a show of force with Britain in case of an uprising in Azerbaijan, because in "the event of a revolution within Iran a show of force might assist in maintaining the status quo."[49]

Intervention by the United States in inter-state conflicts was unlikely because it sought to avoid direct involvement. But an informal "American security guarantee" to the Saudis to come to their defence if necessary, formed, along with geography and Saudi diplomacy, the deterrent against an invasion of Saudi Arabia by potentially hostile

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[48] Noted by Campbell, Defense Of The Middle East, p. 180.

[49] From Approved Summary of Conclusions and Agreements Reached at a Meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the United States and United Kingdom in State, FRUS 1950 vol. 3, Western Europe (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 1688.

neighbours.[50] At the time of the Lebanon crisis, in which the US did intervene, and the revolution in Iraq in summer 1958, the Joint Chiefs of Staff made plans to protect (British oil interests in) Kuwait. Probably

> in response to British urgings, [Eisenhower] approved a recommendation from the Joint Chiefs for a seaborne movement of a Marine Corps regimental combat team then stationed on Okinawa to the Persian Gulf. There, in Eisenhower's view, it could help deter an Iraqi move into Kuwait or help protect other friendly governments. Twining was ordered to 'be prepared to employ, subject to Einshower's approval, whatever means might become necessary to prevent any unfriendly forces from moving into Kuwait.' It seems clear that Eisenhower was referring to the possible use of nuclear weapons, an issue that was discussed several times during the crisis.[51]

The most serious conflict likely to occur in the Persian Gulf after 1958, and one in which Britain would not be committed to intervene, was between Iraq and Iran. America's preparations for it were confined to reassessing its military assistance programme for Iran and to modifying its contingency planning to take into account a potential simultaneous Soviet and Iraqi attack upon Iran.

The possibility, however unlikely, of a relatively small and limited local conflict between the US and the Soviets caused by the entry of Soviet forces into Azerbaijan or other parts of northern Iran was foreseen by the National Security Council in 1949, among other times. Such an incursion was

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[50] Nadav Safran, Saudi Arabia The Ceaseless Quest for Security (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 197.

[51] William B. Quandt, "Lebanon, 1958, and Jordan, 1970", in Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, Force without War U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1978), p. 238. General Twining was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1958.

> perhaps the one that would offer the greatest temptation to the USSR, and the one with which it would be the hardest to cope. The situation would be particularly difficult if the Russians should re-occupy the northern province of Iran swiftly and with very little bloodshed and then stop there and go no further.[52]

If the United Nations "confirmed the fact of Soviet aggression", the United States would have to decide whether to help Iran. In recommending a course of action to Congress, the President

> would have to take into account a number of variable factors, including the international situation at the moment, the state of international opinion as reflected in the United Nations, [America's] own analysis of Russian motives, the state of [its] commitments elsewhere, and the reactions of [its] closest allies. Therefore, no hard and fast course can be prescribed at the present time.[53]

A Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan, strategically the least objectionable Soviet military action in Iran[54] and the most difficult with which to deal, might (along with an inadequate conventional military capability) cause America to confine its response to political measures and to make no more than a token military response.

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[52] State, FRUS 1949 vol. 6, p. 551.

[53] Idem. As a draft NSC study in December 1951 on America's policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East generalized, America should not commit forces to the area "but should retain flexibility ... and arrive at a decision on the employment of U.S. forces only in the light of particular circumstances as they may exist." State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 262.

[54] That occupying Azerbaijan was the least objectionable Soviet action was the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Memorandum by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee to Major General John H. Hilldring in State, FRUS 1946 vol. 7, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 531.

In principle the "maximum deterrent effect" upon a minor Soviet aggression

> should come from creating in the minds of the Soviet leadership a mixture of uncertainty and certainty: uncertainty whether a local aggression might not result in general war, and certainty that even if it did not, the United States could and would react with such force locally that it would be clear in advance that aggression would not pay.[55]

It would desirable to keep the Soviets clearly aware of the risk of a general war in order

> to establish the conviction that any attack in the Middle East could bring devastating nuclear retaliation, and that, even if it did not, limited hostilities would not be likely to remain limited; at any rate, the decision to keep them limited would not be solely within Soviet control.[56]

The US would have to manipulate the Soviets' fear that a small war would escalate to a general war whose cost would outweigh inestimably the benefits of the limited war. If, however, the Soviets thought that America's nuclear capability was not a credible deterrent against a minor aggression by them, because of the USSR's acquisition of a counterbalancing nuclear capability, they might be sufficiently tempted to launch an attack. Too great a dependence by America on its nuclear deterrent would deprive it of flexibility of response. The US had

> every reason, therefore, to remove the temptation by developing and maintaining the means of meeting a "controlled" aggression successfully without resort to all-out war. The mere existence of those means should

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[55] Campbell, Defense of the Middle East, pp. 177-178.

[56] Ibid., pp. 176-177.

> have the effect of discouraging Soviet adventures and lessening the risk that the Soviet leaders may come to count on a paralysis of American will.[57]

A substantial conventional US capability to

> take counteraction on the spot would constitute a warning that any aggression up to a certain magnitude would meet certain and effective resistance and accordingly would not pay. It would thus be desirable to maintain a military posture that, in its effect on Soviet calculations, would narrow or eliminate any gap that might exist between an aggression too small to be worth the hard fighting required and one too large to be worth the mortal risk[58]

of US nuclear retaliation. In order to deter limited Soviet aggression

> at least one division of ground forces with high mobility and firepower, able to use tactical nuclear weapons but also to fight without them if necessary, should be maintained either in the Middle East or at points from which they could quickly be brought into it by air ..., points where they would be stationed, to Moscow's knowledge, for the specific purpose of being ready in case of aggression....[59]

The relative proximity of an American division would show that the US would indeed reinforce Iranian resistance against a Soviet attack. In Iran, where

> the Soviet Union's own forces would be engaged, it is doubtful whether an aggression on the Korean scale could be kept within limits, as Moscow must recognize; and even if the American forces on the spot were inadequate in the beginning, as the conflict developed and if it remained

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[57] Ibid. p. 177. The rest of this paragraph is policy recommendation by Campbell which reflects the general trend of strategic thinking in the United States in the latter 1950s against the Administration's policy of "massive" strategic nuclear retaliation (see below).

[58] Ibid., p. 193.

[59] Ibid., p. 194.

> limited, additional forces could be sent to assist them. A central reserve of such forces should be kept in being, to be drawn on for that type of emergency, whether it should arise in the Middle East or elsewhere.[60]

The US 6th Fleet in the eastern Mediterranean with a strong Marine detachment and also a "similar force in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf area [as] a necessary supplement to it"[61] would be "a large part of the answer" to the need "to show strength inconspicuously, to have military power present and taken into account in the calculations of all concerned but without raising political difficulties...."[62]

An American policy for use of conventional forces in a limited war against the USSR in Iran was unrealistic and confined to "principle" because, as noted above, the US lacked the capability and the regional political and logistic support necessary to fight and thwart, much less defeat the Soviets. In practice America's strategic policy intended to deter a Soviet attack by heavy reliance on the threat of retaliation with nuclear weapons. The difficulty in this policy lay in forging a credible link, without regionally-based conventional US forces to reinforce that link, between a limited war and America's "global", strategic nuclear deterrent. The problem was how to persuade the Soviet Union that introducing forces into Iran would lead to US nuclear retaliation and perhaps general war when the American government doubted that Azerbaijan was "vital" to the US, Britain and the West, that loss of it alone to the Soviets would be "fatal"[63] and that therefore it would not be conceded. But deterrence against the Soviets would be successful, America assumed, because the USSR's unwillingness to risk military action which might

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[60] Ibid., pp. 194-195.

[61] Ibid., p. 194.

[62] Ibid., p. 197.

[63] Note, for instance, State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, pp. 190-191.

provoke US nuclear retaliation was greater than America's bluff/risk in proposing to protect a lesser interest, one not "worth" a nuclear response, by jeopardizing higher interests in other regions. If the Soviet Union did call the Americans' bluff, because its defensive interests in Iran were perceived to be clearly at stake and to be more important than US defensive interests there, then probably the US would have had to concede the Soviets' occupation of Azerbaijan.

The United States' strategic policy from the late 1940s until the early 1950s in the improbable case of a major Soviet attack upon Iran* and perhaps other Middle Eastern states too tended towards indirect defence. It would forgo an impracticable direct defence of Iran and respond with conventional counter-action in other regions. But, as shown, in actuality it would rely mainly on retaliation with atomic weapons, whether in Iran or in another theatre. According to a memorandum in 1947 by the Chief of the Division of South Asian Affairs in the State Department, a

> policy of full support of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, and particularly of Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Iran, does not necessarily mean that machinery would be set in motion for the direct defense of the threatened area, but rather that counter measures would be taken wherever and whenever it may be determined that they could be most effective.... Whereas we propose to take a political stand against Soviet aggression on the Italy-Greece-Turkey-Iran front, ...in the event of the necessity of recourse to arms, our military effort might be concentrated elsewhere with a view to most effective use of the forces employed.[64]

"In the event of Soviet-Iranian hostilities", the Secretary of State told the American ambassador to Iran in 1947, "basic Iranian interests would be helped or hurt primarily by

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* In a major attack Soviet forces would attempt to occupy the oilfields and installations in Khuzistan province in south-western Iran.

[64] State, FRUS 1947, vol. 5, pp. 578-579.

military and political developments in other theaters."[65] The US thus accepted the risk of initiating fighting in regions of higher priority than Iran - and incurring harm to its and its allies' security - in defence of a lesser, more indirect "vital" interest. This risk was the same as that involved in attempting to deter the Soviets' entry into Azerbaijan alone. But it possessed somewhat less bluff because the value bestowed on Iran by the US was more credibly worth general war and resort to nuclear weapons, if still not decisively so, than Azerbaijan alone. (In 1950 America agreed with Britain that "an overt Soviet attack on Iran would raise an immediate question of general war."[66]) The United States would have been willing to use the US Air Force's Strategic Air Command in an effort to help defend Iran and also Saudi Arabia against a Soviet attack[67] or to impede the movement of Soviet forces in Iran and delay their occupation of the Persian Gulf coast south to Dhahran.

From about 1952-53, when America had assumed at least informally from Britain primary responsibility for Iran's security against the USSR and when "massive retaliation" was becoming the cardinal US strategic concept, the United States proposed to deter a Soviet attack by resort almost exclusively to use of nuclear weapons, whether tactical ones in Iran or strategic ones against the USSR itself, if not both.

## Contingency Planning to the Early 1950s

In 1950s the American Joint Chiefs of Staff and their British counterparts addressed the desirability, should there be war with the USSR, of demolishing the oil fields and installations in the Persian Gulf, particularly Iran, in order

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[65] Ibid., p. 925.

[66] State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, p. 190.

[67] State, FRUS 1950 vol. 3, pp. 1686-1687. Note also State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, p. 474. US Navy tactical air support might also have been employed, according to State, FRUS 1951 vol. 5, p. 33.

to prevent their exploitation by the Soviet Union.[68] But because of the very difficult lines of communication through western Iran, they doubted whether, even if the Soviets captured the oil facilities intact, much oil could be got back to the USSR. And if the refineries were destroyed, a task easily done according to the Air Chiefs of Staff, the Soviets would not be able to supply even their expeditionary forces in the Middle East with Persian Gulf oil. In view of the limited value of Gulf oil to the Soviet Union and of the harmful effect on morale in Iran and other regional states and on the West's Cold War position which would result from knowledge of UK-US plans to demolish the oilfields, the British and American Chiefs of Staff doubted seriously whether they should proceed with making plans for demolition.

In contingency planning in the latter 1940s and the early 1950s for resistance, if not defence against a Soviet advance to the Persian Gulf and also to the Suez Canal, the US attended first to the defence of Saudi Arabia. America's most important regional interest, its oil concessions, lay in Saudi Arabia and as the US position there was paramount, unlike in Iran, Britain did not plan to defend it. While considered important in its own right, Iran was viewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a British responsibility and as a shield for Saudi Arabia: from "the standpoint of defensive purposes" it offered "opportunities to conduct delaying operations and/or operations to protect United States-controlled oil resources in Saudi Arabia."[69] From a broader, regional

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[68] This paragraph draws upon State, FRUS 1950 vol. 5, pp. 236-237.

[69] State, FRUS 1946 vol. 3, p. 530. For Britain's plan to deal with a German attack from the Caucasus Mountains into Iran in World War II, consult G.H.Q., M.E.F. Operation Instruction No. 118. Operations in Persia, in "Operations In The Middle East From 1st November 1941 to 15th August 1942" A despatch submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 27th January, 1943 by General Sir Claude J.E. Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief, the Middle East Forces in Supplement to the London Gazette, 15th January, 1948, no. 38177, pp. 388-390. General

perspective, defensive action which used Iran's territorial depth and difficult terrain was necessary "for preventing a Soviet attack overrunning the whole Middle East including the Suez-Cairo area ... before sufficient defensive forces could be interposed."[70] "Holding" the Middle East was important because it was "one of the few favorable areas for counteroffensive action"[71] against the USSR. The JCS well understood that the

> most desirable course of action would be to hold the oil-bearing areas since it would obviate the necessity for their recapture and the $3^1/_3$ divisions and 3 fighter groups required would be considerably less than would be required to retake them either immediately or subsequently. Immediate retaking of the oil areas as far north as the Iranian areas at the head of the Gulf would require a total of approximately 5 divisions and 5 fighter groups.[72]

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Auchinleck's object was to ensure the security of bases, ports, oil supplies and refineries in Iraq and Persia and he intended to stop the enemy as far forward as possible. Maximum loss and delay would be inflicted upon the Germans who would not be allowed to establish themselves south of the line from Pahlevi through Qasvin, Hamadan, Senna, Saqqiz to Rowanduz Gorge, along which line there would be prepared defences. In Operation Instruction No. 118 and in instructions devoted to defence against an attack into Turkey, General Auchinleck proposed to delay the enemy's advance, and allow time for reinforcements to arrive, by demolishing communications and oil stocks in northern Iran; by holding delaying positions astride the enemy's main lines of advance in country unsuited to armoured fighting vehicles and, because the enemy was stronger, avoiding engagement except on favourable ground; by counter-attacking the enemy's flanks and rear when there was satisfactory opportunity; and by protecting advanced aerodromes from which to launch air attacks. He would fight delaying actions back to southern Iraq, if necessary, and cover the ports on the Persian Gulf. Training in manoeuvre warfare was essential to success.

[70] State, FRUS 1946 vol. 3, p. 530.

[71] Idem.

[72] Quotation from "formerly top secret analyses by the Joint Chiefs of Staff" in Joshua M. Epstein, Strategy And Force Planning The Case of the Persian Gulf (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), p. 86. The JCS, Epstein points out (fn. 93, p. 87), "noted that 'the forces for holding ...

But, the JCS calculated, although Britain and America "probably could not retain the major portion of the oil-producing areas from the outset", they could "deny the enemy use of oil-producing facilities...,"[73] as indicated above. US contingency planning in the late 1940s, unilateral and with the UK, envisaged primarily Britain delaying a Soviet advance through Iran by destroying roads and railways at critical points such as bridges, tunnels and mountain passes.[74] Without adequate deployed forces and reinforcements, the UK and the US would have had to concede the northern Persian Gulf to the USSR and withdraw to Egypt. From there they would, according to short-range US planning, regain in time - before the end of the second year of war, when Gulf oil would become necessary - "a portion of the Middle East oil resources...."[75] When America's strategic focus narrowed in 1953 to defence of the "northern tier", its modification and renaming of the UK's "outer ring" concept, its contingency planning concentrated on

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would be sufficient ... to protect the oil areas from Soviet airborne attacks and overland advances through Iran.'" Approximately 23 Soviet divisions were available for operations in the Middle East in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. See Department of State Minutes of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting in State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, pp. 522-523.

[73] State, FRUS 1948 vol. 5, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, pt. 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 3.

[74] See Epstein, Strategy And Force Planning, pp. 49-51, 56-57. Beginning in 1949, he observes (p.13), the US devised "options" for use of atomic weapons against targets, mainly road and rail centres and ports, in the USSR itself as a way of retarding a Soviet advance into Iran and Turkey.

[75] State, FRUS 1948 vol. 5, pt. 1, p. 2. By 1953 the JCS had apparently concluded that Persian Gulf oil would be necessary closer to the outbreak of war with the USSR: US military planners were studying the defence with Britain in war "of such limited areas as may be necessary to permit continued exploitation of petroleum of one oil complex determined to be the most economically defensible in terms of force requirements." Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense in State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 411.

"holding" mountain passes along "a line based on the Taurus Mountains in Southern Turkey and the Zagros Mountains in Iraq and Iran ... [which] would thus safeguard the major oil production areas of the Middle East."[76] Under the auspices of the Military Committee of the Baghdad Pact, the US made plans for mountain defence but more "realistic" planning was confined to air strikes with atomic bombs,[77] even though in 1952 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had expressed "doubt that it would effective to use them in the mountain passes...."[78]

"Policy" in the 1960s: Interventionism and Emphasis on Conventional Forces, Quest for Logistic Facilities

From the early 1960s deterring Soviet aggression against Iran and, more immediately and actively as the potential Soviet threat was perceived to become latent, preventing conflict between and within regional states from producing undesirable political change were America's main strategic objectives for what it began to call the "Indian Ocean area". The Strike Command (STRICOM or STRIKE) was created in order to provide an organized conventional capability for better deterring or resisting a Soviet attack but mainly for intervening in insurgencies or perhaps small wars. It competed with the US Navy and the Marines in the interventionist role. The United States also increased its naval presence in the Indian Ocean in 1963-1964 in order to show tangibly more interest in littoral states and to reinforce its regional diplomacy, until all 7th Fleet aircraft carrier task groups were committed to the Vietnam war. The

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[76] State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 320.

[77] In the latter 1950s the US Air Force established the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF), which emphasized the use of tactical nuclear weapons in limited wars and possessed a contingency plan for all conceivable trouble spots. Robert P. Haffa, The Half War Planning U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces to Meet a Limited Contingency, 1960-1983 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 91-92.

[78] State, FRUS 1952-1954 vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 239.

Americans encouraged Britain to maintain its political and military presence in the Indian Ocean area as much as possible and they acquired access to British islands. Proposed facilities there were intended first for logistic support of intervention, until that was discarded as a means of policy in 1968, and then for helping to counterbalance the new Soviet naval presence.

The Kennedy administration came to power in 1961 sceptical about the credibility and efficacy of nuclear weapons for deterrence or defence against limited aggression by the USSR, much less for coping with numerous small conflicts, inter-state and, even more likely, internal, in the Third World. The Soviets had endorsed wars of "national liberation" and it was feared that by supporting and exploiting unconventional, minor conflicts they might ultimately accumulate enough influence to shift the global balance of power, or "correlation of forces", decisively against the West. Not easily able to respond to limited contingencies without resort to nuclear weapons, the US worried about its incapacity to intervene in a Third World conflict, whether or not the Soviets were involved, without seriously risking a nuclear confrontation with them. President Kennedy and his Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara, resolved to develop conventional forces capable of waging two large wars, in Europe and in East Asia, and fighting a smaller, limited war typified as a Third World insurgency perhaps involving Cuba.

In order for the US to be able to fight a limited war McNamara ordered the organization of a force which could respond to any kind of limited aggression by communist forces promptly, with appropriate preparation and in adequate strength. Because of the large political and economic costs of stationing abroad all the forces needed to fight in several theatres and because American forces could be needed for concurrent contingencies in places other than the three most

probable ones noted above, the US decided to enlarge its home-based strategic reserve forces. In December 1961 it created and based at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida the Strike Command. STRICOM had access, for the conduct of exercises and contingency operations only, to the US Army's XVIII Corps (the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Air Assault Division and the 4th Infantry Division) and the US Air Force's Tactical Air Command fighter, reconnaissance and troop carrier wings.[79] STRIKE had two general, global purposes: to be ready to reinforce by aerial movement of the Army forces US unified commands such as the European Command and to be prepared for integrated Air Force-Army operations across the entire range of limited war, from subversion to tactical nuclear warfare. Its capability for rapid intervention, the Kennedy administration reasoned, could deter conflicts and prevent them from growing by "nipping them in the bud".[80] America would achieve economy of force and flexibility in use of STRICOM provided that an adequate number of long-range transport aircraft and also ships were available to move quickly and, with available regional facilities, sustain an expeditionary force and provided that US forces were versatile in training and equipment for fighting in mountain, desert and jungle.

Besides being ready to augment other commands STRIKE was intended by McNamara "'as the primary force for use [that is, intervention] in remote areas such as Central Africa or the

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[79] These wings consisted of the "TAC's 19th Air Force and CASF capabilities." Haffa, The Half War, p. 93. The Strategic Army Corps, consisting in 1961 of the XVIII Army Corps, was intended by the Administration to increase to six and finally eight divisions, all of which STRICOM would be able to draw upon. Ibid., pp. 31, 100.

[80] On Strike Command and its background, see Ibid., pp. 25-38, 93-105; General Paul D. Adams, "Strike Command", Military Review (May 1962), pp. 2-10; Major General Clyde Box, "United States Strike Command", Air University Review (September/October 1964), pp. 2-14.

Middle East.'"[81] In November 1963 STRICOM was assigned autonomous responsibility, previously held by the US Navy, for all US defence activities - including the operations of the Middle East Force, Military Assistance Advisory Groups, exercises and the planning and execution of contingency operations - in the Middle East, Africa south of the Sahara and South Asia.[82] The commander of STRICOM became Commander-in-Chief MEAFSA. "CINCSTRIKE-CINCMEAFSA" was responsible also for reacting to potential Soviet aggression against Iran.

America's strategic contribution to Middle Eastern, specifically Iranian, security was discussed in McNamara's statement to Congress in 1964 on the US defence "posture". The Middle East was a region "of great political instability and uneven economic development." Although Iran bordered on the USSR and was directly exposed to its military power,

> the more immediate danger to the peace and stability of the area is internal, and stems from: the deep-seated animosities existing between the Arab countries and Israel; the power struggles and rivalries among the Arab countries themselves; and the existence of powerful minority groups within most of these countries, such as the Kurds in Iraq, as well as inequalities which require social and economic reforms.[83]

The "internal" danger to Middle Eastern stability "confronted" the US with "two sets of problems": to help create a setting in which regional states could maintain internal stability and develop their economy and society without fear of attack by

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[81] Haffa, The Half War, p. 98.

[82] Idem. Note "Annual Report Of The Secretary Of The Air Force" in U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1964, pp. 283-84.

[83] United States, Department of Defense, Statement Of Secretary Of Defence Robert S. McNamara Before The House Armed Services Committee On The Fiscal Year 1965-1969 Defense Program And The Fiscal Year 1965 Budget, 1964, p. 15.

neighbours or of infiltration or subversion by the Communist Bloc; and to provide a sense of security to Iran because of its direct exposure to Soviet military power. But despite the

> strategic vulnerability of Iran, it seems quite unlikely that the Soviet Union would, in view of our mutual cooperation agreement with Iran, deliberately undertake a major aggression against that country in the near future. In fact, if Chairman Khrushchev's pronouncement of a few years ago regarding Iran can be taken at face value, the Soviet Union does not believe that military aggression is necessary to bring Iran into the Soviet orbit. Given the economic and social conditions prevailing in Iran a few years ago, Chairman Khrushchev said that Iran would in time 'fall like a ripe fruit' into the Soviet lap. Recent vigorous Soviet efforts to improve relations with Iran and Communist efforts to take credit for the Shah's reforms indicate that Chairman Khrushchev may not be so sure today.
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> ... it is certainly clear that the more likely contingency is a covert or ambiguous aggression, using dissident elements in Iran or neighboring nations to pave the way for ultimate Communist takeover. In Iran, as elsewhere in the world, the best defense against the spread of communism is a steady improvement in economic and social conditions, which is the primary aim of our economic aid efforts.[84]

Although secondary to improving Iranian economic and social conditions, Iran's military security and America's strategic contribution to it were still important. And with regard to that security, America's

> objective has been to help build up Iran's military forces to the point where they could ensure internal security and provide at least an initial defense against a Soviet attack across borders. Although the Iranian military forces, with our aid, have improved significantly during the last decade, they are still not and never can be a match for even those Soviet forces presently deployed along the Iranian borders, even though the terrain favors the defense. Thus Iran could not be expected to stand alone for very long against a major attack from its northern neighbor and would require immediate assistance from the United States; and in this event, the defense of Iran could not be separated from

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[84] Ibid., p. 16.

> the larger problem of the collective defense of the free world.[85]

According to a general purpose (conventional) forces study and related analyses conducted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962-63, approximately four Army divisions and six Air Force fighter-attack wings from the home-based strategic reserve, that is, STRIKE, would be needed to meet a limited Soviet attack against Iran.[86] Except in the case of a "massive" attack by the USSR, McNamara stated in his defence report in 1964, America with its allies possessed enough "active forces for the initial stages of a conflict, without immediately resorting to nuclear weapons."[87] Even so, he continued, it would be

> necessary to mobilize reserve component units rapidly at the start of a conflict in order to provide the additional forces needed to sustain combat and to reconstitute the strategic reserve. And, in all cases, it is clear that ultimate allied success would be heavily dependent upon achieving early air superiority and upon having adequate air and sea lift.[88]

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[85] Idem. McNamara recognized that a "direct U.S. military intervention in defense of a nation threatened by Communist attack ... always carries with it the danger of expanding the area of conflict." (United States, Department of Defense, Statement Of Secretary Of Defense Robert S. McNamara Before The House Armed Services Committee On The Fiscal Year 1966-1970 Defense Program And Fiscal Year 1966 Defense Budget, February 18, 1965, p. 72.) It was expected that Iran's CENTO allies, Britain in particular, would also contribute forces against a Soviet attack.

[86] See William W. Kaufmann, Planning Conventional Forces, 1950-1980 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 6.

[87] U.S. Defense, Statement Of McNamara FY 1965, p. 60.

[88] Idem. Time and economy of force were leading considerations in America's planning for a limited war. The US had been giving "a great deal of attention in recent years to the various ways of reducing its reaction time to limited war situations", McNamara pointed out in his defence report for 1965. (U.S. Defense, Statement Of McNamara FY 1966, p. 72.) A capability for a quick response, in days rather than weeks, to threatened or actual aggression could, in some cases, serve

But insufficient airlift and sealift, STRICOM's inadequate readiness for quick deployment abroad and insufficient combat support for deployed forces impaired America's capability to wage a limited war.[89] And although the US did procure the C-5 long-range transport aircraft, those impairments were not greatly reduced.* Thus even if a simultaneous contingency did not occur and distract its forces, America did not possess enough ships and aircraft to reinforce Iran speedily with more than a fraction of the four divisions.[90] Despite the Kennedy administration's emphasis on improving the capability of conventional forces to fight a limited war, quite probably the US would have had to use tactical nuclear weapons against a Soviet attack, for which STRIKE had prepared.[91]

In addition to its military aid and training programmes and its creation of Strike Command, McNamara pointed out that the United States had

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to halt it before it really got started. Thus it could do much to forestall the need to employ much greater force later on in order to recover lost ground. (U.S. Defense, Statement Of McNamara FY 1965, p. 61; U.S. Defense, Statement Of McNamara, FY 1966, p. 72.)

* Congress denied money for the "Fast Deployment Logistics" ship for fear of encouraging the Executive branch's interventionist tendency. Nor did the US preposition equipment and supplies at Diego Garcia. (For that proposal, see below.)

[89] U.S. Defense, Statement Of McNamara FY 1965, pp. 58, 61.

[90] Had there been a concurrent contingency in Europe, only two Army divisions would have been available for a lesser contingency, according to Haffa, The Half War, p. 31. There would have been even less transportation on hand to move them and possibly Marine forces to Iran. The Vietnam war absorbed the strategic reserve forces available in principle for a limited war in Iran.

[91] See Ibid., fn. 74, p. 136. Epstein, Strategy And Force Planning, p. 14, states: "... a Soviet invasion of Iran was among the key scenarios used in deriving U.S. theater nuclear force goals in 1968." Planning by the JCS assumed that nuclear weapons were needed in order to defeat ten Soviet divisions in Iran.

> undertaken other steps to underscore our interest in arresting any deterioration in the security of [the Middle East]. Our military forces have engaged in military exercises with ... Iran and Saudi Arabia in order to demonstrate our capability and determination to lend support when and if required. We have also made our military presence visible through judicious and periodic deployment of elements of our own forces.[92]

In spring 1964 STRICOM "deployed a joint task force composed of an airborne brigade and two fighter squadrons, with associated airlift, from the United States through Adana, Turkey, to Iran".[93] There "some 6,800 U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force personnel participated in the CENTO-sponsored Exercise DELAWAR in the Persian Gulf ..."[94] and Iran with Iranian forces. "DELAWAR provided valuable experience in planning and conducting combined operations under Central Treaty Organization ... auspices."[95] STRIKE's involvement was intended to show that although detente between Iran and the Soviet Union from 1962 had made a Soviet attack upon Iran improbable, the US still took seriously that contingency and CENTO as a means (or at least a cover) for dealing with it. STRIKE served as well to demonstrate a link between America's interest in and commitment to Iranian security and its conventional forces in the US. The Shah's confidence in America's support for him weakened when, in his view, the Americans failed to help Pakistan in its war with India in 1965.

Earlier, in late 1962 and in 1963, the United States had sent forces to Saudi Arabia following the outbreak in September 1962 of civil war in North Yemen in which Egypt

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[92] U.S. Defense, Statement Of McNamara FY 1965, p. 17.

[93] "Annual Report Of The Secretary Of The Air Force" in U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1964, p. 295.

[94] "Annual Report Of The Secretary Of Defense" in Ibid., p. 54.

[95] "Annual Report Of The Secretary Of The Air Force" in Ibid., p. 295.

intervened directly with its armed forces on the side of the republican forces and the Saudis intervened indirectly on the side of the royalist forces. Egyptian aircraft and destroyers struck at Saudi border towns where royalist Yemeni forces had support bases. Having declared its support for Saudi territorial integrity, the Kennedy administration sent combat aircraft on demonstration flights over Jidda and Riyadh as a warning to Egypt against further attacks against Saudi territory and to reassure the Saudis that the US supported them. In January 1963 America reinforced the Middle East Force, sending two destroyers to Jidda from the Mediterranean. Later it sent a small detachment from the 82nd Airborne Division under Strike Command for "training" with Saudi troops and in summer 1963 a fighter squadron carried out training exercises over Saudi Arabia after further Egyptian air attacks. It was a Saudi perception, however, that although America had warned Nasser not to "carry the air war to the Saudi interior and inflict ... severe damage",

> there was no assurance that he would heed the warning or that [despite its military display] the United States would react effectively if he did not. After all, the United States was tolerating the bombing of the border areas on the grounds advanced by the Egyptians that these were staging points and bases for the royalists.[96]

But

> as the Egyptians continued to bomb and shell the Saudi border areas without being molested by the U.S. Air Force, it became apparent that the American 'protection' extended only to the oil facilities and to an 'unprovoked' extension of the war into the interior of Saudi Arabia. The border areas, insofar as they served as bases for the forces opposing the Egyptians, were apparently fair game as far as the United States was concerned.[97]

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[96] Safran, Saudi Arabia, p. 200.

[97] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

From 1960 intervention was a principal theme in planning for the Indian Ocean area by the US Navy. Anticipating the Kennedy administration's interventionist/limited war outlook outlined above, the Navy perceived that decolonization would lead to instability within newly independent states, to conflicts between them and to anti-Western nationalism and non-alignment, all of which the Soviets and the Chinese would try to manipulate to their advantage. US intervention might be necessary in order to support friendly governments, restore stability, forestall communist attempts to gain power and thereby eliminate the USSR's opportunity to gain influence.[98] According to Navy planners America would have "to sustain a military presence in the Indian Ocean, both to support US prestige with displays of force, and, when required, to 'intervene promptly to defeat aggression or subversion, restore order and/or evacuate Western inhabitants'".[99] The Navy and the Marines, they asserted, gave the US independence and flexibility of operations for intervention and the prosecution of limited wars; and intervention - in fact, a traditional proprietorial role of the Navy and the Marines - provided a role for aircraft carriers now that Polaris fleet ballistic missile submarines would soon take over the Navy's contribution to strategic nuclear deterrence against the USSR.

By reviving its interventionist role the Navy competed with Strike Command. The USN judged STRICOM to be unnecessary because it and the Marines already had an adequate ground and air capability for mounting interventions. It resented STRICOM's acquisition of the role as primary agent of American intervention and of responsibility for all US military

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[98] For the American Navy's view of decolonization and its repercussions, see William Stivers, America's Confrontation with Revolutionary Change in the Middle East, 1948-83 (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1986), pp. 28-32.

[99] Ibid., p. 31. Stivers quotes from a memorandum prepared in June 1960 by the Long-Range Objectives Group for the Chief of Naval Operations: "Assuring a Future Base Structure in the African Indian Ocean Area". Note also Ibid., pp. 32-33.

activities in the Middle East. A secondary role, in support of intervention/limited war operations by STRIKE, would, the Navy feared, lead to its subordination, if not ultimately loss of autonomy to the Army and the Air Force. Anxious that those two services might come to monopolize the interventionist "mission", the USN refused to cooperate and commit forces to Strike Command, thereby impairing STRICOM's planning and its operational capability.[100]

The US Navy also entertained plans for increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean but the main impetus for that measure came from the Presidency and the State Department, which thought that more naval deployments would possess important political signalling and display value. US aircraft carrier task groups had visited the Indian Ocean area in 1960 and 1961.[101] In autumn 1962 America's review of available military resources when India asked for emergency air defence help during its war with China "revealed serious weaknesses in

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[100] Haffa, The Half War, pp. 96-97.

[101] The American task groups could of course fight as well as display. According to Hermann F. Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf", International Security 5 (Fall 1980), 108,

> [d]uring the ... 1961 Iraqi threat against Kuwait, the Secretary of State and the Chief of Naval Operations, with the concurrence of the President, took the initiative to offer augmentation to the British task force deployed to Kuwait in the form of a small United States naval flotilla, Solantimity, then visiting Mombasa, if such would be needed. The British Cabinet, after deliberation, declined the American offer with thanks, just in time to permit the lead destroyers to be turned back before transitting the Straits of Hormuz. The incident underscored Washington's recognition that the strategic and economic importance of the Gulf area warranted deployment of American forces, if needed, to safeguard the political independence of friendly area states and to protect American and Western interests there.

the ability to respond even to limited contingencies...."[102] Partly as a result of that review the State Department "became convinced of the need to have a U.S. military presence to lend muscle to American diplomacy in the region and to underline, for ... friends ..., U.S. ability to meet its commitments."[103] Its view was reinforced when in March 1963 the US encountered difficulty in gaining staging and overflying permission for fighter aircraft deploying to Saudi Arabia in response to the Saudis' request for help against Egyptian air raids upon their territory. The "political problems" caused by the movement of the aircraft "roused" Kennedy's "interest in a US carrier presence in the Indian Ocean" and he asked the Department of Defence to "consider carrier task force cruises as part of its strategic planning for the area."[104] Task groups visited the Indian Ocean twice in 1963 - the Essex task group took part in the annual CENTO exercise, MIDLINK - and consideration was given to stationing there an aircraft carrier amphibious group or deploying periodically a "small fleet".[105] Because McNamara and the Navy commands in the Mediterranean and the Pacific opposed an Indian Ocean "fleet", that proposal was rejected. But "periodic cruises were deemed highly desirable"[106] and in March 1964 President Johnson authorized "the beginning of what was to be a policy of introducing U.S.

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[102] Gary Sick, "The Evolution of U.S. Strategy Toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Regions", in The Great Game Rivalry in the Persian Gulf and South Asia, ed. Alvin Z. Rubinstein (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), p. 54. Walter K. Andersen, "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An American Perspective", in Superpower Rivalry In The Indian Ocean Indian And American Perspectives, eds. Selig S. Harrison, K. Subrahmanyam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 19-20, notes that the US "dispatched the U.S.S. Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal in the wake of the 1962 Sino-Indian war to help provide air cover to Calcutta if ... necessary."

[103] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 54.

[104] Stivers, America's Confrontation, p. 44.

[105] Christian Science Monitor, December 22, 1962; New York Times, December 13, 1963.

[106] Stivers, America's Confrontation, p. 44.

military power into the Indian Ocean region on an intermittent but regular basis."[107] Only two deployments, in April-May and August-September 1964, took place before this "policy" was discontinued when the 7th Fleet, from which the deploying task groups were drawn, became preoccupied with the second Vietnam war.

Although a support base was unnecessary for aircraft carrier task groups making routine peacetime cruises and paying port visits, US Navy planners had identified by 1960 a need to acquire secure access to logistic facilities in the Indian Ocean area. They would support potential contingency operations, whether intervention or a sustained "show of force" in a crisis, in which the tempo of operations would be much higher than usual. The essential condition for secure access was that facilities be free from the danger that the Navy could be evicted from them for political reasons. The availability of mainland bases was declining and it would continue to do so as British colonies became independent. Access to those bases was politically unreliable: a new state was unlikely to support intervention against another Indian Ocean area state. And even if the purpose of US contingency operations proved to be acceptable to it, arrangement of access to its facilities might be slow and their use would be strictly ad hoc and of limited scope and duration. If America waited until the need for logistic support facilities was immediate and compelling, it might be "too late" to acquire access either to bases or to safe sites where dependence on the host state could be avoided and facilities could be constructed.

The US Navy's "solution" to the identified requirement for secure logistic facilities was the "strategic island" concept, formally proposed in June 1960. Its rationale was that only small, lightly populated islands of British

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[107] Sick, "Evolution of Indian Ocean Strategy", p. 54.

archipelago colonies

> could safely be held 'under the full control of the West in face of the currents of nationalism'. Prompt action should be taken to segregate these territories from larger political units due for independence. This was particularly important in the case of Diego Garcia, 'a large atoll ideally suited to be the primary Western fleet base and air staging position in the Indian Ocean'[108]

because of its position in the centre of the ocean roughly equi-distant (2,000 miles) from potential operating areas. Aldabra, about 500 miles south-east of Dar es-Salaam in (then) Tanganyika, and other islands were "possible links in a strategic chain stretching from Ascension in the South Atlantic through ... the Indian Ocean to Australia, and thence to Subic Bay in the Philippines",[109] the main base of the 7th Fleet. The Navy submitted a proposal for detaching and "stockpiling" "strategic islands" to the Joint Chiefs of Staff who early in 1962 "recommended making arrangements with the British that would assure the availability of selected islands in the Indian Ocean; by 1963, Defense had firm plans for facilities in Diego Garcia."[110]

The Navy's proposal was supported by the State Department, which viewed it as an important way to encourage Britain to maintain its traditional political and military

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[108] Stivers, America's Confrontation, p. 34, quoting further from "Assuring a Future Base Structure in the African Indian Ocean Area". Note also Sick, "Evolution of Indian Ocean Strategy", p. 53. Diego Garcia lay about 1,100 miles south-southwest from the southern tip of India. It had an area of 6,710 acres and its lagoon was 13 miles long and 5 $^{1}/_{2}$ miles wide.

[109] Stivers, America's Confrontation, p. 35.

[110] United States, General Accounting Office, Financial And Legal Aspects Of The Agreement On The Availability Of Certain Indian Ocean Islands For Defense Purposes, Report Of The Comptroller General Of The United States (January 7, 1976), p. 4.

presence in the Indian Ocean area. Island military facilities would help the United States to bring its military power to bear, intervening if necessary, and enhance regional stability. But they would also enable the US to avoid new security commitments and to keep its security - and interventionist - role secondary to that of Britain, which was more acceptable and knowledgeable in mounting "peacekeeping" operations. Current British strategic policy "envisioned stationing at Aden mobile forces, which would move to trouble spots on commando carriers or transport aircraft."[111] And in light of the fact that "the territorial and financial bases of British power were withering away",

> Anglo-American joint development of island facilities would accord with British thinking and permit [the UK's] mobile forces to remain effective when the Aden base was lost. This was crucial, American officials thought, to US hopes for strengthening the 'overall Western military posture in the Indian Ocean' with moves 'to complement (but not in any way to replace) the existing British effort in the area'.
>
> The strategic islands would serve an economic purpose as well. ... An American share in the cost of constructing island facilities would subsidise the British presence...."[112]

When in February 1964 formal discussions started between

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[111] Stivers, America's Confrontation, p. 46.

[112] Idem. Stivers draws from a State Department memorandum, 'Proposed Note to the British Government Concerning Possible Long-term Development of Base Facilities in the Indian Ocean Area', 25 April, 1963; a joint memorandum by the State Department and the Defence Department, 'Defense Problems in the Indian Ocean Area', 21 January, 1964; 'U.S. Defense Interests in the Indian Ocean. Memorandum of U.K./U.S. London Discussions, February 1964', State Department, 3 March, 1964; and a letter from the State Department to the Defence Department, 7 December, 1966. A "power vacuum" in the Indian Ocean area filled by the USSR and China if and when Britain withdrew (and the US did not respond) was used by the Johnson administration as a general justification for Diego Garcia, in addition to "the perceived need for future support facilities in the context of long-term contingency planning." Note Sick, "Evolution of Indian Ocean Strategy", p. 55.

British and American officials about the feasibility of establishing joint staging posts in the Indian Ocean, both sides understood that "any new facilities would be complementary to the British bases at Aden and Singapore, which the United States continued to regard as essential for the security of the area."[113]

> Neither party wished to station large, permanent forces in the region. But both saw the need to back up vital Western interests with military power. The strategic scheme would let them have things both ways, providing logistics centres and staging posts for sea or airborne forces which would make up in mobility what they lacked in numerical strength.[114]

Britain favoured Aldabra for supporting airborne forces intervening in East Africa while the American negotiators, keen that the islands selected should be detached promptly and placed under British sovereignty,

> had a primary interest in building facilities on Diego Garcia. If surveys confirmed US expectations, the island would support a wide range of military actions. The navy had an immediate need for a communications centre. But over the long term, more extensive development was contemplated. Harbour dredging would provide anchorage for 'a carrier task force, and amphibious and support ships'. Fuel, equipment [and] ammunition might be prestocked (either on the ground or on 'floating depots') for subsequent 'marrying with mobile combat units which might be deployed into the area'. Such stockpiles could supply 'a substantial portion of an army division ... An airbase might support cargo, carrier, and tanker

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[113] Darby, British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968, p. 265. McNamara had at first opposed the project for joint facilities, because "it would be disastrous if the navy got hold of another ocean". (Idem) But he was prepared to support a small-scale undertaking once it became clear that the Indian Ocean area would remain primarily a British responsibility and that the arrangement could not lead to the creation of an American Indian Ocean fleet.

[114] Stivers, America's Confrontation, pp. 47-48. According to the Washington Post, August 29, 1964 and the Cleveland Plain Dealer, August 30, 1964, Diego Garcia was designated for construction of an airstrip, anchorage and communications station at a cost of $25 million.

aircraft.' Aerial surveillance, anti-submarine patrols and air logistics operations could be conducted from such a base.[115] (Brackets in text.)

A survey by Britain and America in summer 1964 of possible sites for facilities confirmed Diego Garcia and Aldabra as very good possibilities. Talks between the two sides in April 1965 narrowed the choice of sites and the Americans reiterated their sense of urgency that the administrative transfer to direct British sovereignty of the islands selected had to be completed before the UK and Mauritius began to confer in late 1965 about that colony's independence. In autumn 1965 the British reached agreement with the Seychelles, another colony, for detachment of Aldabra, Desroches and Farquahar islands and with Mauritius for detachment of the Chagos archipelago, of which Diego Garcia was part. In November 1965 the UK formed those islands into the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

The selection of the islands to make up BIOT had been governed by the planning requirements of the Royal Air Force and the USAF and Strike Command on the one hand and of the US Navy on the other hand, and the conflict of emphasis between those requirements led to contention about whether facilities should be constructed first on Diego Garcia or Aldabra. But when in February 1966 the RAF won a debate with the Royal Navy about the predominance in future British defence of land- versus aircraft carrier-based air power, the informal alliance of the RAF and the USAF prevailed and Britain and America concurred "that Aldabra should be the first island ... developed".[116] Planning by Britain and America for Aldabra was delayed in 1967 because, although the conditions for the US to lease BIOT and construct facilities there had been

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[115] Stivers, America's Confrontation, p. 48.

[116] Kim C. Beazley and Ian Clark, The Politics of Intrusion The Super Powers and the Indian Ocean (Sydney: Alternative Publishing Cooperative Ltd., 1979), p. 7.

negotiated and an agreement had been signed at the end of December 1966,[117] the two sides differed about what should be built on it and how construction costs, higher than first estimated, should be divided. Underlying those differences was disagreement about the nature and extent of political and military cooperation between the US and the UK "east of Suez". Heavily engaged in the Vietnam war, the Americans could not offer Britain the collaboration it sought or the money it needed in order to buttress its military capability in the Indian Ocean area. In Britain plans for the Aldabra staging post were held up while the Ministry of Defence tried to recast its strategic policy for the area within the limits of a straightened budget. Also there was opposition to the Aldabra project at home and abroad from conservationists who campaigned to protect the island's unique natural environment. Finally, when the pound sterling was devalued in November 1967, the Wilson government had to enforce further economies and the plans for Aldabra were cancelled.

In February 1967, well before the Aldabra project was abandoned and the competition from its service rivals was eliminated, the US Navy had proposed an "austere support facility" at Diego Garcia costing $26 million. The "main thrust" of the Navy's proposal "was to create an oiling station for carrier task forces transiting from Norfolk,

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[117] In an exchange of notes on December 30, 1966 Britain and America agreed on the "Availability Of Certain Indian Ocean Islands For Defense Purposes" of both governments "as they may arise". BIOT would remain under British sovereignty and after an initial period of fifty years, the agreement would continue in force for a further twenty years unless one party informed the other of its intention to end the agreement. Both governments had to approve in principle the construction of all facilities on BIOT. The text of the agreement is in United States, Congress, House, Committee On International Relations, Diego Garcia, 1975: The Debate Over The Base And The Island's Former Inhabitants, Hearings Before The Special Subcommittee On Investigations, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, pp. 50-55.

Virginia to battle stations off Vietnam."[118] A memorandum in July 1967 by the Joint Chiefs of Staff - 'Proposed Naval Facility on Diego Garcia' - evaluated favourably the Navy's proposal in the broad context of the interventionist ethos which informed US strategic planning for the Indian Ocean area in the 1960s.[119] That memorandum

> provided a list of situations in which US military power might be deployed from a Diego Garcia staging post. Twenty possibilities were listed - all comprising internal and regional crises, none involving Soviet military action in the area. Disturbances in India, political unrest in Ceylon, secession of East Pakistan from West Pakistan, an Iraqi attack on Kuwait or Iran, hostilities between Ethiopia and Somalia, and between Somalia and Kenya, domestic upheaval in Ethiopia - these and more were presented as cases requiring US interventionist capabilities in the Indian Ocean.[120]

On Diego Garcia the JCS

> envisioned a multi-purpose staging area to support US military action throughout the littoral. The $26 million facility proposed by the Navy could provide a basis for massive movements of US forces into the region in 'contingency situations'. Moreover, although 'the initial project would be primarily a naval facility, the bulk of investment would provide improvements of a

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[118] From "American Strategy In The Indian Ocean: The Proposed Base On Diego Garcia", prepared statement by Dr. Earl C. Ravenel in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, Proposed Expansion Of U.S. Military Facilities In The Indian Ocean, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On The Near East And South Asia, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, p. 86.

[119] See Stivers, America's Confrontation, pp. 54-56. The memorandum repeated the points made (and discussed above) by the USN in 1960 and noted, as had other memoranda, that America had to develop Diego Garcia quickly in order to avoid paying an even higher political price in opposition from Indian Ocean states and the USSR.

[120] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

> general purpose nature which could be developed further to meet additional future requirements' - such as air force operations.[121]

The American navy's proposal was rejected by McNamara in October 1967 after it had been shown in a study by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) that refuelling at Diego Garcia would be more costly and time-consuming than refuelling from an oil tanker from the Persian Gulf. More importantly the OSD study

> rebutted the notion that any of the two dozen contingencies mentioned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would require or respond to the use of Diego Garcia. In some cases it was reasonable to assume that a country that had been attacked would offer us ports, airfields, and staging places if it wanted or deserved our help. In other cases Diego Garcia ... would be too remote to be of any direct use at all. In still other cases military intervention, from any base, could not control certain kinds of trouble, such as slowly developing political instability. We also pointed out that an American initiative ... would promote an American-Soviet arms race in yet another geographic area that had ... been spared that affliction.[122]

But in June 1968, the new Secretary of Defence approved a Navy proposal to construct a "modest logistic support base" at Diego Garcia with five functions: support of aerial surveillance of Soviet naval activity which had begun in the Indian Ocean in March 1968; communications; a low profile and, it was hoped, politically unprovocative presence; support, for example, re-fuelling, for aircraft carrier operations in crises; and provision of a fall-back base for the Middle East

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[121] Ibid., p. 55. According to Ravenal, U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 87, "the whole list of functions" for Diego Garcia "originally conceived by the Joint Chiefs of Staff" consisted of "oil storage, communications, air staging and operations, staging of ground forces, forward basing of submarines and other vessels - at a cost of about $55 million." He does not indicate whether the submarines envisioned to be based in the Indian Ocean were strategic nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

[122] Ibid., p. 86.

Force, should it be evicted from Bahrain.[123] According to the Navy's "Indian Ocean Base Study" from which the proposal was derived, America needed an ability to operate in the Indian Ocean "for two purposes":

> 1. Surveillance. To keep an eye on ... Soviet vessels, for intelligence ..., and for deterrence: police patrols deter armed crime, and fear of untimely discovery deters political and economic skullduggery.
>
> 2. Influence. To make it clear to the peripheral nations that the U.S. retains interest and power in the area, and does not intend to abandon the Indian Ocean to the status of a Soviet lake.[124]

Specifically, Diego Garcia would provide berthing for an aircraft carrier task group and oilers, an air strip and facilities for communications, oil storage and minor repairs. The proposal was accepted despite another OSD study's findings that a facility still was unnecessary because, besides the reasons noted above, satellites would soon come to provide communications; "all the political liabilities" - opposition from the littoral states and the Soviets - "remained"; and "ad hoc and temporary" deployments by 7th Fleet "contingents" could "handle" contingencies amenable to US intervention at a lower cost.[125]

In January 1969 the Navy through the Department of Defence requested authorization from Congress for the first increment of funding for the proposed $26 million "austere logistic support facility" called Project "Rest Stop". A facility had become necessary, according to the USN, in order

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[123] See William H. Lewis, "How a Defense Planner Looks at Africa", in Africa: From Mystery to Maze, ed. Helen Kitchen (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1976), p. 289; letters by Stuart B. Barber in U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 175.

[124] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 175.

[125] Ravenal in U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 87.

> to insure Navy readiness in the South Atlantic, Indian and Western Pacific Oceans. Access to ports for bunkering and resupply had diminished.... Communications in the Indian Ocean are tenuous without satisfactory coverage of the Mid-Indian Ocean area. Lack of fuelling facilities and immediately responsive communications, while not prohibiting naval operations, limits operational flexibility. No military facilities of any nature exist in this area and a new facility is required for ship refuelling, limited aviation, and communications.[126]

In place of the interventionist rationale abandoned the previous year in reaction to the Vietnam war, Project "Rest Stop's" wider justification for a facility on Diego Garcia proposed that now the US had to respond to the "vacuum" caused by Britain's announced withdrawal from "east of Suez" and to the increasing Soviet naval presence and to Chinese influence both of which were trying to fill that "vacuum".[127] The Navy's request for funding was rejected in late 1969 as a result of strong opposition from the Senate Appropriations Committee to the United States becoming committed to "another" naval base and to sustained operations in the Indian Ocean area. Although thwarted the US Navy resolved to persevere in its intention to establish a logistic facility at Diego Garcia (see Chapters Two and Three): at bottom it expected that naval or maritime operations and a secure logistic facility for their support would be necessary in the future for defence of American interests in an area inherently unstable.

## Rudiments of Policy

By the end of the 1960s two of the three rudiments of US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area had lapsed into dormancy: deterrence of a potential Soviet land threat to Iran, because of Soviet-Iranian detente and growing detente

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[126] United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Appropriations, Second Supplemental Appropriations For Fiscal Year 1974, Hearings On H.R. 14013, pt. 2, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, p. 2114.

[127] Washington Post, May 19, 1974.

between the US and the USSR; and intervention in conflicts between or within littoral states, because it was discredited as a policy option in reaction to the Vietnam war.

Naval display, the third rudiment, remained active if only in a minor way, and until 1979 it was the core of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area created in 1970. Why that policy was created and its purpose, nature, substance and the influences upon it are analyzed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER TWO

## CREATION OF POLICY, 1970

The United States created in 1970 a strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area in response to Britain's announcement in 1968 of its virtual military withdrawal from "east of Suez" by late 1971 and to a new, potential threat posed by the Soviet navy's entry into the Indian Ocean, also in 1968. That policy was influenced by America's security policy for the Persian Gulf region originated in 1969-1970 in light of the Nixon Doctrine which precluded new US security commitments. Because a direct US military security role in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area was neither necessary, the Nixon administration concluded, nor wanted by the littoral states, the purposes of America's strategic policy were strictly political: to display concern for US interests and friends and to counterbalance the Soviet naval presence, thereby reassuring friendly states as Britain withdrew. The United States' "low profile" presence consisted of the small Middle East Force, occasional exercises or deployments by detachments from the 7th Fleet and, from 1973, a communications station and a staging point for surveillance aircraft at Diego Garcia. The limited facilities at Diego Garcia represented a policy compromise between the National Security Council, which had sought to avoid building any facilities there as part of keeping America's Indian Ocean presence very low and trying to reach an arms control agreement with the USSR, and the US Navy, which had wanted to establish a standing presence which would "match" its Soviet counterpart and to construct at Diego Garcia a logistic facility for supporting that presence.

This chapter examines first the context of the creation of US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area: America's interests, its assessment of the threats to them and its security policy for the Persian Gulf. Then are analyzed the objectives and premises of America's strategic policy and the

conflict between the National Security Council and the US Navy about the significance of the Soviet naval presence, what was an appropriate strategic policy and whether a logistic facility should be constructed at Diego Garcia. Finally, littoral states' challenges to America's strategic mobility and flexibility in the Indian Ocean are surveyed and the response by Indian Ocean countries and the USSR to US policy is discussed.

## Security Policy

In devising a strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area, the Executive branch of the American government recognised that the "Indian Ocean is of less strategic importance to the United States than other oceanic regions such as the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the North Pacific in the current context of world security posture."[1] From 1971 through 1975 US political, economic and military interests in the Indian Ocean would "be of a substantially lower order than those in ... the Atlantic and the Pacific".[2] About 30 of the then 126 members of the United Nations with one-third of the world's population were littoral or hinterland states of the Indian Ocean and of them India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran,

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[1] From "Statement of Robert J. Pranger, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) For Policy Plans and National Security Affairs" in United States, Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, The Indian Ocean: Political And Strategic Future, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On National Security Policy And Scientific Developments, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 171.

[2] From "Statement of Hon. Ronald I. Spiers, Director Of The Bureau Of Politico-Military Affairs, Department Of State" in Ibid., p. 168. The statements above by Spiers and Pranger probably drew from "Soviet and Friendly Naval Involvement in the Indian Ocean Area, 1971-1975", National Security Study Memorandum 104, November 9, 1970 and "Follow-on Study of Strategy Toward Indian Ocean", National Security Study Memorandum 110, December 22, 1970. See Stivers, America's Confrontation, fn. 4, pp. 116-117. Howard Wriggins discusses "U.S. Interests In The Indian Ocean", in The Indian Ocean: Its Political, Economic and Military Importance, eds. Alvin J. Cottrell, R.M. Burrell (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), pp. 357-377.

Egypt and, in some ways, South Africa played a significant international role. The littoral states' political stability and economic development, the peaceful resolution of inter-state conflicts and good relations with each country were America's general interests in the Indian Ocean area, above all the Persian Gulf.[3] Its interest in the Gulf states' orderly political evolution under "moderate" governments hospitable to US economic interests derived from their possession of oil. Although the Persian Gulf's position as part of the Middle Eastern "bridge" for communication between Europe, Asia and Africa and as the "backyard" of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its proximity to the southern USSR were well appreciated by the US, most important was the region's immense oil resources, amounting in the early 1970s to more than sixty per cent of the world's proven oil reserves. Assured continuous access to that oil was a vital economic necessity for America's allies in Western Europe, over fifty per cent of whose oil imports came from that region, and for Japan, over eighty per cent of whose oil imports came from there. And it meant that the US had

> a major strategic interest in the Persian Gulf oil supply to Western Europe and Japan. Interdiction of the flow of Persian Gulf oil to Japan and to Western Europe could cripple those economies in a very short period of time.... Alternate supplies to meet the vast fuel requirements of these industrial nations would not be readily available, and in any event, major realinement

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[3] For a review of US interests in the Persian Gulf, see "Background Study Of The Persian Gulf Area Prepared By The Department Of State" in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, U.S. Interests In And Policy Toward The Persian Gulf, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On The Near East And South Asia, 92nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1972, pp. 139-141. In regions of the Indian Ocean area other than the Persian Gulf, the US had no "critical interests". On South Asia, for example, see United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, United States Interests In And Policies Toward South Asia, Hearings Before the Subcommittee On The Near East and South Asia, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., 1973, pp. 82-92, 161-175.

> (sic) of supply sources and distribution systems would be required to keep these economies going without Persian Gulf oil.[4]

By the early 1970s America's interest in the Persian Gulf no longer pertained only to its allies' oil requirements, to the dependence on Gulf oil of its naval forces in the Pacific and other US forces in Asia and Europe and to the investments and profits of US oil companies which were now yielding control of oil production to regional states. Direct American dependence on Gulf oil was increasing; it had risen from two per cent of US oil imports in the middle 1960s to about ten per cent by 1972. By 1980, it was estimated, America would depend on Gulf, mainly Saudi and Iranian, oil for one-half of its oil imports and for one-quarter of its total oil consumption. Of wider importance was the Persian Gulf states' rising income from oil and its consequences: an expanding market for US goods and services, the regional states' sizable investments in the American and other Western economies, their increasing holdings of foreign exchange and their new prominence in the international financial and monetary system.

The "prime importance" to the US that the Persian Gulf states' oil "remain available" gave it an interest in their territorial integrity and independence: the "United States would not want to see the oil, population, territory, and other resources of the region fall under the control of any adversary or combination of adversaries able to threaten..."[5] it. "Specifically, we would be concerned if Chinese or Soviet influence in the area extended to control of the water areas or significant parts of the littoral."[6] Although "no littoral state is of direct strategic importance to the security of the

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[4] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 171.

[5] Idem.

[6] Ibid., p. 165.

United States"[7], the Americans did possess an interest in containing "Soviet military power within its present borders"[8] and limiting Soviet influence. The sea lanes of the Indian Ocean were not vital to America but many of its allies had

> essential sea lines of communication that cross the Indian Ocean - Australia to the United Kingdom and Western Europe, Japan to Europe, Iran to Europe.... Twenty percent (sic) of the world's maritime shipping is on the Indian Ocean on any one day. Interdiction of sea lines of communication, although a wartime threat, is a peacetime strategic concern. Capability to maintain these sea lines of communication in the event of war is a strategic objective of maritime states, and is thus of strategic importance to the United States.[9]

On the other hand America did have an interest in free access to the Indian Ocean and free movement across it by its ships and aircraft, commercial and military. It was a "fundamental strategic interest" that the Indian Ocean "remain available ... for the deployment of naval forces for reaction to contingencies affecting U.S. security and vital interests."[10]

The threats to America's interests in the Indian Ocean area were perceived to be "of relatively low order"[11], although there was "endemic instability" within and conflict between many regional states which in the case of the Persian Gulf could jeopardize the availability of oil. Many countries

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[7] Ibid., p. 171. The US, as noted in Chapter One, had no security treaty obligations in the Persian Gulf-Arabian Sea area.

[8] From "Statement of James H. Noyes, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) for Near Eastern, African, and South Asian Affairs" in United States, Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, New Perspectives On The Persian Gulf, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On The Near East And South Asia, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., 1973, p. 39. (Noyes retained this position until 1976).

[9] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 171.

[10] Idem.

[11] Ibid., p. 168.

were experiencing rapid, unsettling political, economic and social change. There were, for example, insurgencies and autonomy or secessionist movements in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Oman and Ethiopia; rivalries or territorial disputes or both between India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, North Yemen and South Yemen and the Somalis and Ethiopia and Kenya. A Marxist regime in South Yemen and a socialist one in Iraq threatened traditional rule in Saudi Arabia and its Gulf Arab neighbours, which were also subject to tensions created by the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US was aware, as noted above, of the USSR's intention to enlarge its influence and presence in the Indian Ocean area. There Soviet "influence can grow at the expense of Western and, to a lesser degree, Chinese influence by exploiting targets of opportunity among the revolutionary and nationalist forces...."[12] Thus "the instability and intra-regional antagonisms that characterize much of the Indian Ocean area could serve to promote Soviet interests at the expense of..."[13] American interests. But the Soviets would not make direct use of their armed forces in order to achieve policy objectives.

> With the gradual improvement in relations between the USSR and Iran and between the USSR and [the US], the threat of Soviet overt military action against the sovereignty and independence of states in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian peninsula has lessened and is no longer a cause of immediate concern.[14]

It was "in the expansion and classic peacetime employment of their Navy in the Indian Ocean area" that the Soviets had "made a recent dramatic impact."[15] They had "moved from their

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[12] Ibid., p. 165.

[13] Ibid., p. 164.

[14] U.S. House, New Gulf Perspectives, p. 39.

[15] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 166. For discussion of the sources and purposes of Soviet strategic involvement in the Indian Ocean area, consult Geoffrey Jukes, The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy, Adelphi Paper No. 87 (London:

traditional land-centered, defense of the homeland role to one using their Navy worldwide as an instrument of policy"[16] and they had established a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean, averaging 10 ships in 1970 (and 14-16 ships by 1973), "regardless of [America's] own plans or activities in the area."[17] If they succeeded in acquiring access to the naval base and air base at Aden in South Yemen or to port and air facilities in Somalia or elsewhere such as India or Iraq, they would be able to support much better their naval squadron in the Arabian Sea, potentially for operations in crises or for interdicting the West's sea lines of communication. The United States faced

> the prospect of enhanced Soviet politico-military power flanking Africa, South and Southeast Asia and Australia. This calls attention to the growing Soviet naval capability in reference to the so-called choke points which control ingress and egress to and from the basin. These include Bab El Mandab at the southern entrance to the Red Sea, the Gulf (sic) of Hormuz at the narrow of the Persian Gulf and the politically less vulnerable Straits of Malacca and Sunda.
>
> The practical effect of the Soviet presence athwart lines of communication would ... be acutely felt in the case of all-out hostilities. A Soviet attempt to block maritime routes in peacetime could ... lead to a major

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International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1972); "Forward Deployment In The Indian Ocean", in Soviet Naval Developments Capability and Context, ed. Michael MccGwire (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), pt. 5; Ken Booth and Lee Dowdy, "Soviet Security Interests In The Indian Ocean Region", in Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual 5, ed. David R. Jones (Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, 1982), pp. 327-377; Bruce W. Watson, Red Navy at Sea: Soviet Naval Operations on the High Seas, 1956-1980 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 147-168; Walter K. Andersen, "Soviets in the Indian Ocean", Asian Survey 24 (September 1984), 910-930. Soviet strategic policy for "The Indo-Arabian Region" is analyzed in Michael MccGwire, Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy (Washington D.C: The Brookings Institution, 1987), pp. 183-210.

[16] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 166.

[17] Ibid., p. 174. In 1972-74 other Soviet vessels were engaged in port clearance operations in Bangladesh.

> world crisis. Nonetheless, with appropriate basing and/or establishment or (sic) political preeminence in these funnel areas, Soviet domination of the most critical of these choke points falls within the realm of possibility. The knowledge that in the event of war or great tension the Soviets or their associated states might control traffic in and out of the Indian Ocean ... could not but exert some influence on the political orientation of those nations who would be most affected should this contingency come to pass.[18]

And should the Suez Canal be reopened, the logistic complexities of maintaining the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron would be much ameliorated.

> Supply lines would be drastically reduced, transit times foreshortened, rotation of units expedited. Similarly, with the canal opened to traffic, the number of Soviet naval deployments into the Indian Ocean could take a quantum jump inasmuch as the assets of their powerful Black Sea Fleet would become available for rapid deployment south and east of Suez.[19]

Reinforcing the Indian Ocean squadron for a show of force or for supporting a threatened friendly regime would be much speedier. "For the most part", however, "Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean has been supplemental to political endeavors, and military and assistance programs in the region."[20] It was "a cautious probing exercise that, over time, would probably result in a ... gradually increasing ... presence."[21] The US did "not envisage an immediate threat" of Soviet "control" of land and sea areas of the Indian Ocean[22] and the "Soviet naval threat to U.S. interests ... [there] is moderate."[23] Although the Soviets were trying to

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[18] Ibid., p. 166.

[19] Ibid., p. 167.

[20] Ibid., p. 172.

[21] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 59.

[22] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 165.

[23] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 16.

"augment their influence" in the Persian Gulf, they were not seeking "direct confrontation" with America.[24]

America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area was governed by its security policy for that area according to which the US would not make a direct commitment to guarantee Gulf security after Britain's operational military withdrawal in late 1971. Instead the friendly Gulf states, primarily Iran and also Saudi Arabia, would take principal responsibility for ensuring regional security. According to the State Department, the US did "not seek to intervene in the internal affairs of any of the states nor [did it] wish to assume, or to appear to assume, the former British protective role, which served the cause of peace in its day but is no longer appropriate or desired."[25] Similarly, in February 1972 the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Near Eastern, African and South Asian Affairs stated that the

> United States has assumed none of the former British military role or functions and has no intention of seeking or appearing to replace the British presence in the gulf (sic). We do not plan to make any security commitments to or develop any special military

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[24] From prepared statement by Hon. Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, in U.S. House, New Gulf Perspectives, p. 7.

[25] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 141. For details of America's security policy for the Persian Gulf, consult Ibid., pp. 14-15, 82-84, 141-142; U.S. House, New Gulf Perspectives, pp. 6-10, 38-44, 194-196. Except for its CENTO commitment to Iran, Britain had not been responsible for the security of the major Persian Gulf states. In terms of the Gulf, Britain's withdrawal from "east of Suez" meant that it

> would terminate its special treaties with Bahrain, Qatar, and the seven Trucial states, under which it was responsible for these states' defense and foreign relations, and that it would withdraw its operational military forces, which were charged with carrying out these ... obligations, including a defense understanding with Kuwait, from the Persian Gulf by the end of 1971. (U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 13.)

relationships with any of the newly independent states [there].[26]

The Nixon administration eschewed a Gulf security commitment because, first and as shown, US regional interests and the Soviet military threat to them were thought to be moderate. Second the Soviet "threat" to the Persian Gulf was mainly political in nature. Third, instability in the Gulf, more important than the USSR as a source of insecurity, also was viewed as a political problem rather than as a military one and it was "unlikely to be responsive to U.S. power."[27] Next a direct American security involvement was unnecessary because the United Kingdom continued to play an important role in the Persian Gulf. "On the military side", the UK's naval and air visits and conduct of exercises there and its provision of arms, training, advice and personnel chiefly to the lower Gulf states meant that the "end of a permanently stationed British military presence does not create a 'vacuum' which other outside states should fill...."[28] And Britain's intention "to retain much of [its] political presence in the Gulf meant that there was not so much a power vacuum as a realignment of the power balance"[29] there. Finally a direct American security commitment to the Persian Gulf was not possible because it was ruled out by the Nixon Doctrine and because, above all, the Gulf states did not want it. The Nixon Doctrine acknowledged that failure in the costly Vietnam war and a weakening economy had sapped America's will and

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[26] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 14.

[27] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 57.

[28] From "Supplemental Statement Concerning Background of U.S. Presence in Bahrain" in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 23.

[29] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 57.

capacity to manage global security.* It stipulated that although the US would observe its extant security obligations, new commitments were politically unacceptable and would be avoided. The Gulf states did not wish for an American security commitment because Iran in particular denied the existence of a regional security "vacuum" which had to be "filled" by outside forces, because they sought to keep the Gulf free from super-power competition or conflict and because, the State Department "recognised", "the states of the region have the capability and the will to take the lead in providing for security."[30]

The Nixon Doctrine and the friendly Gulf states' aspirations dovetailed and America encouraged Iran and Saudi Arabia to take primary responsibility for Persian Gulf security after 1971. Iran would counter Iraq, thereby contributing to Saudi and Kuwaiti security, and it would patrol the sea lanes in the Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the

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* The Nixon Doctrine was the Nixon administration's adjustment in 1969-1970 of US security policy and strategic policy in response to the Vietnam war and other important changes in the international and domestic setting of policy. America would continue to maintain a global balance of power with the USSR but containment of communist influence and power would become more selective and deterrence of conventional wars would replace intervention against insurgencies. The US vowed to keep its security treaty commitments but it asked its allies to assume more of the burden for their defence and to supply most of the manpower for that purpose. While the US would avoid conflict with the Soviet Union, it would provide a "shield " if a nuclear power threatened allies or other states essential to US or to regional security. It would help against lesser forms of aggression, by regional states, "as appropriate" with air and naval forces. American forces long "forward deployed" abroad in sizable number as a supplement to allies' defences would be reduced to well below their pre-Vietnam war level (outside Europe) by the middle 1970s and would be reinforced, when required, by contingents from America. US strategic doctrine now anticipated resisting a major Soviet attack upon Western Europe or a communist attack in East Asia and dealing simultaneously with a smaller contingency elsewhere. This "one-and-one-half war" strategic policy was a contraction from planning by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in which America had envisaged repelling concurrently communist offensives in Europe and Asia while it also coped with a lesser contingency.

[30] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 141.

Gulf of Oman and eventually beyond. Saudi Arabia would take the leading role on the Arabian peninsula. (The Shah's rather than Saudi Arabia's military involvement in combatting insurgency by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman in the Dhofar province of Oman indicated that the Saudi security role would be essentially political.) The United States also encouraged joint political and military cooperation as much as possible (in view of the Arab states' suspicion of Iran's hegemonistic ambitions) among the conservative Gulf states for their security and stability. America supported the federation of the Trucial states into the United Arab Emirates, established diplomatic relations with the lower Gulf states and initiated or expanded economic development and technical assistance programmes in Gulf states. The most conspicuous way it intended to contribute to Gulf security was by helping Iran and Saudi Arabia to expand and modernize their armed forces.[31] It strengthened its military training and advisory missions in those states and contracted to supply Iran with large amounts of advanced weapons. From 1972 until 1976 Iran had virtual carte blanche to purchase any US conventional weapon system it chose. The Saudis purchased less weapons, emphasizing instead US help to construct military support facilities.

## Strategic Policy

America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area consisted of providing by way of the Middle East Force with the 7th Fleet in the background

> a low profile but nevertheless positive indication of U.S. interest in the Indian Ocean region [which] ...

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[31] The Department of Defence noted in 1972 that

> Iran is the most determined and best equipped state in the gulf (sic) to assert leadership and the Shah sees the British withdrawal as an opportunity to do so. The Shah views Iranian military power as a stabilizing factor which can guarantee the area against possible turmoil. (Ibid., p. 14.)

> furnishes psychological reassurance to friendly littoral states. Through the conduct of occasional small-scale naval exercises..., it demonstrates U.S. naval capability and flexibility. The U.S. naval presence in the region also serves to counterbalance the political impact of the Soviet naval presence and activities.... An absence of or an inadequate U.S. counterpoise ... would be detrimental to U.S. interests through indicating to the littoral states a lack of U.S. interest or capability. In addition, we encourage the United Kingdom and Australia to increase their own naval presence and activities in the region so that the U.S. effort can remain complementary.[32]

This policy was based on four premises. First, because

> the challenge posed to the United States in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf areas is to a great extent political in nature ..., the principal response to this challenge should emphasize political rather than military activity. Military instruments can contribute to political solutions; they cannot serve as solutions in and of themselves.[33]

Second, the total "current U.S. military effort" "together with other U.S. diplomatic efforts - economic, cultural, and political - is sufficient at present to safeguard [US] interests."[34] Also the regional Soviet-American balance of military activities favoured the US. Except for the number of military advisers and continuously stationed naval vessels, the "U.S. military diplomatic effort exceeds that of the Soviets."[35] Lastly, because there was "no requirement" for the United States "to control, or even decisively influence,

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[32] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 173. Beazley and Clark, Politics of Intrusion, pp. 5-29, examine the "emergence of an American Indian Ocean Policy".

[33] U.S. House, New Gulf Perspectives, p. 38. A naval presence, Noyes implied (Idem), was secondary in importance to arms sales and advisory and training programmes in support of US "interests and foreign policy objectives in peacetime".

[34] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 16.

[35] Ibid., p. 11.

any part of the Indian Ocean or its littoral",[36] it was unnecessary to "upgrade" the US naval presence and "match" the Soviet presence. America's strategic policy thus proposed

> to inhibit as much as possible military competition with the USSR in the Indian Ocean area, while maintaining the ability to exert U.S. military influence there in case of need.
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> Well before the ... Indo-Pakistani war [in November-December 1971], U.S. policy was to maintain COMIDEASTFOR on Bahrain, to conduct naval port visits in the area, to maintain communications facilities in Ethiopia and northwest Australia and to build a new communication facility on Diego Garcia, to conduct maritime surveillance of Soviet naval activities in the Indian Ocean, and to conduct periodic naval exercises or operations in the Indian Ocean. ... [T]he deployment of the U.S. naval task force to the Indian Ocean in December 1971 did not represent a change in our Indian Ocean naval policy. This deployment was a unique response to a specific contingency. U.S. naval operations and exercises had been conducted there before the crisis - three had occurred in 1971 - and we plan to continue to conduct such operations and exercises there in the future.[37]

In 1971, 7th Fleet detachments had begun to conduct small exercises in the Indian Ocean and in autumn 1971 the Department of Defence announced that 7th Fleet task groups would deploy there from time to time.[38] But from early 1972 until late October 1973, only one brief appearance was made by

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[36] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 168.

[37] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 16. The Middle East Force also participated with Britain and Iran in CENTO's annual MIDLINK maritime exercise. US naval vessels on inter-fleet transfers paid visits to Indian Ocean ports. Two of the three US naval exercises in 1971 concentrated on anti-submarine warfare and showed the defensive character of America's strategic policy. They took place in the eastern Indian Ocean, in the vicinity of Indonesia and north-western Australia, and they were probably intended also to reassure Australia about America's interest in Indian Ocean security after Britain withdrew. The US expressed interest in using Australia's naval facilities at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia which were planned to be completed in 1978.

[38] See, for example, New York Times, September 30, 1971.

a 7th Fleet task group.[39]

The emphasis in America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area on display of interest but without taking on a direct security commitment was illustrated by the Nixon administration's thinking about the Middle East Force. The "mission" of the MEF was "a peaceful and symbolic one - goodwill visits to friendly ports on the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean littoral. In [the State Department's] view this concrete demonstration of American interest" and desire to maintain good relations with the littoral states "makes a symbolic but psychologically significant contribution to the continuation of an atmosphere of tranquillity in the area."[40] After a careful review of US policy towards the Persian Gulf, the Administration had decided to keep the MEF at Bahrain. Continuation of the "modest naval presence" there would, the Defence Department thought, contribute to regional stability as the small territories became independent. To withdraw the Middle East Force when the British protectorate had ended and "the Soviet naval effort was increasing could be misinterpreted as evidence that U.S. interest in the gulf (sic) is waning."[41] The decision to retain the MEF had been discussed with principal Gulf states, and friendly governments, "including the new states of the lower gulf (sic), have accepted the continuing MIDEASTFOR presence as an indication of U.S. friendship, good will, and interest."[42] The MEF had no "protective mission" to perform and the State Department's statement that it was "not intended to represent a commitment to, or threat to intervene in, the area, nor is

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[39] The US Navy was too heavily engaged in the Vietnam war to spare aircraft carrier task groups for visits to the Indian Ocean. See Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., USN (Ret.), On Watch (New York: Quadrangle. The New York Times Book Co., 1976), pp. 213-214.

[40] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 143.

[41] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[42] Ibid., p. 13.

it intended as a provocation to any state"[43] was reinforced when the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs proposed that it was America's intention neither "to alter [the MEF's] role nor indeed to undertake an operational American military role in any state in the area."[44] As in the Indian Ocean the US did not wish to provoke a naval arms race or a confrontation with the USSR.

In deciding to maintain the Middle East Force in the Persian Gulf, the United States might also have had in mind that although friendly Gulf Arab states and Iran wanted to exclude external naval powers and avoid both entanglement in super-power competition and giving the Soviets an excuse for gaining regular use of Iraqi port facilities, the Arabs did not want to see the Shah turn the Gulf into a political, military and, perhaps ultimately, even a legal semi-enclosed Iranian sea. The MEF was a long-established and unprovocative presence and provided it was kept small, it would be acceptable for subtle reassurance against Iran's regional aspirations.

The Americans did not add to the three ships assigned to the MEF but in 1972 it was provided with a larger, more modern flagship, the LaSalle, and newer destroyers served with it on the usual six-monthly rotational basis. In December 1971 the US and Bahrain concluded an agreement which permitted the MEF to use for logistic support a small section of the former British naval base. There were "no plans to seek additional military facilities for U.S. forces either in Bahrain or elsewhere in the gulf (sic)."[45] "The suggestion is sometimes made", according to the Department of Defence in 1972, that

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[43] Ibid., p. 143.

[44] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 83.

[45] Ibid., p. 143. The State Department emphasized that America's agreement with Bahrain "does not involve in any reasonable meaning of the word the establishment of an American military 'base' in Bahrain". Ibid., p. 23.

> the role of MIDEASTFOR could be performed by ships operating outside the Persian Gulf - perhaps from Diego Garcia or from the Atlantic or Pacific Fleets. Ships operating from those areas, however, would be far removed from the primary operating area of MIDEASTFOR and could not make the same number of port calls, as frequently and economically, as MIDEASTFOR. Ships operating from Diego Garcia, moreover, could not be homeported there, and this would add to Navy's morale and retention problems. To operate ships from Diego Garcia, furthermore, would require upgrading the austere communications facilities there to a logistic support facility.[46]

The choice of "low profile" political display as America's strategic policy represented an outcome in favour of the National Security Council of a conflict between its broad policy perspective and the views and objectives mainly of the US Navy. The conflict was about what was an adequate counter-balance to the Soviet naval squadron in the Indian Ocean area, to what extent that presence, and more generally the USSR itself, threatened US and Western interests there and what was the political utility of the Soviet presence as an instrument of Soviet influence. The US Navy was part of a "small but vocal group - centered primarily in the Pentagon but with significant support at the State Department and the White House" which

> felt that the United States had substantial interests in the area - investments, oil, and other primary resources - and that the increased Soviet political and military presence constituted a critical challenge in view of anticipated political instability. From their perspective, the United States and the USSR were in global competition in the Third World, and Soviet gains would come only at the expense of U.S. and Western interests. Consequently, it was argued, the United States must make a major effort to exert itself in the Indian Ocean as part of a global effort to preserve its security interests.[47]

One element of that "major effort" had to be a continuous US

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[46] Ibid., p. 12. The flagship of the Middle East Force had been "homeported" at Manama since 1966.

[47] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", pp. 59-60.

naval presence in addition to the MEF, according to Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). Soon after becoming CNO in July 1970, Zumwalt began to speak of a Soviet drive to "dominate" the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean and of the danger of the USSR strategically "outflanking" the West in the area, where it was filling a "vacuum" of power.[48] A Soviet naval force's pressure on the shipping routes or control of straits such as the Strait of Hormuz could influence to the USSR's advantage the policy of states dependent on Persian Gulf oil. Also a Soviet naval force could have a psychological impact in a regional crisis greater than its inherent capability. The reopening of the Suez Canal, bringing the Arabian Sea within 3,500 miles of the USSR's Black Sea fleet, might lead to a rapid increase in the size of the Soviet naval presence and the potential threat from it. A Soviet presence not offset by an American presence larger than the Middle East Force would be encouraged by US "default" towards more "activism" and risk-taking. Urging that protecting the shipping routes was an "emerging responsibility" which the US Navy could not avoid, by autumn 1970 Zumwalt was calling for a "continuing and regularized U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean"[49] of approximately ten ships - equalling the size of the Soviet naval squadron, for cooperation with allies' naval forces there and for "improving" (constructing) naval and air as well as communications facilities on Diego Garcia and "upgrading" the Middle East Force.

The US Navy's advocacy of a standing force deployment in the Indian Ocean was an expression of anxiety not only about the Soviet "threat" but about its own general condition. The USN feared that because of its declining size, the shrinking American defence budget and the high cost of new ships, it was losing its margin of superiority over the growing, modern

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[48] Daily Telegraph, March 4, 1971.

[49] Zumwalt, On Watch, p. 363.

Soviet navy. In some cases it might no longer be able to fulfil with acceptable risk its global responsibilities in war. Thus Zumwalt's leading priorities were to defend and enlarge the USN's share of the defence budget and to modernize the navy. Accomplishing that depended in part on developing a compelling post-Vietnam role: protection of the sea lanes through sea control by new classes of ship such as the patrol frigate.[50] The necessity to counter the Soviet "threat" in the Indian Ocean served as an argument to justify the sea control "mission" and the Navy's ship-building programme for the 1970s. It could be claimed as well to fit in with the Nixon Doctrine because it avoided new defence commitments but contributed to preserving the global balance with the Soviet Union.

The majority in the Executive branch of the US government did not agree with the Navy's perception of a serious Soviet naval "threat" in the Indian Ocean, for both political and military reasons. The foremost military reason was that Soviet interdiction of the sea lanes was very unlikely. Attacks on merchant vessels were acts of war and would almost certainly only accompany general hostilities resulting from a major political crisis. Further, a Soviet assault on shipping would not come principally from the small Indian Ocean squadron, whose combat capability was too slight for much more than "showing the flag", which lacked air cover and whose long lines of communication to its base at Vladivostok were vulnerable to US and allied attack; it would come from Soviet submarines in the Atlantic and the Pacific. (In the view of the Department of Defence, the more probable threat to the safe flow of oil supplies came from the producing states themselves.[51]) Also, in terms of ships and facilities the Soviets were already sufficiently countered by America's friends and allies in the Indian Ocean area. Britain still

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[50] Ibid., pp. 71-77.

[51] Times, October 21, 1970.

retained a presence, if on a reduced scale, and France had a naval base at Djibouti (in the then French Territory of the Afars and Issas) and at Diego Suarez in Madagascar (until 1975) and it kept an average of six combatants in the area. The Iranian navy patrolled the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz and Australia and South Africa could add small forces to the Western naval presence in the Indian Ocean. The ultimate, extra-oceanic counterbalancing force was America's aircraft carriers from the 7th Fleet. They still gave the US Navy a decisive fighting edge over its Soviet counterpart, despite its forebodings. As for the eventual reopening of the Suez Canal, the USSR would indeed gain a military advantage: its ships in the Arabian Sea could be much more easily reinforced and resupplied from the Black Sea, while the draught of most US aircraft carriers, but of no other US combatant, was too deep to enable passage. Nonetheless the Departments of State and Defence welcomed a reopened Suez Canal, most of all because it would signify peace between Egypt and Israel, which was the paramount American political objective in the Middle East and overrode lesser, military considerations.

In the political sphere the Nixon administration assessed as small the Soviet Navy's contribution to Soviet regional influence. Increases in the USSR's influence derived largely from political factors such as the degree of the littoral states' dependence on the Soviet Union, their responsiveness to it or the extent of congruence between their views and interests and those of the Soviets. The Indian Ocean states' nationalism provided a political entrée to the Soviets because of its anti-Western orientation in quite a few countries. Moreover, Soviet support for the Arab/Palestinian cause had added to the USSR's influence with some Arab states. But substantial "gains" in Soviet influence were precluded because the littoral states valued most of all their independence and non-alignment. A Soviet connection was useful for limiting, not excluding Western influence. What influence the Soviet

Union did exert came more through diplomacy, aid, trade and arms transfers than through occasional port visits by ships usually at anchor in international waters. In addition to military assistance, the Soviet naval presence had supported the USSR's foreign policy and helped to expand its influence, but it had not initiated that influence.[52] A small yet growing Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean was a new development to be taken carefully into account and watched closely; unless balanced it might play an important part at a time of high tension but otherwise its contribution to the USSR's attempts to exercise influence was minor and diffuse. This assessment led National Security Memorandum 110 (December 1970) on US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area to find "no need for a large American military presence in the region for the foreseeable future. The emphasis will be on political activity to counter growing Soviet influence."[53]

In the absence of a serious naval threat from the Soviet Union, the general concepts of US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area were, as indicated above, political: to display interest and to counter discreetly the Soviet presence. Direct intervention a la the 1960s had been discredited as a policy option by the Vietnam war and it was ruled out by the Nixon Doctrine. Nonetheless more indirect intervention, however inappropriate in the case of the Indo-Pakistani war in 1971,[54] remained possible. When asked

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[52] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 9.

[53] International Herald Tribune, December 16, 1970.

[54] On December 15, 1971, two days before the end of the war between India and Pakistan concerning the fate of East Pakistan/Bangladesh, a 10-ship American naval task group - Task Force 74 - led by the aircraft carrier Enterprise entered the Bay of Bengal for a show of force. The US sent the task group primarily in order to warn India not to attack West Pakistan and to deter that course of action. For analyses of America's strategic involvement in the war, see James M. McConnell and Anne Kelly Calhoun, "The December 1971 Indo-Pakistani Crisis", in Soviet Naval Diplomacy, eds. Bradford Dismukes, James M. McConnell (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979),

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pp. 178-192; David K. Hall, "The Indo-Pakistani War of 1971", in Blechman and Kaplan, Force without War, pp. 175-218. Hall's evaluation (pp. 214-218, from which all quotations below are drawn, except where noted) of the US show of force is that it was not necessary, prudent or credible and could not be efficacious. The Enterprise task group did not influence India to refrain from attacking West Pakistan because the Indians did not intend to do so for other reasons, including discouragement from the USSR. New Delhi interpreted the US force presence as an attempt to evacuate Pakistani forces from East Pakistan. "The deployment of US forces did stimulate hostile political and military responses by India and the USSR antithetical to Washington's desire for a cease-fire and withdrawal ..." of Indian forces from East Pakistan. India proclaimed that it would not be intimidated and the

> Indian Air Force began destroying the East Pakistani ships and airfields that would be needed to evacuate personnel to the approaching U.S. task force. The net effect of Task Force 74 was to drive India closer to the USSR, arouse anti-American passions, and prompt effective military countermeasures, without securing for Washington any additional leverage over the direction of events in East Pakistan.
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> The appearance of U.S. naval forces did nothing to induce greater Soviet cooperation on the war in the East, but it did present Moscow with a low-risk opportunity for a psychological victory over Washington. Calculating that there was a negligible chance of actual U.S. intervention, the USSR responded to word of Task Force 74 with assurances of protection to New Delhi and with a large-scale naval deployment, which put twenty-six Soviet ships into the Indian Ocean by December 31. The final collapse of Pakistani resistance in the East, with both Soviet and American naval forces looking on from the Bay of Bengal, conveyed the illusion of Soviet deterrence of American intervention, and also suggested a lack of resolve on the part of the more powerful American task force. This imagery was given strength by the U.S. failure to communicate intelligibly to India and other parties

the actual purpose of Task Force 74. The sailing of the Enterprise task group to the Bay of Bengal gave Pakistan false hope that the US would intervene and give it succour. And when American help "failed to materialize", many Pakistanis were disappointed and their sense that America was an unreliable friend increased. Also, rather than contributing as a show of good faith to an improvement in relations between the US and the People's Republic of China, "the U.S. task force appears to have interjected a minor discord into U.S.-Chinese relations because of Peking's backing for the Third World movement to create an Indian Ocean zone of peace barring

whether there would be a "requirement" for the US to help the Saudis in the event of an attack upon them, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs replied that America's "whole policy" was "based on the assumption of the Nixon Doctrine that we would like to help these people to help themselves wherever they want our help and, frankly, it is a way of avoiding our direct involvement

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superpower naval forces."

"Even within the context of the Nixon-Kissinger [globalist-balance of power] value system little merit can be found in the deployment of ..." Task Force 74. Despite the "substantial gross military capability" of the US task group, including 2,000 Marines, only "a massive introduction of American ground troops could have reversed the outcome" of the fighting in East Pakistan, which had nearly ended. (Italics added). Also the Enterprise task group was more than 1,000 miles from the scene of possible fighting in West Pakistan, which "made the actual use of this power impossible." That America "did not have effective and usable military options on the subcontinent" was a result not only of the naval character and the positioning of its forces. The

> inappropriateness of US military action to the [Nixon] administration's primary diplomatic interest appears in part to have been the result of the limited military options served up to the White House by Navy planners. Classified documents ... indicate that the US Navy was primarily interested in demonstrating its capability to counter the growing Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean ... and was only marginally attuned to the administration's objective of deterring a land and air offensive by India against West Pakistan. Thus, the Navy's "Outline Plan for Show of Force Operations in the Pakistan-India Area" called for shadowing Soviet and Indian ships in the Bay of Bengal, but forecast no projection of naval power into the Arabian Sea off West Pakistan, because of the absence of Soviet operations in [that] area. (fn. 188, p. 195)

Hall notes too that the credibility of the American naval threat was very doubtful. "The imbalance between the very limited US interests on the subcontinent and the very high cost of US intervention was simply too great to support a credible threat of force" against India. Nixon and his senior officials had not threatened to resort to US military power and the American public's weariness from the Vietnam war and pro-Indian sentiment "made domestic political support inadequate for a credible threat...."

in this kind of situation."[55] The passing of the American interventionist tendency into dormancy was symbolised formally when in January 1972 Strike Command was stripped of its security responsibility for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South Asia and renamed Readiness Command. "REDCOM" was charged only with deploying US forces abroad, if necessary. The European Command took over STRIKE's responsibilities for Iran, Iraq, the Arabian peninsula and states to the west; Pacific Command took "jurisdiction" for Afghanistan, Pakistan and states to their east.

The political concepts of America's strategic policy were informed by the restraint inherent in the Nixon Doctrine, by detente with the USSR and by an understanding that avoiding conflict and limiting competition with the USSR were of higher priority than America's other, more direct interests in the area. Thus while recognizing that "diplomacy must be bulwarked by military strength if it is to be credible"[56], the United States decided that a strategic policy proportionate to its moderate interests and the low Soviet military threat to them would eschew maintaining a naval presence roughly equivalent to the USSR's Indian Ocean squadron. Instead, America would keep a minimal balance with it at a distance, from the Pacific. (Also, limited Navy resources could be better employed elsewhere than in the Indian Ocean.) The US Navy would show interest in the littoral states in a way - visits by the Middle East Force and occasional cruises or exercises by 7th Fleet task groups - which would minimize their apprehension about the intrusion of super-power rivalry into the Indian Ocean and militarization of the area. It would maintain access to the Indian Ocean and affirm the freedom of the seas. Occasional task group deployments would display a "general capability" for efficient response to a crisis in the area or to the possible growth there of the

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[55] U.S. House, New Gulf Perspectives, p. 33.

[56] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests, p. 9.

Soviet naval presence as total Soviet military power increased. Displays would indicate America's will to counteract politically the Soviet naval squadron: although it did not intend to start an arms race, neither would it allow the USSR to make cumulative "gains" of influence. Some degree of linkage between the Indian Ocean area and global US security policy was inevitable and armed forces remained a cardinal background element in international politics. Occasional demonstrations of naval power as part of the general US political and military presence in the area would help to show that the balance of super-power forces, to which the littoral states were sensitive, was not shifting towards the Soviet Union.

Deterrence of potential Soviet military action on land against Iran was a quiescent part of US policy. The Nixon administration did not link the appearance of a Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean with Soviet land and air forces in the southern USSR which, it recognised (see above), did not pose an "immediate" threat to Iran, certainly not one motivated by a need for Iran's oil. But although Soviet-Iranian relations were "cordial and active", Iran still had to consider "on a contingency basis"

> how it would defend itself in the event of global or local conflict. Here the Iranian strategy would be, as has been described by the Shah, to fight a hard delaying war of attrition and await a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. Although Iran could not 'defeat' a major power, its armed forces would have the capability to make an attack costly enough to give a potential attacker serious reason for pause. [Iran's] first purpose would be to deter an attack.[57]

If Iran's deterrence failed, it would have to look to the United States for help. The American security agreement of 1959 with Iran remained in effect but the US sought to contribute to Iranian security in the atmosphere of the early

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[57] U.S. House, New Gulf Perspectives, pp. 40-41.

1970s mainly by cultivating detente with the USSR as well as by maintaining strategic nuclear deterrence against it. The Nixon Doctrine's reference to an American nuclear "shield" for states besides its allies to whom it had no binding security commitment but which were important to regional security probably applied to Iran. America's contribution to the protection of Iran in the event of Soviet aggression was confined essentially to nuclear retaliation at the global level but yet possibly at the regional level "by the presence or the availability of some tactical nuclear weapons that could be brought into play in the case of need."[58] Even had circumstances and its policy called for it, the US did not possess more than a very limited conventional capability for reinforcing Iran, helping to delay a Soviet advance and promoting a diplomatic resolution of a conflict.

The emphasis on restraint in America's Indian Ocean strategic policy was reflected in the NSC's recommendation that the US seek an arms control agreement with the USSR and it led to debate with the Navy about the need for a logistic support facility at Diego Garcia. The NSC was "highly critical"[59] of the Navy's plans for a facility there: America's limited interests in the Indian Ocean area could not be protected by military intervention. Thus the armed forces, except the Navy for display, and a facility for their support were unnecessary. A facility at Diego Garcia could be the first step towards the eventual introduction on a permanent basis of an aircraft carrier task group or a small fleet[60], leading to an arms race with the USSR. Even plans to construct a communications station on the atoll ought to be abandoned. An arms control agreement would be a radical

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[58] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Future, p. 177. This was quite likely an allusion to the United States' capability to launch nuclear strikes from its aircraft carriers.

[59] Washington Post, May 19, 1974.

[60] Guardian, November 21, 1970.

preventive measure: it would halt the expected gradual growth of the Soviet naval squadron and stop a felt US need to respond to that increase. Besides precluding the construction of a facility at Diego Garcia, an agreement would stop the USSR from acquiring access to support installations and strengthening its weak logistic capability. By minimizing competition and the potential for conflict with the Soviets, it would contribute to the security of American interests and of the Indian Ocean states.

The US Navy objected to arms control. It pointed out that the new (June 1970) Conservative government in Britain was not going to reverse the UK's withdrawal from "east of Suez" and that Diego Garcia was required to support an American naval presence counterbalancing the Soviet squadron. While continuing to call for the construction of a full logistic support facility at Diego Garcia, the Navy had had to accept Congress's rejection of that project in December 1969. Congress did, however, instruct the Navy to return in 1970 with a revised request for an appropriation for a communications facility only; facilities which could support fleet units or other forces were to be left out. In March 1970 the Navy won approval in the Department of Defence for establishing an "austere communications facility" at Diego Garcia. Its declared primary function was to fill a gap in reliable maritime communications in the southern, central and Bay of Bengal areas of the Indian Ocean. By linking up with the communications stations at Asmara in Ethiopia and North-West Cape in Australia and giving navigational guidance to ships, aircraft and submarines, it would become part of America's "worldwide command and control networks for normal and contingency operations in support of the national and naval operating requirements."[61] Diego Garcia would

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[61] United States, Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department Of Defense Appropriations For 1972, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On Department Of Defense, pt. 1, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, p. 997.

supplement US military communications by satellite and it was envisioned as a replacement for the station at Asmara, from which the US would in time have to withdraw in order to avoid entanglement in the Eritrean insurgency. Diego Garcia would also serve as an intelligence/surveillance facility for monitoring the Soviet naval presence and radio traffic in the Indian Ocean, and long-range reconnaissance aircraft would use it.[62]

The outcome of the debate about Diego Garcia and arms control was a compromise - to construct only a communications station on the atoll and to discuss with the USSR the possibility for arms control* - which reflected America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. The Navy gained satisfaction about improving its communications capability: Diego Garcia would provide useful redundancy and complementarity of communications and it would enhance the Navy's flexibility in the event of an emergency. On the other hand the Administration deflected Navy pressure for a permanent commitment of forces to the Indian Ocean and a logistic facility on Diego Garcia, the Navy's abiding objective, by pointing out that a communications station would provide a minimum of "infrastructure" in the area and that it would be independent from the littoral states. It could be expanded if necessary, enabling the US to retain a degree of strategic freedom of action in the future. Perhaps most important was the symbolic value of Diego Garcia for keeping

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* According to the public record it was the Soviet Union which in March 1971 approached the US about Indian Ocean arms control. But when the US tried to follow up on the issue in summer 1971, the Soviets did not respond. (See below and Chapter Four, in which it is noted that by summer 1971 the USSR probably had decided to consolidate its naval presence in the Indian Ocean and acquire routine access to Somali port facilities, whether or not the US planned to expand its naval presence.) Certainly the Americans' start of construction on Diego Garcia in March 1971 could not have encouraged a positive Soviet response.

[62] New York Times, December 16, 1970.

watch over the Soviets in the Indian Ocean. Its planned capability for monitoring Soviet maritime activities, by staging reconnaissance flights, would help to show that the United States was not "leaving" the area to the USSR and giving a "free ride" to it in attempts to increase its influence. But like expressing interest in the Soviets' suggestion about arms control, the facility's minimal, passive function would signal America's caution and restraint.

In December 1970, as Britain and America reached agreement in principle (formalized in October 1972) for the US to construct a communications station on Diego Garcia, Congress approved the first of three consecutive annual fundings for the project whose grand total was $20.45 million. That money was used for building a transmitter and receiving facility, petroleum, oil and lubricants storage tanks of 60,000 barrels total capacity, an 8,000 feet airstrip, parking facilities for two aircraft, housing for about 300 men, and for dredging a channel and small turning basin in the lagoon for supply ships. Construction at Diego Garcia began in March 1971 and the communications station began operation in March 1973.

## Challenges to Mobility and Freedom of Action

In an attempt to reduce perceived growing great power military threats to their independence and security, Indian Ocean states took three initiatives in late 1971 which, if realized, would have constricted seriously the US Navy's timely, efficient and flexible operation in the Indian Ocean area. Two of the three initiatives struck at unrestricted naval and air access to the Indian Ocean and its legal basis, the customary international right of freedom of navigation. The most far-reaching initiative, put forward by Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and co-sponsored by Tanzania, was the United Nations General Assembly's declaration of the Indian Ocean as a "Zone of Peace". Littoral states were anxious about the potential for an arms race between the US and the USSR, which might put

pressure on them for access to their military facilities, and they were apprehensive also about possible entanglement in the Soviet-American rivalry and about competitive super-power interference in their affairs. The IOZP declaration called upon the "great powers"

> to enter into immediate consultations with the littoral States of the Indian Ocean with a view to:
>
> (a) Halting the further escalation and expansion of their military presence in the Indian Ocean;
>
> (b) Eliminating from the Indian Ocean all bases, military installations, logistical supply facilities, the disposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and any manifestation of great Power military presence ... conceived in the context of great Power rivalry.
>
> ...
>
> (a) Warships and military aircraft may not use the Indian Ocean for any threat or use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or independence of any littoral or hinterland State of the Indian Ocean in contravention of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations....[63]

According to a Sri Lankan memorandum, the major powers' respect for a "Zone of Peace" would mean, "among other things, that the freedom of the high seas will be subject to important voluntary limitations."[64]

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[63] The "Zone of Peace" declaration is in K.P. Misra, Quest For An International Order In The Indian Ocean (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1977), pp. 135-136. For the Sri Lankan thinking informing the IOZP concept, see Poulose, Indian Ocean Power Rivalry, pp. 215-224. Hedley Bull, "The Indian Ocean as a 'Zone of Peace'", in Poulose, Indian Ocean Power Rivalry, pp. 177-189, provides a critical assessment of the concept.

[64] Poulose, Indian Ocean Power Rivalry, p. 217.

America opposed the "Zone of Peace" proposal, for three general reasons.[65] It rejected the idea, in its view, that states could establish in their region without the consent of all affected parties a legal regime which would limit freedom of international navigation and overflight. Nor could a "Zone of Peace" abridge the inherent right of states to individual and collective self-defence and thus to keeping a military presence and support facilities in a region. A "Zone of Peace" could damage the fundamental interests not only of (external) states "compelled" to maintain military preparedness in the Indian Ocean but also of regional states relying for security on a political and military balance involving extra-regional powers. Finally although it favoured nuclear-free zones in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, the US did not accept the prohibition on its naval vessels of nuclear weapons, whose presence in the Indian Ocean it neither confirmed nor denied, because nuclear deterrence was important to US security and to global stability. Without America's compliance a "Zone of Peace" could not be created.

The second security initiative originated from South-East Asia, whose Straits of Malacca and Singapore formed by peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia give the quickest, most direct access to the northern Indian Ocean for US naval traffic from Subic Bay naval base in the Philippines.* In the "Joint Statement of the Governments of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore" in November 1971, Malaysia and

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* Thailand provided the US with aerial access to the Indian Ocean: it allowed P-3C reconnaissance aircraft and also supply flights going to Diego Garcia to overfly its territory and to stop off at Utapao air base.

[65] See United Nations, General Assembly, 26th Session, First Committee, Official Records, (A/C.1/PV.1849), December 10, 1971, p. 3; ---, 34th Session, Meeting of the Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean (A/AC.199/SR.2), July 5, 1979, pp. 6-9. The US held also that a "Zone of Peace" would set a dangerous precedent for other areas such as the Mediterranean and would hinder chances for a successful United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea in the 1970s.

Indonesia "agreed that the Straits of Malacca and Singapore are not international straits while fully recognizing their use for international shipping in accordance with the principle of innocent passage."[66] (Italics added.) Malaysia and Indonesia claimed a limit of 12 nautical miles for their territorial waters, in contrast to the customary three-mile limit for countries fronting straits used for international navigation acknowledged by the US, the USSR and other maritime powers. If their claim gained international legal validity, the Straits, about eight nautical miles wide at their narrowest point, would come under Malaysian and Indonesian jurisdiction and the basis of international navigation through them would change from the right of unhindered passage to the more restricted right of innocent passage, of transit not prejudicial to the peace, good order and security of the coastal states. That change would enable Malaysia and Indonesia potentially to use international law to limit or deny at their discretion inter-oceanic naval movements which they considered a threat to their security.* And if Indonesia's "archipelago principle"[67] also gained international

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* When in 1963-65 Indonesia "confronted" (the creation of) Malaysia and the "imperialist" powers, acquired naval vessels from the USSR and called the Indian Ocean the "Indonesian Ocean", the possibility of its actual military threat to unimpeded passage through its straits became more tangible.

[66] The text of the "Joint Statement" is in Michael Leifer, Malacca, Singapore, and Indonesia vol. 2: International Straits of the World (Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978), p. 204. Leifer provides background and analysis of the international political, legal and strategic issues pertaining to the Straits of Malacca and Singapore and also to Indonesia's straits in light of the Indonesian government's quest for national maritime integrity and security.

[67] In an attempt to create greater unity of the land and sea of the Indonesian archipelago and to enhance national security against external interference, the Indonesian government enunciated in December 1957 the "archipelago principle": all waters within linked straight baselines joining the outermost points of Indonesia's outermost islands were internal seas and an integral part of the state under exclusive Indonesian sovereignty. In effect Indonesia proclaimed that it no longer

acceptance, Indonesia and Malaysia would be able to impose a complete barrier to naval communication between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. The US Navy's response time to a contingency in the Indian Ocean area would be much increased and its flexibility of operations there would be severely reduced because, unless the Americans were prepared to incur the costs of running the Indonesian straits and the Strait of Malacca against the littoral governments' will, an aircraft carrier task group and logistic support ships would have to sail more than 9,000 miles south around Australia in order to reach the northern Indian Ocean. The US made quiet diplomatic representations against the two straits states' challenge to its strategic mobility, and the conflict of their interest in maritime security with America's interest in freedom of movement was resolved (see Chapter Three) in the context of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) beginning in 1974. Until then, that conflict was mitigated by America's good relations with Malaysia and close ties with Indonesia and by those countries' wish that the US play an active part in the post-Vietnam war security of South-East Asia.

A second security initiative from South-East Asia in 1971 would, if put into effect, also have undermined America's capability to operate in the Indian Ocean. In the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of November 1971 Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore expressed their determination to try to create a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in South-East Asia in order to insulate it

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regarded itself as a cluster of islands within which were straits used for international navigation and high seas where foreign navies could sail at will without reference to Indonesian interests and authority. The right of innocent passage would not apply automatically within Indonesia's internal waters; the government could grant innocent passage as it chose and threatening warships could be excluded. For the Indonesian government's formal statement of the "archipelago principle", see the "Government Declaration Concerning the Water Areas of Indonesia, 13 December, 1957" in Ibid., p. 201.

from external interference and to keep it out of involvement in conflicts among outside powers.[68] One consequence of the implementation of ZOPFAN would be the removal of all foreign military bases from the region, including, for example, the US naval base at Subic Bay. The capacity of American naval forces to function efficiently in the Indian Ocean would be impaired by the increase in time and distance to reach it from potential alternative bases such as Guam island 1500 miles to the east of Subic Bay. ZOPFAN had little chance of being implemented, however. The security interests and perceptions among the Kuala Lumpur Declaration states diverged and they could not avoid the fact that China's presence contiguous to South-East Asia attracted Soviet involvement in the region and that they relied on America to balance the communist rivals. ZOPFAN was an ideal and its proposal was more a matter of diplomatic ritual than reality to which the United States needed only to express cautious, low-key interest "in principle".

## Responses to US Policy

Although many littoral states responded to America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area by supporting a "Zone of Peace" as a way to avoid threats from "escalating" great power naval rivalry and, ideally, to manage their security by themselves, they knew that an IOZP was unrealistic. The super-powers intended to counter one another and the Indian Ocean states could not prevent their global competition from taking hold in the area. At the same time, they understood, the small, essentially symbolic American and Soviet naval forces did not pose an imminent, direct threat to them. The only practical approach was to oppose maritime hegemony by any one external power and countenance a balance between the Soviet presence and the American presence at as low a level as possible.

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[68] The text of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration is in Dick Wilson, The Neutralization of Southeast Asia (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), pp. 198-199.

How individual Indian Ocean states reached the above conclusion depended on their security policy and their perception of America's role in it. In the Persian Gulf the conservative Arab states had, like Iran and Iraq, a strong interest in the safe passage of oil tankers and other shipping through the Gulf and out through the Strait of Hormuz into the Indian Ocean. Scarcely able to police their territorial waters, they had to look to the Iranian navy to patrol the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. They valued the Middle East Force for showing American interest and friendship without an unwanted direct US military involvement in regional security and for subtly qualifying Iran's attempt at maritime hegemony, as suggested above. But the MEF's support facility on Arab territory, in Bahrain, was an embarrassment in Arab politics and Iran as well as Iraq objected to it. The Indian Ocean lay beyond the practical security purview of the conservative Gulf Arabs and although they noted the new Soviet naval presence there, it was of minor concern relative to the USSR's involvement in South Yemen or the Soviet-Iraqi alliance in 1972 and even more so compared to issues such as their immediate security and the Arab-Israeli conflict. A small American naval presence in the Indian Ocean which countered the modest Soviet force was acceptable as part of the United States' global balance against the USSR. Iraq opposed the Middle East Force, its use of facilities in Bahrain and an American presence in the Indian Ocean. They were part of US "imperialist domination" of the Arab nation and the Third World and in the case of the MEF, it tended to attract a Soviet naval presence into the Gulf, intensifying the super-power competition there and its attendant dangers.

Iran, that is, the Shah, sought to play the paramount role in ordering the security of the Persian Gulf and to keep the Soviets and the Americans out of the Gulf while it maximized its independence from them both. Since the middle 1960s Iran had been on good terms with the USSR, which was thought no longer to pose a serious military threat to it. The

occasional Soviet naval visit to the Persian Gulf and the "build-up" by Soviet forces in the Indian Ocean were minor in importance; they were intended principally for political effect. The Shah preferred that Britain and America as well as the Soviet Union keep their forces out of the Gulf and that the MEF leave Bahrain[69] in order to avoid great power competition and also "polarization. If one of the countries in this region moves too close to either of the blocs, the others might be persuaded to move closer to its rival."[70] External naval forces were not necessary because the Iranian navy could patrol the sea lanes. In the Indian Ocean Iran tolerated a US (and also British) presence as a balance against the Soviet squadron: "if the big powers [were] to have a naval presence in the [Indian Ocean] region, Iran would not wish to see the U.S. become the only one that is excluded."[71] But from 1972 the Shah intended to acquire naval forces able to patrol the sea lanes far out into the Indian Ocean, into which he had extended Iran's security perimeter. Those forces were part of an all azimuths defence capability which he was determined to create with large amounts of advanced American weapons and which would enhance Iran's strategic self-reliance. Greater self-reliance was even more imperative as a result of the Vietnam war because the United States had become a weaker and more unreliable source of security. It might fail to support Iran as it had "failed" to support Pakistan in 1971, despite the appearance of the Enterprise task group, and in 1965.

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[69] See Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, The Foreign Relations of Iran A Developing State in a Zone of Great-Power Conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 261, 269-270.

[70] From a comment by Amir Taheri in Amir Taheri, "Policies of Iran in the Persian Gulf Region", in The Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean in International Politics, ed. Abbas Amirie (Tehran: Institute for International Political and Economic Studies, 1975), p. 284.

[71] Ibid., p. 274.

Initially, in 1962-64, India accepted an American naval presence in the Indian Ocean, even though in the 1950s the US had introduced the Cold War into South Asia by way of its security tie with India's chief antagonist, Pakistan. China was a foe of the US as well as India, which had fought a war against the PRC in 1962, and an American aircraft carrier task group in the Indian Ocean was perceived as a stabilising force helping to deter further Chinese aggression and to restrain Pakistan.[72] This consideration mitigated India's opposition in the latter 1960s to the British and American intention to construct naval and air facilities on the newly created British Indian Ocean Territory. India lost its de facto maritime defence as Britain began to withdraw from the Indian Ocean area in 1968 but until late 1971 it viewed with relative equanimity the introduction there of Soviet naval forces and of US 7th Fleet detachments. Both sides' presence and the potential threat posed by their competition were judged to be minor. Although India could not prevent the super-powers from sending forces to the Indian Ocean, it could keep a careful watch on their operations, try to keep the US or the USSR from acquiring logistic facilities in Pakistan and protest against America's construction of a communications station at Diego Garcia. The principle of balance informed India's view of the American and the Soviet naval presence: only

> a competitive and balanced presence would prevent either superpower from building up its forces to an intolerable level. It was the best assurance that conflicts between the superpowers in the Ocean would remain under control and that intervention in the affairs of the littoral states would be minimized.[73]

A "balance of presence would let India maintain a stance of nonalignment in (sic) Indian Ocean power rivalry, and provide

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[72] From a comment by Ganti Bhargava in Bhabani Sen Gupta, "The View from India" in Ibid., pp. 195, 196.

[73] Ibid., p. 189.

nonaligned nations with an opportunity to press for such utopian concepts as a zone of peace...."[74]

In 1971 the United States' rapprochement with China, its diplomatic support for Pakistan in the Indo-Pakistani war and its dispatch of the Enterprise aircraft carrier task group to the Bay of Bengal (see fn. 54 above) reminded the Indians that their interests could clash with America's and that the USSR was necessary for balancing the US and China in South Asia and the US in the Indian Ocean. The presence of the Enterprise task group had a "powerful impact on India's perception of developments in the Indian Ocean since December 1971. Indian policy planners [could] hardly ignore the possibility that the US might intervene in a future Indo-Pakistani war from the naval base at Diego Garcia."[75] Thus India would strongly oppose the Nixon administration's proposal in 1974 to expand Diego Garcia into a logistic support facility. The threat of American intervention represented by the Enterprise was an important factor inducing India to take on two new naval roles and to accelerate the expansion of the Indian navy in order to fulfil them. Besides defending India's coast, islands and territorial waters, protecting Indian shipping and countering the Pakistani navy, Indian maritime forces would begin to monitor external powers' naval forces in the Indian Ocean and would offer protection upon request to small states in the Indian Ocean area. A larger navy would enable India to present a modest but still useful political counter to competing US and Soviet forces and a degree of deterrence against a potential American naval threat. It would also lessen in time India's dependence on the USSR for naval aid and for balancing the American presence. For the near-term, however, America's attempted naval coercive diplomacy in

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[74] Idem.

[75] Ibid., p. 191.

December 1971 made even more remote a basic Indian objective of minimizing the super-powers' involvement in the Indian Ocean area.

The Pakistanis were anxious that India with its growing navy would become the dominant regional naval power in the Indian Ocean area and intimidate its smaller neighbours, including Pakistan.[76] Seeking to minimize Indian naval hegemony as much as possible and realising that they alone could not balance the Indian navy, they wanted an Indian Ocean "Zone of Peace" to restrict regional powers, that is, India, as well as external powers. But because a "Zone of Peace" was not possible, Pakistan hoped that the presence of Soviet and American naval forces would moderate India's maritime ambitions, in addition to inhibiting aggressive action by one of those super-power presences. It was hoped too that outside powers would not do anything that would give "overwhelming superiority to any single regional country."[77]

The presence of the Enterprise aircraft carrier task group in the Bay of Bengal at the end of the Indo-Pakistani war in December 1971 disappointed Pakistan. Helping to raise unrealistic hopes of American help, it "showed" that once again, as in 1965, the US was an unreliable friend when needed. To the extent that the Enterprise caused India, assisted in part by its Soviet ally, to accelerate its naval expansion programme, it worsened Pakistan's inferiority in the naval balance with India. Pakistan began to look to Iran for potential help in countering the Indian navy. Nonetheless the Pakistanis had to maintain their relationship with the United States, even though it was more frayed and "distant" after

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[76] See Latif Ahmed Sherwani, "Realities of the Indian Ocean Area: A Pakistani Evaluation", paper presented to the Indian Ocean Conference at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., March 1971, p. 17.

[77] Ibid., p. 26.

1971. The American tie, however imperfect relative to the more dependable, if more limited link with China, remained necessary for balancing the USSR in South Asia and in the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean was part of Indonesia's security purview, centred on South-East Asia, within which Indonesia wanted the United States to balance the Soviet Union as well as China. Staunchly anti-communist since 1966, Indonesia considered America as its informal, de facto ally and as the Vietnam war drew to a close, the "prospect of the United States in a phase of strategic decline aroused profound concern"[78] among the Indonesian leadership. Uncertain about America's future role in regional security and its reliability in fulfilling that role, the Indonesians found "the likelihood of competition between the Soviet Union and China to fill the vacuum left by an abdication of the US military presence [to be] extremely disturbing."[79]

Maritime security was very important to Indonesia because of its archipelagic character. The presence of naval forces of a communist power, the USSR, sailing through South-East Asia to the Indian Ocean underlined to Indonesia its inability to control its maritime environment.[80] Thus although naval deployments through South-East Asia by both super-powers was "regarded with distaste" by Jakarta, which also expressed critical concern about America's construction of facilities on

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[78] Michael Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 154.

[79] Idem.

[80] See Guy J. Pauker, "Indonesian Perspectives On The Indian Ocean" in Cottrell and Burrell, The Indian Ocean: Its Political, Economic, and Military Importance, p. 230.

Diego Garcia, "the US navy constituted the only credible counterweight [to Soviet naval forces] and had to be tolerated in the interest of raison d'etat."[81]

Australia judged that the United States' strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area was insufficient to balance the Soviet naval presence there and it encouraged, without success, the Americans to make a greater effort to do so. The growing economic importance of Western Australia, Britain's withdrawal in large part from "east of Suez" by late 1971,* Australia's very limited capacity for defence in its west and uncertainty about its American ally's defence involvement in the Indian Ocean area and the larger US security role in Asia as the Vietnam war ended heightened its unease about potential danger from the USSR, as suggested by the establishment in the area and increase since 1968 of a Soviet naval presence. That presence was part of the USSR's attempt to increase its influence and prestige among the littoral states. Although the main purpose of the Soviet squadron was political rather than military[82], the Australian government recognised, and

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* Under the Five-Power Defence Arrangement signed by Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore in April 1971, Britain retained several frigates at Singapore and aircraft in Malaysia in contribution to those two states' defence.

[81] Leifer, Indonesia's Foreign Policy, p. 146. For Indonesian views on the Indian Ocean issue, see Ali Moertopo, "The Indian Ocean: Strategic And Security Problems", The Indonesian Quarterly 5 (April 1977), 33-46; Kirdi Dipoyudo, "Important Development In The Indian Ocean Area", The Indonesian Quarterly 10 (April 1982), 5-15. Indonesia, both analysts note, recognizes that the Soviet-American rivalry in the Indian Ocean will continue. The two sides' presence must be maintained "in reasonable balance at as low a level as possible" in order to "avoid a competitive escalation of forces and to guarantee stability, peace and security in the region."

[82] See p. 131 in Beazley and Clark, Politics of Intrusion, which discusses (pp. 127-143) Australia's defence policy for the Indian Ocean area from the late 1960s to 1978 and its response to the United States' strategic policy there.

According to Commonwealth of Australia, Parliament, Report

although "Australia alone [could] do little about the Soviet presence", if it did "not pay close attention to the region its nations may be encouraged to swing more towards USSR and the PRC. This would be detrimental to Australia's potential for trade, influence and goodwill."[83]

Because Australia by itself could not balance the Soviet squadron, it sought help from America and Britain: it hoped to persuade them to form with it a joint naval force in the Indian Ocean which would be, as expressed by the Australian Minister for Defence, "'adequate to demonstrate ... that the Ocean does not and will not become a Russian preserve and that Western interests there remain positive and will be secured.'"[84] Australia's attempt to gain the cooperation of its allies failed. When the then Prime Minister, Mr McMahon,

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from the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs on the Indian Ocean Region, 1971 - Parliamentary Paper No. 258, p. 4,

> The Soviet surface naval presence, because of its size, vulnerability and lack of full naval base facilities, cannot, at present, be considered an aggressive military force or a direct threat to Australia. It can generally be classed as a political and psychological tool, which increases uncertainty in the region.

The Joint Committee Report concluded that the Soviet squadron had the primary purpose of

> 'showing the flag' - showing the countries of the Indian Ocean ... that the Soviet Union has an interest and a place in the ... region. By visiting various sectors of the region, it has sought to create a feeling of goodwill, to display a sense of involvement, and most importantly, to gain and consolidate the confidence of the littoral states. But ... the influence exercised by a naval force, if it belonged to a great power, was related more to the latent power it represented, rather than to the size of the force itself. (p. 28)

[83] Australia, Parliament, Joint Committee Report, p. 35.

[84] Beazley and Clark, Politics of Intrusion, p. 131.

raised the issue during a visit to Britain and America in November 1971, the British declined to make a commitment and the

> response in Washington scarcely came closer to meeting Australian objectives. ... [T]he prevailing mood [there] was in favour of a low-key approach to the Indian Ocean and there was considerable resistance to any large-scale commitment of American Naval (sic) forces to the area. If anything, the US administration was much less prone to emphasise a Soviet 'threat' in the Indian Ocean than was its Australian counterpart. This feeling was undoubtedly conveyed to the visiting Australian Prime Minister and any hopes that he might have had of returning with specific plans for a joint Anglo-American-Australian naval force for the Ocean were rapidly dashed.[85]

The US would agree with the Australians only that a "careful watch" over the Soviet naval presence should continue, by way of its construction of a communications station and landing strip at Diego Garcia. Unable to gain reassurance from the American position, the Australians had to tolerate it. They continued to build at Cockburn Sound near Freemantle in Western Australia a naval support facility which, when finished, the US was invited to use. They sought to gain use of Diego Garcia for reconnaissance flights across the eastern Indian Ocean. When the Labor government under Gough Whitlman came to power in late 1972, it took a more critical and independent view of the US and unlike the previous, conservative government it espoused an Indian Ocean "Zone of Peace". But that espousal was intended essentially for improving Australia's standing in the Third World and the Labor government supported America's presence in the Indian Ocean, provided that it was kept at as low a level as possible.

The USSR's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean from 1968 and its acquisition of access to logistic facilities in Somalia was not a response to America's strategic policy

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[85] Ibid., p. 132.

for the Indian Ocean area. That policy was not created until late 1970 and the only US naval presence there was the small and long-established Middle East Force. Initially the Soviet presence was a logical but mistaken anticipation of the deployment by US ballistic missile submarines into the Indian Ocean as part of America's global strategic nuclear deterrence against the USSR. Although the "Soviets were under no illusion that they had the capability to counter Polaris [submarines] in the Indian Ocean..., [t]hey wanted to develop the operational and physical infrastructure to support measures that they hoped would gradually become available...."[86] But in 1971-72 the primary mission of the Soviet force in the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea changed from countering Polaris submarines to preparing for the defence of the Soviet Union in conventional war with the West and more immediately, in view of tensions on their mutual border, with China.[87] As a result the Soviets increased further their naval presence and began to enlarge their Somali support facilities. Preparing for war contingencies was more important than arms control with the Americans, which was rejected as a possible course of action not only because of opposition by the chiefs of the Soviet land forces as well as the Navy but also probably because, it was calculated, the US also wanted to, and would, keep its naval presence at a low level, notwithstanding the deployment of the Enterprise aircraft carrier task group to the Bay of Bengal in late 1971.

Besides area familiarization and gaining operational experience, the Soviet naval presence had the collateral, political purpose of "showing the flag". That presence helped to underline the USSR's importance as a regional and also global actor and to enhance Soviet prestige and it made carefully selected goodwill port visits. It showed the USSR's

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[86] MccGwire, Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy, pp. 196-197.

[87] Ibid., pp. 197-201.

support for friendly regimes facing political danger, for example the new Marxist regime in Somalia in 1969 and 1970. It provided minor, non-belligerent support for "national liberation" when in 1973 Soviet ships carried Dhofari rebel forces from Aden to near the border between South Yemen and Oman. None of those activities was a response to America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area, however. And in the one case in which the Soviet navy did counterbalance an American naval force, the Enterprise task group in 1971, the anti-aircraft carrier detachment came not from the Soviet Indian Ocean presence but from the Soviet Pacific Fleet's base at Vladivostok.

The Soviet political leadership was concerned about the American and Western response to the USSR's presence in the Arabian Sea at least as much as about how to respond to America's strategic policy for the area. The Soviet presence had to be restricted to a minor, low-risk cadre force, too slight to be perceived as a military threat, in order to avoid incurring yet heavier defence expenditure, provoking opposition from littoral states or perhaps prompting the US to introduce a significant counter-force. The Soviet deployment indeed had to be

> delicately calculated; it must be large enough to satisfy the naval requirement of area familiarization; it must be large enough, and sufficiently eye-catching, to raise the spectre of a great-power naval race in the Indian Ocean; but it must not be large enough to convince the Western governments that the spectre had become reality and that they must respond by raising their own involvement. In essence, it must arouse non-aligned opinion to the dangers of a great-power naval race, so that a hostile climate would be created, not for the Soviet presence itself, but for the possibility of an American or British counter to it, and a consequent raising of the naval armaments level. ... Knowing that the American government was also faced with the problems of rising defence costs, and that disillusionment with the involvement in Vietnam was creating a climate adverse to new commitments, the Soviet leaders probably expected that by raising a 'spectre' they could achieve a tacit

understanding with the American government, in which they could together act to limit the aspirations of their respective navies.[88]

The USSR's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area was not so much a response to the corresponding US policy as it was a compromise between the Soviet armed forces' requirement to prepare for war and their political leaders' preference to restrain as much as possible the Soviet naval presence in the area. Unlike in the US, however, the armed forces' position was strong enough for them to block the USSR from entering into naval arms control negotiations for the Indian Ocean.

## Creation of Policy, 1970

America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area created in 1970 - minor naval display and establishing a communications station at Diego Garcia for the political purposes of showing interest, balancing the Soviet naval presence and thereby reassuring friendly littoral states - was of marginal necessity. The United States' interests were moderate, as were the military threats to them on land from Iraq and the Soviet Union. The Soviet naval presence was too small to threaten shipping or to exert appreciable influence. The principal threat to access to Persian Gulf oil was instability within states, and US armed forces were irrelevant for dealing with it. America showed sufficient concern for its interests and was able to secure them with policy instruments other than a naval presence. In the Gulf encouraging primarily Iran to take responsibility for regional security and selling it arms with which to balance Iraq were much more important than retaining the Middle East Force. Minor crises, for example that between Iraq and Kuwait in 1973, were resolved by a combination of Saudi (and, in the background, Iranian) military strength in readiness and Arab diplomacy, and without a US naval show of force. The Americans balanced the Soviets adequately through superiority

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[88] Jukes, "The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy", pp. 11-12.

in the total range of military activities, which was the greater source of reassurance to friendly states.

Avoidance was a prominent motif in America's strategic policy. Minor naval display was judged to be necessary in order to avoid wrong signalling by inaction: Britain's operational departure from the Indian Ocean area and the entry of the Soviet navy were too important to be ignored. A response had to be made in order to prevent the littoral states from getting a stronger impression as the Vietnam war began to draw to an end that America was becoming weak and indifferent and was "retreating" relative to the USSR. An occasional minimal and defensive deployment by 7th Fleet units, retaining the MEF and (the compromise with the US Navy of) building a communications station at Diego Garcia would avoid the appearance of US indifference to the Indian Ocean area and the possibility because of American "default" that some littoral countries might become more responsive to the Soviet naval presence. But America's strategic policy was intended also to avoid provoking littoral countries by minimizing the worry that it was "militarizing" the Indian Ocean, engaging in an arms race with the USSR and endangering their security. The policy objective of inhibiting competition with the Soviets was shown by the United States' interest, not reciprocated by them in practice, in naval arms control negotiations. The above considerations led the Nixon administration to reject the US Navy's preferred policy of "matching" quantitatively the Soviet naval presence and constructing a logistic support facility on Diego Garcia.

That America did balance the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean was suggested by the littoral states' response to its strategic policy for the area. Except for outright opposition by politically and ideologically unfriendly states such as Iraq and also Marxist Somalia and South Yemen, ambivalence was many states' response to the US policy. America was necessary to balance the Soviet presence but

balance implied potentially dangerous competition between the super-powers, even though America did avoid an arms race with the USSR and even though its Indian Ocean strategic policy had not caused the introduction of the Soviet presence. Thus most of the littoral states voted for the "Zone of Peace" declaration which called in effect for both sides to withdraw from the Indian Ocean. Ambivalence, caused also in the case of Iran and Pakistan by their sense of US unreliability as a source of help in a crisis, weakened America's reassurance of friendly powers that it was balancing the Soviet presence.

In late 1973 the October war in the Middle East, the consequent oil embargo and America's changing perception of Soviet behaviour prompted it to make a minor change in its strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. Why and how that policy was adjusted is the subject of the next chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE

## MINOR ADJUSTMENT OF POLICY, 1973-74

The United States made a minor adjustment in 1973-74 to its strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area in response to the Arab oil embargo resulting from the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 and to Soviet behaviour during that war. The embargo emphasized America's growing dependence on Persian Gulf oil, and the USSR's threat to intervene in the war and airlift to Arab belligerents suggested a greater Soviet willingness to use the armed forces abroad in support of policy. The US Navy in particular warned of the Soviets' potential to exercise "considerable influence" in the Indian Ocean area and globally by way of its increasing naval presence there. America began regular naval deployments to the Arabian Sea in order to balance more vigorously the Soviet squadron and to intensify the display of concern for its regional interests, especially access to Persian Gulf oil. From late 1973 into 1975 the US made veiled threats to retaliate against "friendly" Gulf Arab states if they did not end the oil embargo soon and then to intervene in "defence" of access to oil should another embargo be imposed. The Nixon and Ford administrations' proposal to expand Diego Garcia into a logistic facility was part of America's enhanced naval display in the Indian Ocean and when completed, Diego Garcia would be able to support contingency operations by aircraft carrier task groups for 30 days and by long-range combat and logistic aircraft. America was not prepared to negotiate with the USSR about naval arms control for the Indian Ocean, preferring instead to exercise "tacit restraint".

This chapter outlines the setting to the adjustment of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area, discusses the rationale and premises for that adjustment and examines the United States' threats to retaliate, then to intervene against Gulf Arab states. The proposal for a

logistic facility at Diego Garcia, the vigorous opposition to it in the US Senate and the Executive branch's reasons not to seek naval arms control negotiations with the Soviets are detailed. Finally are reviewed how the US dealt with political challenges to its use of bases in the Philippines and a support facility in Bahrain and how legal challenges to its strategic mobility through maritime South-East Asia were resolved.

## Setting and Interests

In late October 1973 the United States sent the Hancock aircraft carrier task group to the Arabian Sea, where a "greatly increased naval presence was maintained until April 1974."[1] The Hancock's deployment was "probably related to the global alert of U.S. forces in response to the Arab-Israeli war and a reaction to the shipping threat, as well as a more generalized response to the sudden cessation of oil supplies."[2] A month later, in late November, the first adjustment of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area was announced by James Schlesinger, then Secretary of Defence, who expressed the Nixon administration's intention to make "more frequent and more regular naval deployments to the region",[3] thereby resuming the periodic deployments discontinued in 1964.

The modification of America's initial, "minimalist" policy for the Indian Ocean area was caused by important changes in the setting of that policy. The Middle East war, the Arab oil embargo, the resulting four-fold increase in the price of oil and economic disruption in the West showed that the US had become dependent on Persian Gulf oil to the point

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[1] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 63.

[2] Ibid., p. 64. The "shipping threat" referred to Egypt's interference at the Bab al-Mandab strait with shipping bound for Israel.

[3] Idem; New York Times, November 30, 1973.

of vulnerability. Contrary to America's assumption before 1973, the growing economic interdependence between the Gulf Arab states and the US had not prevented the Arabs from using the denial of oil as an economic and political "weapon" for exerting pressure on the US in order to influence Israel to make more concessions to the "front line" Arab states. The Nixon administration became acutely aware not only of the close political linkage between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the oil policy of the Gulf Arab states but also of the leverage that they could apply on America's allies, whose heavy dependence on Persian Gulf oil made them a source of indirect influence against the US and potentially on the global balance of power with the USSR. The divergence of policy between America and its European and Japanese allies during the October 1973 war and the strain on the Western alliance as the allies made political concessions to the Arabs and separate arrangements for oil supplies suggested that the United States could not rely on allied support for its foreign and security policies outside Europe or North-East Asia. Perhaps the most ominous aspect of the Middle East war was the behaviour of the Soviet Union. Its large airlift of war supplies to Egypt and Syria while America initially exercised restraint in support of Israel, its encouragement of the oil embargo and its threat of direct armed intervention in the fighting suggested to the US a Soviet view of <u>detente</u> not as a process of restrained competition in the Third World but as a means of gaining regional advantage at America's expense.

The Soviets' airlift to the Arab belligerents provided US policy-makers one of four "lessons" from the war and the oil embargo. First, the Soviet Union had "projected" "military power on a scale and at a distance sufficient to break America's monopoly of the capacity for long-range intervention."[4] It had deployed up to 96 naval ships in the Mediterranean during the war. And in response to America's

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[4] <u>Strategic Survey 1973</u> (London: International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1974), p. 4.

deployment of the Hancock task group to the Arabian Sea, the Soviet naval presence there doubled to 32 ships by December 1973. Second, the stoppage of Saudi oil from the refinery at Bahrain, the usual source of fuel for its naval vessels in the Indian Ocean, compelled the US to make hasty oil purchase arrangements with Iran and to establish a supply chain of tankers from the 7th Fleet's oil depot at Subic Bay, more than 4,000 miles away. The strain on the US logistic forces emphasized the difficulty of supporting emergency operations over a long distance. Third, access to military facilities in the Middle East and in allied states was unavailable when, as in the case of US support for Israel, America's interests were opposed politically. On October 20, 1973 the Bahraini government ordered the Middle East Force to leave Bahrain by October 1974 and all of America's European allies except Portugal refused to give it use of their facilities and overflight rights for its aerial resupply of Israel. Fourth, Egypt's interference at the Bab al-Mandab with shipping bound for Israel, especially oil tankers from Iran, demonstrated the vulnerability of shipping to hostile action at "choke points".

The changes in the setting of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area in late 1973 underlined the importance of its already well-defined interests there which centred on the Persian Gulf. The most compelling interest was the assured availability of oil in sufficient quantity and at a "reasonable" price. The dependence of America's allies on Gulf oil was heavy, as noted, and its own imports of Gulf oil - about 15% of all its imported oil in 1974 - were growing.* The US government's earlier estimate that by 1980 50% of America's oil imports would come from the Persian Gulf seemed to be coming true. As the balance of trade with that region now weighed heavily against the US, the vigorous export of goods and services there became more urgent.

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* The US government was also becoming aware of the West's expanding need for the metals, minerals and other raw materials of southern Africa.

Accessibility of oil was connected with the independence, stability and security of the Persian Gulf as well as with a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which would prevent another oil embargo. The United States continued to encourage the pro-Western orientation and regional influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Mending relations with the Saudis after the oil embargo, keeping close links with the Shah and sustaining its help for both countries' economic and military development programmes would enable them to maintain primary responsibility for security in the Gulf and to contain pressures from South Yemen and Iraq. America supported the idea of a Gulf security system and it sought to restrict Soviet interference and influence while avoiding military competition or confrontation with the USSR. The United States' interest in assured air and sea access to the Indian Ocean area and free movement across it, the security of shipping routes along which oil was carried to Europe, Asia and America and the safety of its citizens, an increasing number of whom were resident in the Gulf, were steadfast.

## Rationale and Premises of Policy

In 1974 America undertook a "comprehensive reevaluation" of its Indian Ocean area strategic policy. Its reassessment was guided by the recognition that Persian Gulf oil was now a much more direct and vital national interest, that events in the Gulf could affect American security quite seriously - which recognition was itself a major watershed in US strategic thinking - and that the "oil had been turned off" for political reasons, not as a result of a military threat.[5] National Security Study Memorandum 199, the principal policy document (completed in autumn 1974), answered the questions of what level of naval presence in the Indian Ocean would now best serve US interests and how that presence could be combined most effectively with diplomatic and other policy

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[5] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 64.

instruments, including possible arms control initiatives, to achieve American objectives. Its main decision was

> to institutionalize the actions that had been taken almost a year before, in the heat of the crisis. These actions had proved operationally feasible, and much of the political cost had already been paid. Thus, it was decided to maintain a contingency naval presence in the form of periodic deployments from the Pacific Fleet. ...
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> ... Diego Garcia was to be expanded from its genuinely austere status as a communications station to an intermediate facility capable of supporting major naval and air deployments for limited periods of time. ...
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> Finally, it was determined that no new initiatives on Indian Ocean arms limitations would be undertaken with the Soviets for the time being. Rather, the United States would pursue a policy of 'tacit restraint,' ... asserting its rights to operate military force in the Indian Ocean at the new, but still relatively modest levels that had emerged from the 1973 crisis.
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> There was general recognition that this increased level of military activity was not in itself a solution to the stubborn political issues facing the United States in the area, nor was it a substitute for other diplomatic or economic policies that might be pursued on a bilateral basis with various states of the region. ... [T]his enhancement of U.S. military capabilities and presence was regarded as a symbol of U.S. political interest, reinforcing other policy instruments, as well as an assertion of American intent to maintain access to the region.[6] (Italics added.)

The rationale for the first policy initiative, the periodic deployment by 7th Fleet task groups to the Indian Ocean, had been set out in February 1974 in a letter to the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee from Schlesinger, who urged that "it is imperative for the U.S. to maintain a balance in the Indian Ocean area vis-a-vis the

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[6] Ibid., pp. 65-66. Beazley and Clark, Politics of Intrusion, pp. 30-49, discuss "The October War and American Approaches to an Indian Ocean Policy 1973-1976".

Soviets."[7] American naval deployments there since November 1973 had been prompted by the Soviets' growing naval presence and their ability to introduce additional forces into the area quickly. "Broadly speaking" they had demonstrated during the October war an increased readiness to use military aid and shows of force to influence events in which major American interests were at stake. They were prepared to project military power into distant areas such as the Indian Ocean as their naval forces and airlift capabilities grew. The prospective reopening of the Suez Canal would enable the USSR to augment its Indian Ocean forces from the Black Sea rather than from the Pacific and a larger Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean would be possible and probable at a time when the importance of the oil routes from the Persian Gulf had been re-emphasized.

More frequent deployments to the Indian Ocean by American naval forces were needed in order to offset growing Soviet influence. Their presence underscored US strategic mobility and provided a clear signal to the USSR of America's resolve to ensure a credible military capability in the area. Balancing the Soviet squadron communicated the United States' intention to continue to play a role there, to support friendly states and to deter potential threats or harassment to major international straits and shipping routes. America's naval presence was not tied to a narrow military mission; it was intended as tangible evidence of US national interest - an interest shared by allies and regional states - in security and stability in the Indian Ocean area. The American presence was not a threat to any state or group of states and no specific tasks had been given it except to maintain general operational proficiency while on station. The presence of its

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[7] This and the next paragraph draw from Schlesinger's letter and an enclosure, "Rationale For Naval Deployments In The Indian Ocean And Proposed Expansion Of Diego Garcia", in United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Armed Services, Selected Material On Diego Garcia, Committee Print, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, pp. 12-15.

naval forces assured the US of an adequate capability to meet contingencies involving friendly governments around the Indian Ocean littoral.

Schlesinger's rationale was complemented by a statement in April 1974 by Admiral Zumwalt, the Chief of Naval Operations until July 1974, in which he proposed that recent

> events such as the Arab-Israeli war, the oil embargo, and the worldwide economic dislocations which flowed from that embargo and ensuing price rises have served to focus attention on the Indian Ocean area.
>
> The impacts of these events have brought home clearly the interrelationship between what goes on in the Indian Ocean area and the well-being of the rest of the world.
>
> I think it is evident, as a result of those experiences, that our interests in the Indian Ocean are directly linked with our interests in Europe and Asia; and, more broadly, with our fundamental interest in maintaining a stable worldwide balance of power.
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> ...
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> In the judgment of many observers, the Indian Ocean has become the area with the potential to produce major shifts in the global balance of power over the next decade. It follows that we must have the ability to influence events in that area, and the capability to deploy our military power in the region is an essential element of such influence.
>
> That ... is the crux of the rationale ...[8]

for increasing America's naval presence in the Indian Ocean. And in June 1975 George Vest, Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department, declared that America's

> periodic deployments reassure ... friends in the area, and serve as a reminder that we are able to respond to

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[8] From "Statement Of Adm. Elmo Russell Zumwalt, Jr., Chief Of Naval Operations, U.S. Navy" in U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 130.

threats against our interests and those of our allies. We firmly believe that an effective capability to deploy and support U.S. naval forces in the Indian Ocean area helps to deter attempts to disrupt the vital sea lines of communication which traverse it, and also underscores the importance we attach to the right of countries to navigate freely on the high seas. These deployments also highlight the flexibility and mobility of our military posture, thereby demonstrating the efficiency and effectiveness of our forces in a wide variety of circumstances and enhancing their deterrent credibility. We believe the periodic demonstration of our ability to operate in the Indian Ocean reinforces our diplomatic efforts to maintain stability in the region, and in contiguous areas such as the Middle East. In that area, during the October 1973 hostilities, our naval deployments exemplified military power in its traditional role of effectively supporting diplomacy.[9]

## Balancing the Soviet Naval Presence

The United States' strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area concentrated on the Soviet naval presence there, the implications of its growth and its perceived uses in war, crisis and peace and on the US Navy as the chief means by which to counter that presence. Since 1968, noted Zumwalt, repeating many of the themes he had articulated in 1970, there had been "a pattern of steady buildup in the Soviet naval presence, in Soviet military assistance to some of the littoral states, and in the Soviet infrastructure for support of military operations in the Indian Ocean."[10] The "impressive" Soviet "buildup" could not be "related, either in time or scope, to any comparable expansion of the U.S. activity", which had "remained at a relatively low level." The "USSR's military logistics infrastructure" in Somalia,

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[9] From "Prepared Statement Of Hon. George S. Vest, Director, Bureau Of Politico-Military Affairs, Department Of State" in U.S. House, Diego Garcia, 1975 Debate, p. 4.

[10] Except where noted, all quotations in the remainder of this and the next paragraph are taken from "Statement Of Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Operations ..." in United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Foreign Relations, Briefings On Diego Garcia And Patrol Frigate, Hearings With Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., U.S. Navy, Chief Of Naval Operations, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, pp. 5-9.

South Yemen and Iraq, which "already is capable of supporting a much greater presence than now exists", and a much shortened transit time from the Black Sea to the Arabian Sea when the Suez Canal was reopened led him to expect the Soviet presence to keep growing, regardless of America's plans to expand Diego Garcia. It would continue to increase despite the USSR's "asymmetrical" geographical advantage over the US: the "most important military fact" was the Soviet Union's "domination" of the Eurasian land mass. It bordered on "some key" Middle Eastern states and its "land-based forces can already be brought to bear in the region." Unlike America the Soviet Union had the "proximity necessary to influence events in the Indian Ocean littoral, without the employment of naval forces...."*

The objectives of the Soviet naval presence were the enlargement of "Soviet influence with countries of the region; the enhancement of the Soviet image as a great power; and the checking of Chinese political influence through the expansion of Soviet power to China's southern flank." Implicitly the Soviet navy's main objective in the Indian Ocean in wartime was interdiction of oil shipping from the Persian Gulf. This was suggested, first, when Zumwalt noted the USSR's "awareness that the oil supplies of the Persian Gulf, and the sea lanes over which they must pass to the economies of the world, are of absolutely vital importance to [America's] most important allies, and are of growing importance to [the US]." In contrast the Soviets were "virtually self-sufficient in oil, and the Indian Ocean littoral consequently is of considerably less economic importance to Moscow than to ..." the West. Second, because the Soviet navy was expanding and the US Navy was contracting, the USN "could not control all of the seas in a conventional war with the Soviet Union today."[11] A

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* This reasoning explains why the US armed services rejected both a "Zone of Peace" for the Indian Ocean area and negotiations with the USSR for arms control there.

[11] Ibid., p. 23.

declining American ability to exercise sea control might also, the US Navy worried, encourage the USSR to use its Indian Ocean squadron to support more aggressive and interfering foreign policy initiatives. The Soviets might be emboldened to exploit regional tensions and to take larger risks for gain in crises, while America's strong emphasis on conflict avoidance and its limited naval forces might retard appropriate counteraction. Ready access to the Arabian Sea via a reopened Suez Canal and ample regional logistic facilities could give the USSR an advantage over America in a crisis by enabling and supporting the quick reinforcement of its Indian Ocean squadron from the Black Sea. The Soviets would be able to reach the Arabian Sea in about four days, while the US Navy would take about ten days to reach it from Subic Bay.* According to Admiral C.D. Grojean, then Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans and Policy),

> the rapidity with which the Soviets could reach a potential hotspot in the region of the Persian Gulf could well be a deciding factor should the outcome of such a crisis be influenced by the presence of a major naval force standing offshore.[12]

The general peacetime political purpose of the Soviets' naval presence in the Indian Ocean was, in Zumwalt's view,

> the use of military power, to convert that to political influence, and to marry a combination of political and military pressures in such a way that they can gradually shift the balance of power, prevail on regimes which are

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* The US Navy pointed out that its forces responding to a crisis in the Arabian Sea area probably would not be taken from the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean, because of its responsibilities there.

[12] From "Statement Of Rear Adm. C.D. Grojean, U.S. Navy, Deputy Chief Of Naval Operations (Plans and Policy), Politico-Military Policy Division" in United States, Congress, Committee On Appropriations, Military Construction Appropriations For Fiscal Year 1975, Hearing Before A Subcommittee on H. R. ---, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, p. 346.

> neutral to tilt in their direction, erode them, radicalize them, and change the world to one more nearly in their image, hopefully as peacefully as they can.[13]

It was not so much the actual use of armed force as the larger psychological "shadow" cast by a military presence which was thought to make an impact on political relations between states. That was the case in the Indian Ocean area whose states were particularly sensitive to naval power. The US Navy expected that the Soviet squadron would be employed to try to modify the littoral states' perception of great power relationships in the area. When seen against a backdrop of Western decline - Britain's withdrawal and America's weakness, indecisiveness and passivity after the Vietnam war - and in combination with Soviet "gains" such as "Friendship" treaties with India, Iraq and, in 1974, with Somalia, the gradually increasing Soviet naval presence would "demonstrate" the USSR's "advance" towards regional predominance. To the extent that the Soviet presence and prestige contributed to altering the expectations of the Indian Ocean countries, they would defer more to the USSR's interests and demands. They would lose confidence in America as a serious regional actor and, for some, the ultimate guarantor of their military security. Their ties with a United States felt to lack the resolve to look after its own interests would weaken. The US would be taken less into account politically and it would lose influence. A "substantial" Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, Zumwalt feared,

> would come to be regarded as a normal and acceptable part of the political landscape, while any augmentation of our forces from their present levels might be regarded as unacceptable if not provocative. We might then find ourselves being squeezed out of the Indian Ocean area
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> ..., while Soviet influence would grow over those nations

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[13] U.S, Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2127.

> which heretofore have been important and friendly to us.[14]

US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area proposed to counterbalance politically the USSR's naval presence and, more tacitly, to deter potential threats by the Soviet squadron against American interests. There had been a growth of Soviet naval capability in the Indian Ocean, Schlesinger remarked in June 1975. That "growth ... does concern us, and we must counterbalance it"[15] because an "effective military balance is essential to the preservation of regional security and stability...."[16] The United States "would not want [littoral states] to be overshadowed by the naval presence of the Soviet Union."[17] And according to Seymour Weiss, Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department in 1974, an American presence was necessary because although "the Soviets have generally been prudent in their actions", the US did

> not believe that it is in our interest, that it gives the correct political thrust to our national interests and to our foreign policy, to have the states of the area reach the conclusion that it is the presence of the Soviet Union which counts when issues are raised where political pressures may be brought to bear....[18]

There were "military ways" "the oil can be cut off" by the

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[14] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 7.

[15] United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Armed Services, Disapprove Construction Projects On The Island Of Diego Garcia, Hearing On S. Res. 160 To Disapprove Construction Projects On The Island Of Diego Garcia, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, p. 44.

[16] From a prepared statement by Hon. James R. Schlesinger, Secretary Of Defense in Ibid., p. 11.

[17] Ibid., p. 26.

[18] From "Statement Of Hon. Seymour Weiss, Director, Bureau Of Politico-Military Affairs, Department Of State" in U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 28.

USSR, Zumwalt pointed out, and the US ought to be "very sure" that it had "the capability to prevent those military ways from coming to pass and if we have that capability, we are much less likely to see political interference [from the Soviets]. The one flows from the other."[19]

Balancing and deterring the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean was thought by the US government to require the periodic display of a naval force sufficient to defeat it in battle. An aircraft carrier task group was a credible counterbalancing presence not only because of its recognised superiority in combat with the Soviet force* and because of the value of US interests and the seriousness of American purpose it demonstrated but also because of its flexibility. In contrast with the USSR only naval forces enabled the US to "project" and, if needed, sustain relatively efficiently and independently its military power at a great distance from its territory.

Maintaining a continuous aircraft carrier task group presence in the Indian Ocean was considered[20] but National Security Study Memorandum 199 concluded that intermittent naval deployments would be just as satisfactory for display as a standing deployment, perhaps more so. Periodic cruises of a "passive" nature, with no specific purpose other than to maintain operational proficiency, were less liable to prompt an increase in Soviet naval activity than might a "matching" permanent presence while they would still manifest superiority in combat. At the same time as they showed a capability and resolve to protect US interests greater than could be shown by the Middle East Force or the single brief visit by a task

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* The aircraft carrier task group might have to contend with an anti-carrier force in addition to the usual Soviet squadron.

[19] Ibid., p. 147.

[20] Zumwalt, On Watch, p. 455.

group between early 1972 and late 1973, they would better express to the Indian Ocean States the careful modulation of US strategic policy, suggesting caution and restraint rather than threat or provocation. Also an intermittent presence would allow wider scope for signalling in crises by keeping forces "in reserve" in the Western Pacific, unless a simultaneous crisis there prevented their possible deployment to the Arabian Sea. Following the continuous presence in the Arabian Sea of US naval forces from late October 1973 to April 1974 primarily in response to the oil embargo, regular cruises started from July 1974 and in 1975 a pattern had evolved of three, on average six-week deployments a year consisting in alternation of an aircraft carrier task group and a "surface action group" led by a cruiser. That pattern lasted until late 1978 when more continuous deployments began in response to the Iranian revolution.

Periodic deployments to the Indian Ocean were in fact all that the US Navy could afford because, as it had planned for, by 1976 the number of aircraft carriers in the 7th Fleet declined from three to two. And a continuous Indian Ocean presence would have reduced the 7th Fleet's contribution to America's more important security commitments in East Asia. Factors such as the long distance to the Arabian Sea and the technicalities of the "deployment cycle" in which three aircraft carriers were used as a unit also ruled out a standing presence.

## Limited Soviet Naval Threat and Influence

In elaborating upon the rationale for America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area, the US Navy exaggerated the Soviet navy's threat to American interests and the degree of influence it was likely to exert there. When asked whether the Soviet presence was a threat to US interests, Noyes responded that it was "not so much ... a direct immediate

threat" as it was a "potential" one.[21] Weiss concurred, declaring that a Soviet threat was "[a]bsolutely potential"; he did not expect active uses of the Soviet squadron.[22] According to William Colby, then Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Soviets recognised "the importance to the west (sic) of Persian Gulf oil, and the sea lanes between the Gulf and Europe or Japan. Moscow also perceives a causal relationship between the oil question and recent increases in the U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean."[23] The USSR would be concerned should there be a "major threat to Soviet security posed from the Indian Ocean"; Soviet writings had reflected "concern over the possibility of the United States sending nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines to the Indian Ocean, but so far the activities of Soviet naval units there have not indicated an anti-Polaris mission."[24] The Soviets also had "a certain interest", Colby continued,

> in posing a possible counterthreat to American or western pressure on the Soviet Union by posing a threat to the oil sources of Western Europe. But it is certainly not in priority anything like their relationships with the United States, Western Europe or China.[25]

And the "normal composition of the Soviet force" in the Indian Ocean - "particularly the lack of a significant submarine capability - suggests that interdiction of western commerce, particularly oil shipments from the Persian Gulf, has not been

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[21] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 62.

[22] Ibid., p. 28.

[23] From "Statement Of W.E. Colby, Director Of Central Intelligence Agency ..." before U.S. Senate, Subcommittee On Military Construction, Of The Committee On Armed Services, Hearing on July 11, 1974 on Military Construction, Fiscal Year 1975, in U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 32.

[24] Idem.

[25] Ibid., p. 34.

a major objective."[26] Nor did "direct military intervention ... appear to figure prominently in Soviet plans."[27] Zumwalt himself acknowledged that if the Soviet and American "fleets" in the Indian Ocean "became involved in an action, [the Americans] are superior."[28] In some global war scenarios, according to Schlesinger, the USSR might conclude that a withdrawal of its naval forces from the Indian Ocean would be desirable.[29]

The Soviet naval "threat" was much more political than military in nature. The "symbolic significance" of the Soviet presence concerned America the most, in the opinion of Weiss,[30] and that presence, Noyes pointed out, enabled the Soviets "to exert political force, potential coercion...."[31] The cardinal assumption of US strategic policy was that unless counterbalanced, the Soviets' naval capability and their willingness to use it might lead to greater Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean area. This premise was stated most clearly by Zumwalt:

> It cannot have escaped the Soviets' attention that ... any nation which is able to project significant naval power into the Indian Ocean automatically acquires

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[26] Ibid., p. 32. Of the five or six combatants of the 18 to 20 Soviet naval vessels deployed in the Indian Ocean in 1974-75, only one or two were submarines, whose main purpose in wartime was to attack shipping.

[27] Idem.

[28] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 140. More precisely Zumwalt meant that a US aircraft carrier task group with P-3C anti-submarine warfare aircraft could defeat the Soviet squadron (and presumably a Soviet anti-aircraft carrier force too). But, he warned, the Soviets could "overfly the littoral countries with their long-range air and associated cruise missiles and ... join the battle. That would make it a much closer proposition." (Idem)

[29] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 59.

[30] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 31.

[31] Ibid., p. 62.

> considerable influence with the littoral countries as well as with those countries elsewhere which depend on its oil resources and ocean trade routes.[32] (Italics added.)

But too strong and direct a causal link was presumed between naval presence and influence. The Soviet squadron was only one of an ensemble of policy instruments used by the USSR to pursue its objectives. Indeed, Colby observed, the "roles of military, and particularly naval forces, have been secondary to diplomatic efforts and aid programs in promoting Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean area."[33] Henry Kissinger, appointed Secretary of State in September 1973, also regarded the Soviet naval presence as a secondary factor. He observed at a news conference in November 1973 that

> Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean will not depend primarily on the number of ships it can deploy into the Indian Ocean. And I am confident that to the degree that power becomes the principal factor in the Indian Ocean, we will be able to generate a fleet of sufficient size ... so that we could counterbalance anything that the Soviet Union might put [there], as the recent visit of the Hancock ... has demonstrated.[34]

The best way to reduce Soviet influence in the Middle East, Kissinger suggested, was not so much by a naval balance as by diplomacy - negotiating a peace settlement between the Arabs and the Israelis.

The Soviet squadron's acquisition of "considerable influence" in the Indian Ocean area depended in part on

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[32] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 6.

[33] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 32. The "principal objective of the [Soviet] naval force" was, he seemed to imply, defensive: "to maintain an adequate military strength to counter - or at least provide a political counterweight to - moves made by western naval forces there, particularly those of the United States." (Idem)

[34] "Secretary Kissinger's News Conference of November 21", DoSB 69 (December 10, 1973), 708-709.

reaching a size enabling it to mount a sustained interdiction of shipping. Ultimately its "influence", insofar as numbers of ships mattered, depended on the resources available to it from the entire Soviet navy. But here a practical limit was set: for all its growth the Soviet navy was still a finite force which had higher priorities in the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Pacific. Thus even with advantages from the reopened Suez Canal such as quicker access to the Arabian Sea from the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and better logistic support, the Soviets could expand their presence only up to a limit. According to Colby, they "probably would not be able to sustain an Indian Ocean force significantly larger than that presently deployed there without reordering their priorities and shifting naval forces from other areas"[35] which they gave no sign of doing. Other restraints on the USSR's capability to deploy and support a larger presence in the Indian Ocean included "the requirement to maintain a strategic reserve in home fleet areas, a large deployed force in the Mediterranean, plus the economic and political costs of operating a sizeable naval force...."[36] One political cost derived from the fact that although sensitive to external

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[35] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 32. The USSR would not draw from its squadron in the Mediterranean, Colby proposed, because it "probably recognizes" that the Suez Canal "is subject to closure in a crisis. The Soviets would not want to be caught with a substantial portion of available units on the wrong end of a blocked canal...." (Idem) Apropos of the prospective reopening of the Suez Canal and the "greater ease" it gave to "movement of the Soviet Fleet from the Mediterranean into the Indian Ocean", Kissinger remarked in late 1973 that

> there is a great danger of looking at the developments in this area in terms of a strategy that is more appropriate to the previous century than now. ...
>
> ... the future of the Middle East should not be deduced from the steaming time of the Soviet Fleet from the Black Sea into the Indian Ocean and whether adding 10 days to it, or cutting 10 days off it, will ... be the determining factor. (DoSB 69 [December 10, 1973], 709.)

[36] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 33.

naval power, the littoral states also opposed potential threats to their independence and security, as shown by the UN "Zone of Peace" declaration. Nor were the Soviets likely to obtain in the near future access to facilities substantially better than those at Berbera and the more limited ones in South Yemen and Iraq. India, for example, would not give the Soviets special access to its naval bases. A final factor discouraged a larger Soviet naval presence: the restrained deployment by the US Navy. Were there no substantial expansion on a permanent basis of American forces in the Indian Ocean, a further rise in the level of the Soviet presence would be gradual, perhaps one or two ships a year.[37]

In fact the ceiling of the average Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean proved to be quite low - about 18 to 20 ships. It had been reached in 1974 and except in 1977-78 when the Soviet presence almost doubled in support of Ethiopia against Eritrean secessionists at the time of the Ethiopian-Somali war, it would remain stable until late 1979. The Soviet squadron thus did not grow to a size sufficient to generate "considerable influence" or to engage in coercive diplomacy. America's Indian Ocean strategic policy had been revised, of course, at a time of crisis in late 1973-early 1974, and in view of events such as the first transit through the Indian Ocean to the Pacific of the Soviet ASW aircraft carrier Kiev and the practice of interdiction operations in the northern Arabian Sea as part of the global Soviet naval exercise OKEAN in spring 1975, the Soviet presence had not seemed to reach a stable level. For OKEAN, Schlesinger observed,

> the number of Soviet ships in the Indian Ocean was approximately doubled. Activity was centered ... at the crossroads of the tanker lanes from the Persian Gulf. The exercise was supported by long range aircraft operating from the Soviet Union, and, for the first time, by maritime patrol aircraft operating from airfields in

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[37] Ibid., p. 32.

Somalia.[38]

Moreover, until it was able to ascertain that the USSR would refrain from using the reopened Suez Canal to help support its Indian Ocean presence, the Department of Defence could not readily determine that the size of the Soviet squadron would be less than it had expected.

## Planning for a Potential Soviet Attack upon Iran

America's Indian Ocean strategic policy vis-a-vis the USSR also possessed, however latently in the middle 1970s, a land dimension. Schlesinger had spoken of the Soviets' readiness to project their military power to distant areas as their airlift and naval capability grew and Zumwalt had mentioned political pressure on Indian Ocean states near the Soviet Union by land-based forces in the southern USSR. But as its involvement in the Angolan civil war in 1975-76 indicated, the Soviet Union's military intervention in distant places was likely to be only requested and indirect. Neither did Soviet forces exert noticeable pressure on countries near the USSR nor was there an active threat of direct Soviet military action against Iran. Detente continued between the Shah's regime and the Soviet Union, which, virtually self-sufficient in oil, did not intend to seize Iran's oilfields. The Soviet land threat to Iran was sufficiently improbable for Grojean to claim in 1974 that "the presence of the U.S. Navy on the southern border of Iran ... is an effective counter to the Soviet Army and Air Force presence on the north as well as the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean."[39]

The United States' deterrence of the Soviet Union depended not so much on the US Navy as on America's general, global military capability, conventional and nuclear.

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[38] Ibid., p. 11.

[39] U.S. Senate, Military Construction Appropriations FY 1975, p. 358.

Although it was the ultimate deterrent against the Soviets, that capability remained a secondary factor in US contingency planning to meet a Soviet attack upon Iran in the sense that according to the Nixon Doctrine, Iran itself would take primary responsibility for that task, at least initially. America's "[s]ecurity assistance and development of cooperative military relations ... [with] friendly states ...", Donald Rumsfeld, Schlesinger's successor as Secretary of Defence, pointed out in January 1977, would continue to contribute to the "development of reliable friendly forces (for example, Iran ...) capable of ... deterring or combating outside intervention."[40] But despite the Shah's expenditure of many thousands of millions of dollars to create a virtually all-armoured and -mechanized army and a sophisticated air force, Iran's armed forces, which the US envisioned reinforcing in the event of Soviet aggression, were inadequate to combat a Soviet attack. Further, the assumptions guiding their use were inappropriate. Consistent with "long-standing American notions on the containment of the Soviet threat", it was "believed that ... Iran could at best delay a Soviet invasion, until the arrival of large-scale US reinforcements. ... [T]he decisive battle would then be fought on the central Iranian plateau...."[41] For

> an armoured defence of the plateau to the workable, the Iranians would have had to delay significantly a Soviet advance across the northern mountains in order to gain time for the redeployment of their own armoured divisions arrayed on the Iraqi border and for US reinforcement (sic) to make up for a shortfall in forces.[42]

But armoured forces were not suitable for delaying and

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[40] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1978, p. 42.

[41] Steven L. Canby, "The Iranian Military: Political Symbolism Versus Military Usefulness", in The Security Of The Persian Gulf, ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 102.

[42] Ibid., p. 104. From the middle 1960s Iran was preoccupied with the military balance against Iraq.

defensive operations in mountains[43] and Iran lacked sufficient light forces to retard a Soviet advance. Even had Soviet forces been delayed long enough before reaching the Iranian plateau, the Iranian forces awaiting them were not adequately skilled in manoeuvre warfare and they

> would probably have been deployed piecemeal, in separated blocking positions; consequently, they would have been quickly outflanked and defeated even by quantitatively inferior Soviet armoured forces. The situation could only have been stabilised by a rapid and large-scale US reinforcement. But until enough American forces arrived to form a significant share of the total allied force, any American units in the field would also have been jeopardised by the collapse of Iranian units on their flanks.[44]

For its part the United States possessed neither adequate forces - at most probably only about four lightly armed brigades, from the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Air Assault Division - nor the aircraft to carry them and reinforce Iran quickly and in strength.

> In short, an armoured defence on the central plateau was not ... militarily feasible. For the Iranians, American reinforcements were too uncertain, if only because of the NATO contingency. For the US, ... the option amounted to a foolish reinforcement race with the USSR. The time factor was not an independent variable; under the circumstances, it was largely dependent on the quality of Soviet planning and the size of their forces committed. There was thus very little likelihood that the defence could have held long enough for significant US reinforcements to arrive. ... If the situation <u>did</u> stabilise because of US reinforcements, the United States would have been saddled with an unattractive protracted conflict in circumstances apt to favour Soviet rather than American persistence.[45]

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[43] It "was believed that Iranian forces (and particularly armour) placed well forward on the Soviet frontier itself would only be lost early on, and could also be provocative in peacetime." (Ibid., p. 102.)

[44] Ibid., p. 104.

[45] Ibid., p. 105.

In view of Iran's inappropriate planning and forces, which tended to weaken the credibility of its deterrence against the USSR, and of America's very limited reinforcement capability, US strategic planning had to (continue to) rely heavily on strategic nuclear deterrence. Wishing to plan for putting nuclear weapons to more tactical use, Kissinger asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff in spring 1974 "to devise a limited nuclear option that the President might order in the hypothetical case of a Soviet invasion of Iran."[46]

## Policy at the Regional Level: Display, Reassurance and Deterrence

America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area at the regional level, principally the Persian Gulf, continued to be pursued within the context of the Nixon Doctrine as well as of balancing the Soviet naval squadron. According to Weiss, the US had an interest in maintaining a naval presence in the Indian Ocean even "if there were no Soviet naval forces ... whatsoever ...."[47] The purposes of America's strategic policy were display of greater interest in access to oil and regional stability after the October 1973 war and of resolve and capability to protect US interests if threatened; reassurance of littoral states that America would counter the Soviet presence; and deterrence of threats to shipping and, as the last resort, of local aggression against US friends. From late 1973 into 1975 deterrence also involved threatening indirectly friendly Gulf Arab states with retaliation should the oil embargo begun in October 1973 be protracted and then, late 1974-early 1975, with intervention in order to "protect" access to oil should another embargo be imposed. US naval forces in the Arabian Sea were thought to reinforce American diplomacy, notably in the Arab-Israeli disengagement negotiations initiated in late 1973.

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[46] See Fred Kaplan, The Wizards of Armageddon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 370. The JCS suggested the option of exploding nuclear devices on Soviet territory. Ibid., p. 371.

[47] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 34.

As indicated above, balancing the Soviet naval presence was intended to sustain friendly states' confidence in America's will and ability to limit Soviet influence and to counter potential Soviet attempts at coercive diplomacy. A super-power military balance was crucial for preserving security and stability in the Indian Ocean area: "it certainly [would] not lend to the political stability we would like to see if the Soviet Union has a deployed capability which is substantially in excess of our own,"[48] Weiss declared.

Of the regional threats to American interests in the Indian Ocean area, the primary one, the Arab-Israeli conflict - the October 1973 war being the cause of the oil embargo and Egypt's interference with shipping at the Bab al-Mandab - lay outside it. The danger of another war had abated in 1975 as a result of negotiations for disengagement agreements between Arab "front-line" states and Israel conducted by the U.S. Reflecting a constant American perception, Rumsfeld pointed out in January 1976 that "[p]olitical and military instability within the Gulf area itself if it were to disrupt the supply of oil, would be damaging to U.S. and allied interests."[49] And in the view of General George Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1975, "political stability in a number of countries" was likely "to be a continuing problem during the mid-range period as a result of the increasing popular expectations of economic advancement and the inability of existing governments to satisfy many of these aspirations...."[50] Earlier, in 1974, Noyes had suggested that "implied coercion by ... even [a] minor power could disrupt the flow [of shipping] without an actual outbreak of

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[48] Ibid., p. 28.

[49] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1977, p. 9.

[50] From "Statement Of Gen. George S. Brown, Chairman, Joint Chiefs Of Staff ..." in U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 22.

hostilities."[51] There was as well the danger of terrorist action against shipping. But, Noyes acknowledged, both threats were "nonexistent",[52] only potential. As for tensions between states, they remained more political than military in character and to the extent that they were military, they were relatively small-scale, for example Iraq's temporary occupation of Kuwaiti territory in 1973, and limited, as in the case of the sporadic fighting between Iran and Iraq in Kurdistan from late 1973 to early 1975.

Because of the limited threats to its interests and the evident ability of friendly regional powers to cope with those threats,[53] the United States continued to adhere to the Nixon Doctrine and play a secondary role in fostering Gulf security. The State Department's position paper in 1974 on "The United States And The Persian Gulf" explicitly disclaimed "any commitment ... to assume new defense responsibilities in this area."[54] And General Brown knew of "no commitment that would be binding on the United States to (sic) call for military action in the Persian Gulf."[55] America continued to encourage Iran to play the leading role in upholding Gulf security and patrolling Gulf waters and the Strait of Hormuz and to cooperate for regional security with Saudi Arabia and the lower Gulf states. Large purchases of American arms facilitated by the rise in the price of oil would enable Iran

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[51] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 58. Action by South Yemen at the Bab al-Mandab was a hypothetical case in point.

[52] Ibid., p. 59.

[53] "The Iraqi threat to Kuwait in March 1973, and a nearly simultaneous upsurge of tension between Saudi Arabia and South Yemen, had been managed without the need for ... direct U.S. intervention", indicates Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 62.

[54] United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, The Persian Gulf, 1974: Money, Politics, Arms, And Power, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On The Near East And South Asia, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, p. 73.

[55] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 50.

and Saudi Arabia to balance Iraq, deter military adventures by it and contribute to regional order. Stability in the Persian Gulf was much improved by the rapprochement between Iran and Iraq from March 1975. Also the insurgency in the Dhofar province of Oman by the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman was quelled by the end of 1975.

Naval deployments for political purposes remained the central part of US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. An "American naval presence", proposed Grojean,

> fulfils important political and military needs in the U.S. national interest. It is a substantial symbol of active U.S. support for our trade routes, for friendly countries, and for the stability and peaceful evolution of our relations with countries ..."[56]

of the area. America's "capability to deploy a ... force into the Indian Ocean ... provides a tangible reminder of our interest in security and stability in the region."[57] By giving concrete evidence of America's determination to protect its "legitimate interests", naval display guaranteed that US "interests continue to be factored into the regional political equation. Otherwise [America] could find that [it] had been excluded from the region by default."[58] A US naval presence helped as well to provide a "stabilizing influence" reassuring to friendly states, and not just at the inter-state level, in Zumwalt's view. America had

> as a vital national interest the preservation of regimes which are friendly to the United States through encouraging them by [its] presence. The absence of U.S.

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[56] From "Statement of Rear Adm. C.J. Grojean" in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Appropriations, Second Supplemental Appropriation Bill, 1974, Hearings Before Subcommittees, pt. 2, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, p. 55.

[57] Idem.

[58] From "Statement Of Rear Adm. C.D. Grojean, U.S. Navy, Office Of The Chief Of Naval Operations" in U.S. House, Second Supplemental Bill 1974, p. 561.

> force [in the Indian Ocean] ... makes it likelier that they would succumb or be replaced by regimes less friendly in nature. ... This is a psychological and political problem and not a military problem, but it flows from the presence of [US] power there.[59]

Supporting America's foreign and security policy in the Indian Ocean area by expressing determination to preserve a stable power balance and "backstopping" US diplomacy initiatives were the purposes of the dispatch of an aircraft carrier task group to the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 and to the Arabian Sea in October 1973, according to Zumwalt.[60] In the latter case the specific reason for sending the Hancock, he claimed, had been "to stabilize the Middle East insofar as the Arab-Israel confrontation is concerned...."[61] Weiss described its presence as

> a reinforcement for the signally successful efforts of Secretary Kissinger to bring the parties in the conflict to the peace table. It impressed upon both sides that the United States was interested in a resolution to the conflict. In short, it played the traditional role which military power should play, that of supporting diplomatic initiatives. By this I do not mean to suggest that military power was used to lend coercive force to our diplomacy. Rather, our visible military presence in the area demonstrated the importance we attached to our diplomatic objective of bringing the parties together to seek a peaceful resolution to the issues that have produced so much discord and strife in the Middle East.[62]

One appreciable way in which the Hancock task group might have helped to "stabilize" the Arab-Israel conflict and to reinforce Kissinger's diplomacy was by providing a tacit guarantee of a condition for Israel's acceptance of a cease-fire agreement with Egypt on November 11, 1973: that Egypt end

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[59] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 152.

[60] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 3.

[61] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2128.

[62] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 24.

its undeclared blockade at the Bab al-Mandab of shipping bound for Israel.* Egypt had established the blockade during the October war in order to prevent ships reaching the Israeli port of Eilat. Ending the blockade was most important to the Israelis because the Bab al-Mandab was the only access route for tankers with Iranian oil, which accounted for about 40 per cent of their oil supplies and would become critical in a protracted war, and because the southern Red Sea was too far away for Israel to reach it with effective force.

America's attention had already been drawn towards the Bab al-Mandab by two events to which its response served in effect as the tacit "guarantee" to Israel. First, South Yemen had declared that the Bab al-Mandab now came under its national jurisdiction, contrary to the strait's recognised international status. If the Bab al-Mandab were part of South Yemen's territorial waters, the government in Aden could in principle exercise discretionary control over, indeed deny, the passage of warships perceived to threaten its security. Second, in late October 1973 an Egyptian destroyer fired a shot across the bow of an American merchantman near the Bab al-Mandab. A destroyer from the Middle East Force was sent to escort the ship south through the strait and it patrolled the southern Red Sea for a week. Then, in late November, the Hancock task group entered the Gulf of Aden and the aircraft carrier provided air cover for the transit through the Bab al-Mandab by several destroyers, which paid a brief visit to Ethiopia. In light of the United States' responsibility to see that the conditions of the cease-fire agreement between Egypt and Israel were fulfilled, the MEF's protection of US shipping, the Hancock task group's assertion of freedom of navigation through an international strait and the continuous presence of US naval forces in the Arabian Sea might have been

* Egypt's agreement not to blockade the Bab al-Mandab was a term of the Egypt-Israel disengagement of forcess agreement in January 1974.

sufficient to assure Israel that shipping could again sail safely to it through the Bab al-Mandab. In this way the American naval presence possibly helped indirectly to sustain the Egypt-Israel negotiations with less complication.

## Deterrence and the Threat of Retaliation and of Intervention

An American naval presence was intended to support US diplomacy in the Indian Ocean area also by deterrence, however tacit. The "deterrent effect of a military presence" was one diplomatic "lever" available to "discourage conflict and contain it when it occurs", in the opinion of Weiss: the Middle East Force supplemented by more frequent deployments by 7th Fleet task groups served those purposes.[63] "Rather than waiting until a threatening situation develops and then seeking a military solution", Grojean asserted, "the very presence of our forces ... will help to forestall such situations and thus avoid the need for military confrontations which could be costly and dangerous."[64] But deterrence could not be efficacious unless the United States was prepared to some extent to employ its armed forces. Thus although Noyes had said in March 1974 that a US naval presence was not intended to keep the peace between littoral states or to enforce America's will upon them by way of threats[65] and although similarly Schlesinger had stated (see above) that US naval deployments were "not a threat" to any state, the active use of the armed forces could not be precluded. Perhaps with that consideration in mind, Schlesinger had declared further that America's naval force presence assured it of "an adequate capability to meet contingencies" involving friendly littoral states. (Italics added.) And Vest's statement, noted above,

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[63] Ibid., p. 25.

[64] U.S. House, Second Supplemental Bill 1974, p. 561. In June 1975 General Brown proposed that a "moderate U.S air and naval presence provides a counter to adventurism from any source." U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 22.

[65] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 74.

about (naval deployments demonstrating) the effectiveness of US forces in a wide variety of circumstances was meant to maximize the credibility of naval presence as a deterrent. The more convincing a deterrent force seemed, the less likely it would be needed for actual use. If there were no potential at all for the active employment of the US Navy, if it were only a symbol for show, friends and foes would take it much less into account, naval display would lose whatever deterrent value it possessed and its ability to reassure, and to threaten, would be undermined.

From late 1973 into 1975 the United States used its naval deployments in the Indian Ocean in order to threaten friendly Gulf Arab states in "defence" of access to their oil. And in late 1974-early 1975 naval forces contributed to America's deterrence of a possible new oil embargo, that deterrence involving the potential, as a last resort, for intervention in the Persian Gulf with land forces. Not an explicit, active factor in the application in 1969-1970 of the Nixon Doctrine to US security policy for the Persian Gulf at a time when access to cheap oil was not in question, the threat or use of the armed forces nonetheless inhered in America's objective of assuring the continuous availability of oil. The potential for the use of force became manifest when in late November 1973 Kissinger warned that the US would have to consider retaliatory action if the oil embargo begun the previous month went on "unreasonably and indefinitely". Simultaneously the Hancock task group approached the entrance to the Persian Gulf in order to underline and give greater substance and credibility to Kissinger's indirect threat. Sustaining the threat of reprisal - another veiled threat, of "danger" for oil producing states if the industrialized world were "crippled", was made by Schlesinger in January 1974 - and subtly intimidating the Gulf Arabs, making them more responsive to America's demand that the embargo be lifted, were purposes of the continuous US naval presence in the Indian Ocean from late October 1973 to April 1974, shortly

after the embargo was lifted.

The US began a second round of veiled threats of military action in September 1974, when President Ford remarked that historically states had gone to war over natural resources and Kissinger hinted at intervention in order to deter the Arabs from imposing another oil embargo in the event of a new Middle East war. The most graphic warning came in late November 1974: the aircraft carrier Constellation and two escorts broke away from a large CENTO "Midlink" exercise and steamed unannounced into the Persian Gulf, one year after Kissinger's initial hinted threat to use force and the Hancock's approach to the Gulf. This first visit by an American aircraft carrier for twenty-five years was ostensibly for "familiarization". But the probable intention of the brief, 36-hour visit, during which aerial exercises were conducted, was to "remind" Gulf Arab states that the US would not accept an interruption of oil supplies and that it had the military capability to seize regional oil fields.[66]

The Constellation's excursion into the Persian Gulf, the entry of the Enterprise task group into the Indian Ocean in January 1975, publicity about the "Operation Petrolandia" military exercise in the US for desert warfare training and reports of contingency planning in the Department of Defence for military operations in the Persian Gulf[67] formed the background for interviews with Kissinger in late December 1974 and in January 1975 in which was expressed the Ford administration's position on the possibility for American intervention in the Gulf.[68] He did not expect an oil embargo

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[66] Christian Science Monitor, November 26, 1974.

[67] Sunday Telegraph, December 15, 1974.

[68] See United States, Library Of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Oil Fields As Military Objectives A Feasibility Study, Prepared For The Special Subcommittee On Investigations Of The Committee On International Relations, Committee Print, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, pp. 79-80.

in the absence of another Arab-Israeli war and perhaps not even if one did occur. The US would consider a resort to force "only in the gravest emergency", should there be "actual strangulation of the industrialized world". However, that contingency was "absolutely hypothetical" and was not going to happen. America would think about the use of force only if "warfare were originated" against it. Kissinger's remarks were reinforced by Ford and Schlesinger but in May 1975 the latter said that the US "might not remain entirely passive to the imposition of [a new oil] embargo"; he would not indicate a "prospective reaction" by the US "other than to point out there are economic, political and conceivably military measures in response.[69]

America's attempts at naval coercive or at least minatory diplomacy were unsuccessful. According to a former commander of the Middle East Force, the presence of the Hancock aircraft carrier task group in the Arabian Sea in late 1973 and the Constellation task group's excursion into the Persian Gulf in November 1974 were politically "neither appropriate nor helpful" because they

> merely serve[d] to harden attitudes, thereby rendering achievement of the desired political solution either more difficult or impossible. ... [K]nowledgeable observers predicted that the [Hancock] battle group's entrance into the Indian Ocean would produce precisely the opposite effect they inferred lay behind its dispatch. That is to say, it most certainly would not intimidate the Arab states; on the contrary, it was more likely to anger them. Nor would it make them more amenable to those compromises which might further the search for peace. Seen by the Arabs as an attempt to coerce them, it would merely stiffen their resolve not to be pressured into an unfavorable settlement dictated by the traditional benefactor of the Israeli enemy: the United States. Finally, the implied American threat to the oil installations could be expected to provoke counterthreats to blow up the wells and loading terminals as an assured means of keeping them out of alien hands. These and other forecasts proved to be painfully accurate. Here ... was an example of the military presence which was

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[69] Ibid., p. 82.

ill-conceived....[70]

This assessment applied, for example, to Saudi Arabia, which announced that it would destroy its oil installations if the Americans attempted reprisals or, later on, intervention. It resented their threats and doubted their rationality and their reliability as a "friend". (And when Saudi Arabia and other Arab states did lift the embargo in March 1974, they did so not because they feared US retaliation but because some oil was reaching the embargoed states and because the US had made progress in negotiating disengagement between Egyptian and Israeli forces.) The Americans' behaviour suggested a fundamental contradiction in their relations with Saudi Arabia: they valued it as a pillar of Gulf security yet, in the media at least, they discussed it as an object of potential attack and occupation.

Besides being politically provocative and unproductive, the indirect threat of US intervention as a deterrent against friendly Gulf Arab states' imposition of another oil embargo was of dubious necessity and credibility. As noted, the United States acknowledged that it would intervene only if it were subjected to "actual strangulation". But an "airtight" embargo would be very difficult to arrange and sustain and all the Arab oil-producers recognized clearly that a new embargo could lead to international political and economic consequences which would harm more than advance their own interests and the prospects for an independent Palestinian homeland. Also the US had too much oil of its own, if not at a relatively cheap production cost, to be "strangled"; it was less dependent on Gulf oil and would be less harmed by its stoppage than would its European allies and Japan. If America did decide to "secure" access to foreign sources of oil for

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[70] Robert J. Hanks, The U.S. Military Presence in the Middle East: Problems and Prospects Foreign Policy Report (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis, 1982), p. 22.

itself alone, probably it would use its armed forces as near to home as possible rather than go the long distance to the Persian Gulf. Moreover, after the Vietnam war US public opinion did not support intervention while America's allies, preferring to make their own political and economic arrangements with the Arabs, would not countenance its intervention in the Gulf in order to "protect" access to oil "on their behalf". An American intervention would create a serious rift between the US and its allies and alienate the Third World en masse.

The operational feasibility of US intervention in the Gulf was in doubt too. Although Schlesinger claimed that intervention there was possible, it would be successful only if the United States could

> -Seize required oil installations intact.
> -Secure them for weeks, months, or years.
> -Restore wrecked assets rapidly.
> -Operate all installations without the owner's assistance.
> -Guarantee safe overseas passage for supplies and petroleum products.[71]

An aircraft carrier task group or one with a Marine Amphibious Brigade would be inadequate for mounting a "defensive" seizure of oilfields and there were insufficient airborne forces for seizing and securing the oil facilities quickly. Two to four divisions with support would be needed indefinitely in order to provide security for 600 oil installations in an area of 10,000 square miles in Saudi Arabia. It would be necessary, and costly, to bring in from the US specialized civilian manpower for operating the facilities and for repairing or

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[71] U.S. Congressional Research Service, Oil Fields As Objectives, p. xi. Saudi Arabia was the subject of this CRS case study of a hypothetical American intervention from which this and the next paragraph draw. For a brief analysis of 'military intervention to secure oil supplies', see Strategic Survey 1974 (London: The International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1975), pp. 30-32.

replacing damaged ones. American military action might cause a Soviet counter-intervention in the guise of "protecting" the Persian Gulf, in which case more US forces would be needed. American forces would have to deal with local harassment and perhaps guerrilla action. The desert climate and terrain presented difficult operational conditions and there would be heavy demands on logistic support,[72] which would be much hindered by insufficient numbers of transportation ships and aircraft and by the refusal of America's allies and friends and the Arab states to provide facilities for its use and to allow overflying.

Because the US could not assure the two main prerequisites for a successful intervention - slight damage to oil facilities and the USSR's abstention from counter-intervention, it would face high costs and large risks. It would "so deplete its strategic reserves that little would be left for contingencies elsewhere. Prospects would be poor, with plights of far-reaching political, economic, social, psychological, and perhaps military consequence the penalty for failure",[73] as suggested. Probably more harmful than beneficial, American military intervention in the Persian Gulf "could not secure for Western countries reliable access to oil in volume at less cost than present prices"[74] in 1974-75.

Intervention with ground-based forces in support of friendly states in an extreme case was part of America's regional deterrence policy at the level of contingency planning. Although in January 1976 Rumsfeld judged America's "modest naval forces" to be "sufficient to support" current US objectives for the Middle East, nonetheless the US had "to be

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[72] On the difficulties facing occupying forces, see New York Times, January 10, 1975.

[73] U.S. Congressional Research Service, Oil Fields As Objectives, p. 76.

[74] New York Times, September 25, 1974.

prepared for unforeseen developments" there. Thus current "military planning for the [region] stresses flexibility and the maintenance of a military capability to meet a wide range of contingencies extending from symbolic support of U.S. diplomatic efforts to major conflict."[75] A leading scenario in America's contingency planning for the Persian Gulf was an Iraqi attack against Saudi Arabia. The US would supply the tertiary, "final resort" force against it, after Saudi Arabia itself and Iran. When at its request the Americans surveyed in 1974 Saudi Arabia's long-term defence requirements, their survey

> recognized that even the best-designed forces that the Kingdom could aspire to develop could not, by themselves, meet all the anticipated contingencies, and therefore built into its defense concept the basic premise that the Kingdom would have to depend in some situations on friendly foreign powers to deter or overcome threats. Specifically, the survey relied on Iran to deter an outright Iraqi invasion; and if such an invasion nevertheless took place, it envisaged a Saudi capability to fight a delaying action until Iranian, and ultimately American, forces came to the rescue.[76]

General US force planning too envisioned the potential for military operations in the Persian Gulf. Other than an attack by the Warsaw Pact against NATO or a North Korean attack upon South Korea, Rumsfeld indicated in January 1977, the contingency to which "most attention is given in considering the design of the general purpose forces" was "what in the past has been described as a lesser contingency such as might arise in the Caribbean or the Middle East, and initially involve US but not Soviet forces."[77] A conflict in the Persian Gulf was "an example of a case which could make demands on the U.S. force posture not brought out by ... the

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[75] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1977, p. 10.

[76] Safran, Saudi Arabia, p. 207.

[77] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1978, p. 53.

base cases."[78] Dealing with a "lesser contingency" would require forces, ground and air contingents, much stronger than an aircraft carrier task group in the Gulf of Oman but those forces were unprepared to meet the potential demands on them.

## Diego Garcia and Naval Arms Control

### Proposal to Expand Diego Garcia

In the same letter of February 1974 in which he presented the rationale for America's adjusted strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area, Schlesinger proposed that Diego Garcia be expanded into a logistic facility for the better and assured support of US naval deployments.[79] It was in America's interest for its forces to "have the ability to operate routinely on a sustained basis in the Indian Ocean ..." but maintaining naval deployments there was "not without difficulty". The communications station at Diego Garcia had not been designed to provide logistic support for task groups operating at "extended distances" from the western Pacific. In order to sustain them the US had had to obtain access to bunkering and limited facility support from friendly countries and to resort to more inefficient support from Subic Bay naval base. Inadequate logistic facilities now limited its capacity to demonstrate American interest in the Indian Ocean area by routine presence. If the United States wished to assure a continuous capability to move or maintain its ships there, "development of more practical support facilities seems essential. An obvious solution is Diego Garcia, with some supplemental bunkering and aircraft landing rights elsewhere in the area." The facilities requested for Diego Garcia would

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[78] Idem.

[79] All quotations in this paragraph are drawn from U.S. Senate, Selected Material, pp. 12-15. On the role and value of Diego Garcia in America's foreign policy and defence policy for the Indian Ocean area, see United States, Library Of Congress, Congressional Research Service, United States Foreign Policy Objectives And Overseas Military Installations, Prepared For The Committee On Foreign Relations, United States Senate By The Foreign Affairs And National Defense Division, Committee Print, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 1979, pp. 84-121.

provide maintenance, bunkering, aircraft staging and enhanced communications and enable American forces to operate from a "facility on British sovereign territory in the outer reaches of the Indian Ocean with minimal political or military visibility." In light of America's broad political purposes - to provide tangible evidence of its interest in security and stability in the Indian Ocean area and to "offset growing Soviet influence" - the US government did not see

> expanding the Diego Garcia facilities as an event which drives our foreign policy. A more accurate view is that a perception of clear deficiencies in U.S. military capabilities in the region could cause us to lose political and diplomatic influence to the Soviets by default. Therefore, a support facility in the Indian Ocean is in response to our actual foreign policy needs rather than being a potential motivator of policy.

Schlesinger's proposal was reinforced by President Ford's justification to Congress in May 1975 for constructing limited support facilities on Diego Garcia. The President stated that the

> credibility of any US military presence ultimately depends on the ability of our forces to function efficiently and effectively in a wide range of circumstances. Currently, the US logistic facility closest to the western Indian Ocean is in the Philippines, 4,000 miles away. At a time when access to regional fuel supplies and other support is subject to the uncertainties of political developments, the establishment of modest support facilities on Diego Garcia is essential to insure the proper flexibility and responsiveness of US forces to national requirements in a variety of possible contingencies. The alternative would be an inefficient and costly increase in naval tankers and other mobile logistics forces.[80]

By shortening the supply line to a task group in the Arabian Sea, the proposed facilities at Diego Garcia would enhance America's "capability to provide support to US forces

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[80] From "Justification For The Presidential Determination On The Construction Of Limited Support Facilities On Diego Garcia" in U.S. Senate, Selected Material, p. 20.

operating in the Indian Ocean." But there was "no intent to permanently station operational units there, and the installation would not imply an increase in the level of US forces deployed to that region."[81] (Italics added.)

> Diego Garcia would
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> serve as an outpost base where ships may perform limited in port upkeep, receive periodic repair services from a tender and receive critical supplies via M[ilitary] A[irlift] C[ommand] airlift. Diego Garcia will also serve as a base for patrol aircraft providing air surveillance support to the ships in the Indian Ocean.[82]

The major planned improvements to Diego Garcia were an enlarged anchorage capable of mooring a six-ship aircraft carrier task group; an airstrip lengthened from 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet, giving it the capacity to receive KC-135 resupply and aerial refuelling aircraft; an extension of the aircraft parking apron in order to accommodate four P-3C ASW patrol aircraft on station for several months at a time and larger numbers of other aircraft; an aircraft maintenance hangar; a 550 feet fuel and general purpose pier able to load and unload a 180,000 barrel Navy tanker in 24 hours and at which ships could perform repairs; an expansion of the petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) storage capacity from 60,000 barrels to 640,000 barrels of aviation fuel and oil for ships, the equivalent to more than three Navy tankers; an enlarged communications station; and more living quarters, for a total of about 600 men.[83] These and other projects for Diego Garcia would cost $37.8 million from Fiscal Year 1975 through Fiscal Year 1977 and they would be completed in 1979. The Administration and the Navy denied that there were additional

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[81] Idem.

[82] U.S. Senate, Military Construction Appropriations FY 1975, p. 366.

[83] Idem and U.S. Senate, Selected Material On Diego Garcia, pp. 7-8.

plans to change Diego Garcia from a limited support facility into a full-scale base. Zumwalt was "of the view that in the absence of a major change in world affairs ... this program ought to suffice...."[84]

Four themes were apparent in the Department of Defence's more specific arguments about the utility of the proposed logistic facility at Diego Garcia: political signalling, independence and reliability of operational support, flexibility and economy. A logistic facility in the Indian Ocean area would provide in its own right a concrete signal of America's willingness to protect its interests. It would signify, General Brown noted, "a commitment to ensure that we are able to respond wherever and however our important interests are challenged."[85] Without "the presence of a fixed support installation", "more frequent ... deployment of combatants utilizing mobile logistic support could be needed" as "unmistakable evidence" of the United States' ability to support its combat forces,[86] according to the Department of Defence.

Whether or not additional facilities were constructed at Diego Garcia, the US Navy acknowledged that it would still have an ability to operate in the Indian Ocean.[87] However, an expanded Diego Garcia would enable the USN to avoid dependence in crises on regional states for politically uncertain access to fuel and facilities, with the risk that access to them might be denied or delayed to the point of danger to operations. Diego Garcia was "ideal", in Zumwalt's view, because it could satisfy the Navy's support requirements without hindrance: centrally located, uninhabited and

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[84] U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 141.

[85] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 23.

[86] Ibid., p. 71.

[87] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2155.

politically available, it was far enough from Asia not to threaten or appear to threaten any country[88] and it put "our base astern of our offensive power where we can protect the base and be supported by it."[89] Its freedom from involvement in the affairs of the littoral states made Diego Garcia consistent with the Nixon Doctrine.

Greater flexibility would be a major advantage bestowed by an enlarged Diego Garcia because "you can maintain a larger number [of ships] for a longer period of time in the Indian Ocean if you have this facility."[90] By enabling an aircraft carrier task group to operate longer and protect itself better in crisis or war, Diego Garcia would, in Zumwalt's judgement, add to "the total deterrent capability" of the US, help to forestall aggressive actions by the USSR[91] and thereby increase the US Navy's political efficacy in peacetime. A "key point" about the proposed facility was that it would avoid the need for a naval force to resort initially to replenishment by logistic ships from Subic Bay. As

> a logistics facility it gives the National Command Authority a surge capacity for up to 30 days of intensive operations by a Carrier Task (sic) group in an Indian Ocean crisis ... without concern for the establishment of an adequate logistic pipeline. This substantial degree of added flexibility should be considered as a primary benefit that accrues from the Diego Garcia expansion.[92]

The "added flexibility" would enable combat vessels to avoid arriving in the Arabian Sea "with only 35 percent fuel and not

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[88] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 4.

[89] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2126.

[90] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p.34.

[91] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, pp. 2127-28.

[92] Ibid., p. 2142.

enough aviation gasoline to carry out ... operations ...."[93] Besides enhancing the combat readiness and endurance of an aircraft carrier task group, Diego Garcia would provide a "margin of time", the 30 days, which could make the "difference between the orderly resupply of our forces and a hasty improvisation which could place unwieldy demands on our supports in other areas. The same is true of the repair and maintenance which could be performed on ships and aircraft."[94] This was important because supplying an aircraft carrier task group in the Indian Ocean at the end of 1971 and in late 1973 had strained severely the 7th Fleet's scarce logistic ships and reduced support for fleet units in the western Pacific. The decline of the latter's preparedness for combat and time on station prevented the Navy from being able to meet a crisis in East Asia simultaneous with one in the Indian Ocean area, according to Zumwalt.[95] A further "flexibility", which would be afforded by the increase of the parking apron at Diego Garcia, was suggested by the Director of Plans in the Department of the Air Force. If an aircraft carrier were not available to deploy to the Indian Ocean and substitute forces were needed, Diego Garcia could act as a temporary base for half a tactical squadron of F-111 fighter-bombers with tanker aircraft.[96]

America's naval deployments in 1971 and 1973 were reminders that although "Soviet activity [in the Indian Ocean] adds to the rationale for Diego Garcia, that rationale would exist independently of anything the Soviets are doing."[97] One reason why "Diego Garcia should be increased as a logistics

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[93] U.S. House, Second Supplemental Bill 1974, p. 62.

[94] U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 10.

[95] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 9.

[96] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2190.

[97] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 7.

facility even if the Soviets weren't there"[98] was because, Zumwalt claimed, it was "a very important factor" in America's "ability to stabilize the Middle East insofar as the Arab-Israeli confrontation is concerned."[99] By using Diego Garcia KC-135 tankers would enable the United States to resupply Israel in the event of another Middle East war. According to the US Air Force, KC-135s operating from the atoll "could provide in-flight refueling support for an airlift resupply of friendly nations in the Middle East coming westward across the Indian Ocean."[100] The US would not have to seek staging or overflight rights from European allies whose policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict differed from its own. (In April 1974 the revolution in Portugal raised the possibility that Lajes airfield in the Azores, vital for the resupply of Israel in 1973, might not be available in the future. But the US would still have to obtain overflying and staging permission from South-East Asian states.) There might be other future occasions in which Diego Garcia could support American forces: it "could be used as a staging point for C-141's or C-5's from Southeast Asia or ... the Philippines enroute to a friendly country such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, and not just Israel...."[101]

Finally the proposed logistic facility at Diego Garcia was intended to reduce the cost in ships and money of support operations by "shifting to less expensive shore-based facilities a portion of the support burden now borne wholly by

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[98] U.S. Senate, Military Construction Appropriations FY 1975, p. 360.

[99] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2128.

[100] U.S. Senate, Military Construction Authorization FY 1975, p. 157.

[101] Idem. B-52 bombers could not stage at Diego Garcia but aerial refuelling by KC-135 tankers from Diego Garcia would enable them to conduct operations in the Indian Ocean area.

... afloat logistics resources."[102] "With a logistic facility at Diego Garcia", Zumwalt pointed out, a "task group could sustain operations with the support of one AOE and 3 chartered MSC tankers, plus three stores/ammo ships."[103] Without it nine ships would be needed,[104] the two extra ships being tankers which, compared to Diego Garcia, could provide less fuel. He considered Diego Garcia to be an "economy measure" because otherwise the United States would have to spend from $400 million to $1,000 million over four to five years for extra replenishment ships to support an aircraft carrier task group.[105]

In planning to enlarge Diego Garcia, the Administration calculated that additional logistic facilities would not be important enough to harm America's relations with the littoral states seriously or for long. Friends would not be lost nor enemies made. In surveys by the State Department in 1974 and 1975 of littoral state opinion about US naval deployments and Diego Garcia,[106] many governments favoured a "Zone of Peace" in the Indian Ocean in order to prevent further militarization of the area; some did not offer a response; a few, among them India, objected strongly to the proposal for Diego Garcia for fear of a super-power arms race and an increase in tension. Several states, for example Iran and Singapore, tolerated the prospective facility because they viewed it as part of the regional US military balance against the USSR. American officials claimed that privately a majority of the countries which advocated a "Zone of Peace" "understood" the necessity

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[102] U.S. Senate, Second Supplemental FY 1974 Appropriations, p. 2155.

[103] Ibid., p. 2142. An "AOE" is a fast combat support ship and "MSC" is the Military Sealift Command.

[104] Idem.

[105] U.S. Senate, Briefings On Diego Garcia, p. 34.

[106] See U.S. Senate, Selected Material, pp. 9-11.

to counter the Soviets[107] and would tolerate the balancing process provided it was kept at the lowest possible level. The most spirited opposition to the expansion of Diego Garcia seemed to come from within the US Senate.

### Opposition in the US Senate to Diego Garcia, Advocacy of Arms Control

Opposition to the proposed enlargement of Diego Garcia came from Senators who tried to persuade their colleagues to reject the Executive branch's request for money for the project. Opponents contended that an expanded facility was not necessary to help protect US interests in the Indian Ocean area and that it could start an arms race with the Soviets which would pose grave risks of conflict and impair prospects for peace in the Middle East. Both super-powers had an interest in avoiding a costly competition, and a resolution in March 1974 by several Senators urged that America should seek direct negotiations with the USSR in order "to achieve agreement on limiting deployment of their respective naval and other military forces in the Indian Ocean and littoral states" and on limiting military facilities. Pointing to the importance and complexity of the issues raised by Diego Garcia, Congress decided in 1974 not to allot funds for expanding the facility until the Ford administration had evaluated all foreign policy and military implications of the need for it and the President had certified that its expansion was "essential to the national interest of the United States". In May 1975 Ford made that certification (see above). Then both Houses of Congress had to vote specifically not to disapprove funds for enlarging Diego Garcia. The House of Representatives had always favoured the project, thus the crucial vote on the fate of the installation lay in the Senate, on July 28, 1975.

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[107] Note U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, pp. 29, 37; U.S. Senate, Disapprove Diego Garcia, p. 38.

Opponents of Diego Garcia did not see clear evidence of a compelling need for logistic facilities on the atoll or proof that super-power naval restraint could not be achieved.[108] The United States did not have formal security treaty commitments to any littoral state west of Thailand and it was promoting regional security in the Persian Gulf by way of large arms sales. Not obliged to deploy its forces in the Indian Ocean area, America did not require the expansion of Diego Garcia. Freedom of the seas and the safe transit of oil supplies could best be preserved not by "unilateral military adventures" but by working with other states. The US had allies such as France which, more dependent on Persian Gulf oil than itself, possessed a naval presence comparable to the Soviet squadron and which would help to assure the passage of shipping, if necessary. And a US aircraft carrier task group alone was much more powerful than the Soviet force. Although the USSR was seeking to expand its influence and operational capability in the area, there was no strong, immediate Soviet military threat to US interests. As for the reopened Suez Canal, it reduced the transit time to the Arabian Sea not only for Soviet ships but also for all US combatants from the Mediterranean except aircraft carriers. During hostilities the Suez Canal might again by blocked, rendering Soviet lines of communication to the Indian Ocean longer and more exposed than those of the US. Prudent Soviet military planners would not rely on it. The USSR did have the means for "trouble-making" in the Indian Ocean but the risk of escalation would weigh heavily against a direct confrontation with America, whether or not Diego Garcia were expanded. Nor were the USSR's facilities in the area as impressive as the

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[108] The arguments in the Senate for and against the expansion of Diego Garcia on which most of this and the following two paragraphs are based are found in United States, Congress, Congressional Record - Senate, Proceedings And Debates Of The 94th Congress, 1st Session, vol. 121 - pt. 20, July 28 to July 31, 1975, pp. 25317-25363; United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Armed Services, Disapproving Construction Projects On The Island Of Diego Garcia, Report No. 94-00, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, pp. 13-22.

Administration had claimed. The US Navy and its oilers could visit more ports than could the Soviet navy.

As for the utility of Diego Garcia to help "protect" oil supplies, those likeliest to interfere with access to oil were not the Soviets but the Persian Gulf oil producers themselves. The Navy would be of little help in ending another oil embargo unless the US contemplated an amphibious invasion. Even in that event, with the chance of wider war, Diego Garcia probably was too vulnerable and too limited to be depended on. If America's goal was simply to be able to "show the flag", it had that capacity already without Diego Garcia. If the objective was to be able to conduct major military operations, probably the proposed project was insufficient. In addition there was the question of whether Britain would permit the potential contingency operations important in justifying the facility's expansion. If (as it did) the UK retained a veto right over "special operations", the use of Diego Garcia in extraordinary circumstances would not be certain. Further, if the US went ahead with expansion when there was no real danger to its Indian Ocean interests, its relations with the littoral states, which publicly opposed the project and preferred super-power military restraint,* would deteriorate. Improvement of Diego Garcia might also provoke a Soviet counter-expansion and that could serve as an excuse for the US Navy to press for a fleet which would cost up to $8,000 million and which in competition with the Soviet navy would add to tension and instability in the Indian Ocean area and jeopardize US interests. The armed services' desire for flexibility seemed to be prevailing over America's interest in keeping good relations with the regional countries and in sustaining detente with the Soviets.

* Opponents of Diego Garcia did not accept the Administration's claim that more littoral governments supported, or at least tolerated, the proposed expansion in private than in public.

The Senators who disapproved of Diego Garcia thought that defence of US interests, oil particularly, was more a political and economic matter than a military one. They gave little credence to the political utility of a naval presence and the value of an expanded Diego Garcia in support of it. Opponents did not ascribe a direct political and symbolic value to Diego Garcia in the sense of it showing US capability and will to look after American interests and balance the Soviet naval squadron. They did bestow on the proposed facility a larger, dangerous symbolic importance: it represented an inversion of America's Indian Ocean security policy because it was "leading" US military policy for the area and military policy was determining US foreign policy there. Some Senators worried that through Diego Garcia America would take on new security commitments; it seemed to be trying to assume its discredited role of "policeman", which could lead to "another Vietnam". They queried the lack of an agreement with Britain about expanding the facility which Congress, in a mood to reassert its authority after Vietnam, could scrutinize and use to influence US policy. Lastly, opponents of Diego Garcia observed that the Administration had not tried to approach the USSR in order to negotiate an arms control agreement for the Indian Ocean and prevent an arms race. They urged rejection of the proposed project partly as a way to prod the Administration to try for negotiations. If the Soviets rejected an initiative, they would take the blame. Then the expansion of Diego Garcia could start, with little harm done because of the delay. Advocates of Diego Garcia repeated the Administration's rationale detailed above and with all the arguments in, the Senate voted. The resolution to disapprove of the proposed expansion of Diego Garcia was defeated by 53 votes to 43 votes.

### The Executive Branch's Rejection of Arms Control Negotiations

While Senatorial opponents of Diego Garcia wanted the Administration to begin arms control talks with the USSR before expanding the facility, the Executive branch held out

the possibility of negotiations after the new phase of construction had started. NSSM 199 on America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area and related inter-agency documents had considered naval arms control and there was a re-evaluation of the issue before Ford certified to Congress that enlarging Diego Garcia was necessary. "On the basis of that review, it was decided not to approach the Soviets at the present time",[109] spring 1975, because there would not be a major super-power arms race in the Indian Ocean. The United States was exercising caution in its general strategic policy and it sought to avoid or at least restrain competition with the Soviets at a time when its navy was smaller and when it was negotiating with the USSR on SALT II and participating in talks on reducing conventional forces in Europe. Avoiding competition with the Soviets was an American security objective in the Indian Ocean area just as much as balancing them by way of a "stabilizing" military presence carefully limited to periodic naval deployments. As for the Soviets "it would be incorrect to assume that Soviet actions are determined exclusively by the level or nature of [the US] force presence."[110] The construction of new facilities at Diego Garcia would not prompt a Soviet force increase in the Indian Ocean because that would be caused by ships, not by a support facility. And, the Presidential justification for Diego Garcia asserted (see above), an expanded facility did not signify an American intention to station permanently a larger number of ships there. Apropos of negotiations a distinction had to be made between facilities and force presence: although the United States had expressed willingness to consider constructive proposals for arms restraint in the

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[109] For the Administration's explanation of why it rejected naval arms control talks, see in Congressional Record - Senate, July 28, 1975 a letter of July 17, 1975 by Robert J. McCloskey, Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, to Senator Bartlett, p. 25325, and a "communication" to Ford from the Department of Defence quoted by Senator John Stennis in Ibid., p. 25347.

[110] U.S. Senate, Selected Material, p. 20.

Indian Ocean, it did "not believe that construction on Diego Garcia should be contingent upon the outcome of discussions on such proposals. In our view, these are two separate issues."[111] If negotiations were to be successful, logistic facilities at Diego Garcia would have to be constructed first. Otherwise there would not be a rough symmetry between the super-powers' facilities and the USSR, which would keep and expand Berbera whether or not Diego Garcia were enlarged, would not have an incentive to negotiate about it.

When the Senate voted to reject disapproval of the Diego Garcia project, the Department of Defence's request for FY 1975 of $18.1 million was released. But in December 1975 Congress enacted an amendment to approve but defer the FY 1976 funds, $14.2 million, for Diego Garcia. The amendment was intended to provide an example of restraint which would impress the Indian Ocean states and "improve" the chance of an American initiative for arms control negotiations with the USSR. Negotiations, the resolution declared, were quite desirable and should proceed at the earliest possible time. It expected the Ford government to report to Congress regarding an initiative by April 15, 1976.

In response the Administration convened in December 1975 under the auspices of the National Security Council a Verification Panel Working Group which made a detailed study of the technical difficulties of arms control in the Indian Ocean. The publicized part of its report in April 1976 on the issues of arms control and the alternatives to it pertained not so much to negotiating initiatives as to why, in a political context, they were not possible. It concluded that although the US "might want to give further consideration to some arms limitation initiative at a later date and perhaps take up the matter with the Soviet government then, any such

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[111] U.S. Senate, Selected Material, p. 20.

initiative would be inappropriate now."[112] A successful arrangement could occur only within a general political framework of mutual restraint in the Indian Ocean region, which restraint the USSR had not shown. The situation in the area could not be assessed in isolation from past and possible events on the African mainland. Soviet "activities" (indirect military intervention) in Angola and the Soviets' enlargement of facilities in Somalia, referring, for example, to the expansion of POL storage capacity and the construction of a lengthy airfield and a conventional missile storage and handling facility at Berbera, had raised major questions about Soviet interests in areas of the Indian Ocean. An arms limitation initiative in a region contiguous to Africa might convey the mistaken impression to the USSR and to America's friends and allies that it was willing to acquiesce in the Soviet Union's use of surrogate forces as a means of determining the outcome of local conflicts, as in Angola, and of exploiting conflicts for unilateral advantage. The report noted too that concluding "naval arms limitations would pose severe technical problems but would not necessarily be impossible to negotiate."[113]

Underlying these conclusions about the temporary inadvisability of arms control talks were more general considerations. Apart from diplomacy, arms aid and naval presence were understood to be the Soviets' principal policy instruments in the Indian Ocean area and if the level of the USSR's naval deployments could be stabilized, the United States' competitive position against it would be stronger. But arms talks with the Soviets were thought to be unnecessary, because, as noted above, there would not be an

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[112] United States, Senate, Office of Senator John Culver, "Culver Criticizes Report On Indian Ocean", Press Release, April 21, 1976. The press release includes a summary of the conclusions of the classified document by the Verification Panel Working Group.

[113] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 67.

arms race in the Indian Ocean. Substantially increasing their naval presence would be too onerous for the Soviets and offer too little reward. Both sides were already exercising "tacit restraint" and their force levels had been stable for two years, the Indian Ocean report pointed out. To bring the USSR into arms negotiations would be to accept its rights and role in the area, to legitimize it and to send the wrong signals to the littoral states.[114]

Upon receipt of the Administration's report, Congress approved the FY 1976 funds* for Diego Garcia and its expansion finally began. The other prerequisite for undertaking its enlargement had been met in February 1976 when Britain and America concluded a formal agreement authorizing the project.

## Access to Bases and Facility: Defensive Negotiations

### The Filipino Bases

While the Ford administration skirmished with the Senate about Diego Garcia, it had to protect American access to strategically crucial bases in the Philippines and to the small naval support facility in Bahrain. The US bases in the Philippines, principally Subic Bay naval base and Clark Air Base, provided the material foundation for America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. They were the centre of operations and logistic support for all 7th Fleet deployments from South-East Asia to Africa. They enabled the US Navy to "project" and sustain its forces in the Indian Ocean with the most efficiency in time and cost compared to possible alternatives elsewhere. Owing to their "forward" geographical position and relative proximity to the Indian Ocean, they facilitated a "force multiplier effect", because fewer ships and aircraft were needed to provide an equivalent presence

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* A further $5.5 million were due to be allocated for Diego Garcia in FY 1977.

[114] Interview with a US government official.

than from farther away.[115] According to Admiral M.F. Weisner, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific in 1977,

> Clark Air Base and the Subic/Cubi complex are strategically located at the hub of converging Western Pacific air and sea LOCs. They are key bases in the U.S. forward defense strategy and provide an ideal staging base for projecting U.S. power into (sic) Western Pacific, Indian Ocean and Middle East. There is no other geographical location in the PACOM [Pacific Command] area which could provide bases with similar strategic advantages. Loss of bases would result in decreased (sic) contingency response time, reduced forward based POL and W[artime] R[eserve] M[ateriel] storage, longer logistic pipelines, degraded communications, loss of ship repair facilities and loss of training areas.[116]

At Subic Bay there were repair, supply and bunkering facilities. Cubi Point was a "co-located" naval air station and San Miguel Naval Communications Station was the heart of 7th Fleet communications in the western Pacific and Indian Ocean. Clark Air Base was the main point of American aerial operations, military and logistic, for those areas and it was the base of the 13th Air Force, which would be responsible for deploying to the Indian Ocean area in a crisis, whenever needed. Clark Air Base and Subic Bay were the primary sources of support for 7th Fleet task group operations in the Indian Ocean: Diego Garcia was a valuable supplementary but limited outpost of them, not a substitute. America had access to those bases until 1991 under the Military Bases Agreement of 1947 (amended in 1969) with the Filipino government.

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[115] Lawrence E. Grinter, The Philippine Bases: Continuing Utility In A Changing Strategic Context National Security Affairs Monograph Series 80-2 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, February 1980), p. 8. For details about the bases, see Congressional Research Service, US Overseas Installations, pp. 144-149.

[116] United States, Senate, Committee On Armed Services, Fiscal Year 1978 Authorization For Military Procurement, Research And Development, And Active Duty, Selected Reserve, And Civilian Personnel Strength, Hearings On S. 1210, pt. 3, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 1977, p. 2363.

Assured access to the bases was one of the United States' most important interests in the Philippines. But by 1975 the status of the bases and the terms of their use, if not their actual retention by the US were uncertain. In response to America's withdrawal from mainland South-East Asia and to domestic opinion, the government of President Ferdinand Marcos made the conditions for use of the bases the subject of negotiations with the Americans and a counter in wider bargaining with them. The Filipinos viewed Subic Bay and Clark Air Base as a quid pro quo for America's security commitment to them founded on the two sides' Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951. But after America's withdrawal from Vietnam and the communists' seizure of power throughout Indochina, Manila questioned the ambiguous nature of the United States' commitment to it - against what threat would it respond? - and America's dependability and resolve to fulfil that commitment. As the commitment was queried, so the purpose and value of the bases came into doubt. They could be used when Filipino interests were not at stake and be subject to attack, harming Filipino people and property. Also the decline of America's political and military position in South-East Asia suggested to the Marcos government that higher priority be given to relations with China and the USSR, with its partners in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and with the Third World. US bases on its territory would lessen the Philippines' standing and credibility as an independent state.

Independence and sovereignty were major issues in Filipino domestic politics because the "American bases" had long been a focal point for nationalist and, closely related, anti-American sentiment which derived from the Filipinos' political and psychological sense of being the "exploited" junior partner of the US. Nationalists objected to the qualification of Filipino sovereignty symbolized by the bases. The Americans had virtually complete legal jurisdiction over them, redolent of the extra-territorial enclaves in China during its colonial period. Political prudence and his own

inclinations required Marcos to satisfy his domestic and international "audiences" and demonstrate Filipino national independence. And in negotiations with the Carter administration* beginning in September 1977, the Philippines pressed the United States for maximum concessions to Filipino sovereignty and control of the bases, more military aid as "rent" and a more extensive, explicit and automatic security commitment to it.

In December 1978 the Philippines and America reached an agreement (signed in January 1979) for amending the bases agreement. In essence the United States acknowledged that the bases were Filipino bases over which Filipino sovereignty extended and it accepted the formal command of a Filipino officer over their security and administration. At the same time the US attained its main negotiating objective of assured unhampered use of the bases for military operations. The agreement would continue until 1991 but it would be re-evaluated every five years and America pledged that the Executive branch would "make its best effort" to obtain from Congress $250 million in military assistance and $250 million in military sales credits for the Philippines. As no changes were made in the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1951, the US avoided additional, more clearly defined obligations to contribute to Filipino security. The negotiations were successful because US-Filipino relations were mutually beneficial and because the Philippines' ASEAN partners exerted pressure on it to compromise. Subic Bay and Clark Air Base were prime symbols of America's interest and concern for South-East Asian security. Measures which advanced rather than arrested the unwanted trend of US strategic withdrawal had to be opposed, because they would leave ASEAN more vulnerable to pressures from China and the Soviet Union individually and in competition.

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* Previous negotiations, with the Ford administration, had broken down.

## The Bahraini Facility

The uncertain prospect from 1973 to 1977 for the US Middle East Force's enduring access to the facility at Jufair in Manama, Bahrain and the terms of its use from 1977 reflected the Bahraini government's ambivalent view of the MEF and its sensitivity to Middle Eastern, Persian Gulf and internal politics. Because of America's airlift of military supplies to Israel during the October 1973 war, the Bahraini government announced on October 20, 1973 that the Middle East Force would have to leave Jufair by October 1974. Saudi influence with Bahrain was strong and after the Arab oil embargo was lifted in March 1974, the US asked Saudi Arabia to hint to Bahrain that it should allow the MEF to remain. Representations from the Saudis, after some reluctance by them, and also the progress America was making in the conduct of the Arab-Israeli military disengagement negotiations in 1974 led Bahrain to indicate by August 1974 that the MEF could stay but that the lease of the Jufair facility and the status of US defence personnel in Bahrain would have to be renegotiated. One reason for renegotiation was opposition since October 1973 from the Bahraini National Assembly, some of whose members viewed the Middle East Force as an affront to Arab nationalism and Bahraini independence which had to be removed. This view was heightened in late 1974 and early 1975 by discussion in America about intervention in the Persian Gulf in order to seize oilfields. The renegotiation of the US-Bahraini facility agreement of 1971 was completed by spring 1975 and among the changes were Bahrain's assumption of jurisdiction over US civil offenses, a rise in the annual lease payment from $600,000 to $4 million and loss of priority bunkering for the MEF. The number of US defence personnel at Bahrain was allowed to increase.

By autumn 1975, however, the Bahraini government told the United States that the MEF would have to "phase out" its use of Jufair by 1977. Its decision was mainly a response to new trends in Persian Gulf politics and security. Most prominent

was the rapprochement in March 1975 between Iran and Iraq. Among its consequences were an abatement of Iraq's support for subversive groups in the Gulf, including Bahrain, and an improvement in Iraq's relations with the Gulf states. It helped to engender greater stability and to open the way for discussion of a regional security framework which would make the presence of the Middle East Force less relevant. All the Gulf governments wanted to take more responsibility for their security and it was an important objective to try to reduce as far as possible the involvement of external powers. That consideration spotlighted the fact, to which Bahrain was quite sensitive, that Jufair was the only American military facility on Arab territory. The Gulf states were critical of the Bahrainis' acceptance of one of the last vestiges of "imperialism" and if the MEF left Bahrain, there would be less excuse for the Soviet Union to try to seek permanent access to facilities in Iraq.[117]

In negotiations with the Americans from late 1975 concerning their future use of the Jufair facility, Bahrain wanted to avoid the political stigma of "homeporting" the MEF command ship, the LaSalle. The US Navy wanted to avoid termination of its access to Bahrain because, it claimed, the American "presence means more than just showing the U.S. flag in the Persian Gulf. It contributes to the stability of a highly volatile area. It would be a bad international signal to our many friends in these countries if we leave now."[118] Yet representing the US was not as important as when America did not have embassies in the lower Gulf and it was ironic that the MEF now seemed to be an obstacle to a self-sustaining Persian Gulf security system without outside interference,

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[117] At a conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers in Saudi Arabia in summer 1975, Gulf Foreign Ministers endorsed the principles that foreign fleets be excluded from the Gulf and that external powers be denied use of regional military bases. Strategic Survey 1975 (London: The International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1976), p. 87.

[118] Christian Science Monitor, January 10, 1977.

which was one of America's own regional security objectives. Nonetheless the MEF did still have practical uses such as helping to monitor Soviet naval movements and providing intelligence to friendly states, reinforcing US ties with the armed services of various countries and providing training for fledgling navies of the Persian Gulf. Nor could goodwill port visits showing US interest be ignored.

The negotiations with the Bahraini government resulted in a compromise whereby the arrangement of 1975 ended on June 30, 1977. Under the new agreement commencing on July 1, 1977 the MEF became an afloat command and the LaSalle was no longer "homeported" at Manama. But the LaSalle and two destroyers could spend in aggregate up to four months a year at Manama, which was adequate because they would be at sea or visiting other ports for the rest of the time. The US Navy could continue to visit Bahrain upon request and access was retained to the airport and the communications facility and to a commercial pier for repairs, refuelling and replenishment. The number of US personnel was reduced from more than 500 to about 80, whose presence for logistic support was called an "Administrative Support Unit". The annual rent paid by the US went down to $2 million.[119] The Bahraini government got the satisfaction of "evicting" the United States but perhaps also reassurance about the continuous availability of support for shaikhly rule in an uncertain future. That reassurance would have come from the feeling that although the ruling al-Khalifa family might be toppled if the Middle East Force were present, it might be overthrown too if the MEF were absent. Externally there could be no confidence that Iran might not revive its claim to Bahrain, in which case recourse to the MEF

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[119] For details of the agreement, see United States, Congress, House, Committee On International Relations, Review Of Recent Developments In The Middle East, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 1977, pp. 105-107; -----, Review Of Developments In The Middle East, 1978, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 1978, pp. 136-137.

as a quiet deterrent and to larger US support with which it would be linked could well be necessary. Also an American presence might be reassuring and helpful in the future, when Gulf security might be less stable.

Resolution of Challenges to Strategic Mobility

By 1977 America and other major maritime powers had reached agreement with Indonesia and Malaysia at the Third United Nations Conference On The Law Of The Sea (UNCLOS III) concerning the terms of international navigation through (South-East Asia's) straits and archipelagos.[120] Those terms provided for "transit passage", which meant "continuous and expeditious" passage through straits, and "archipelagic sea lanes passage", the equivalent passage through archipelagos. Indonesia and Malaysia accepted those terms, which ensured virtually unhindered naval movement through South-East Asia's sea passages, rather than the preferred more restrictive term of "innocent passage", the basis of their challenge (see Chapter Two) to America's strategic mobility. Their compromise acceptance was based on the achievement of their main maritime policy objectives and on recognition of their limited influence. They had little military capability to restrict the movements of foreign navies perceived to threaten their security. At most they could invoke international opinion and support from the comity of nations and hint that the offending naval power's relations with them would suffer. They had to recognise as well their very limited bargaining strength concerning an issue of global importance about which America and the USSR were in agreement. Indonesia had to be attentive to the preferences of the United States which was its informal security "partner" and which balanced Chinese and Soviet influence in South-East Asia and provided the only adequate counterweight to the Soviet navy within its strategic purview. More immediately compelling, Indonesia wanted to

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[120] For a discussion of the process by which agreement was reached, consult Leifer, Malacca, Singapore, And Indonesia, chs. 4 and 6.

secure international recognition of the legal status of its islands and waters as an archipelago, in order to reinforce its political integrity, much more than it wanted to alter the status of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. When America, the USSR and the other large maritime powers accepted the provisions in the UNCLOS III informal negotiating text which established Indonesia's legal status as an archipelago, when they accepted 12 miles instead of three miles as the maximum breadth of states' territorial waters and when they made concessions about the safety of navigation through straits and archipelagos, Indonesia and Malaysia agreed to the terms of "transit passage" and "archipelagic sea lanes passage".

## Minor Adjustment of Policy

The minor adjustment in 1973-74 of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area was in essence a continuation of the policy created in 1970. Display three times a year by a moderate naval force and the (proposed) construction of a logistic support facility at Diego Garcia remained political and symbolic in character because the Soviet squadron, although larger than in 1970, still neither threatened shipping nor was able to exert "considerable influence" and because the objectives of US policy - showing concern, balancing the USSR and reassuring littoral states - were the same. Intermittent deployments by an aircraft carrier task group sufficed to balance the Soviet presence because a task group could defeat it in battle, and their intermittent presence, alternating with a surface action group, suggested the "tacit restraint" appropriate for avoiding a naval arms race.

There were two causes for the adjustment of US policy. First the Nixon administration had become anxious and uncertain about future general Soviet international behaviour. Extrapolating from the perceived aggressive Soviet threats and action during the October 1973 Middle East war, it exaggerated the potential Soviet threat in the Indian Ocean: the

Administration took up the US Navy's argument, which it had rejected in 1970, about the danger of "considerable" Soviet influence and used it in order to persuade Congress to allot funding for Diego Garcia. Logistic facilities there were unnecessary in normal peacetime conditions because the Navy could obtain adequate support elsewhere. Thus, besides helping to show that the US would maintain a steady presence in the Indian Ocean, basically Diego Garcia's value derived from the potential utility of moderate naval display or long-range air strike or logistic operations in crises at the regional level when access to local support facilities might not be readily available. That was, of course, in large part the original and main reason for the US Navy's tenacious and now successful quest for a logistic facility on the atoll.

The second reason for the adjustment of policy was that America wanted to show tangibly a greater concern for access to Persian Gulf oil. But concern was shown in other, more important ways, by economic policy and diplomacy, and concrete demonstration of that concern by naval display did not mean that in extremis the US Navy could actually secure access to oil; it could not. From late 1973 into 1975 showing "concern" had a minatory aspect. Naval display reinforced threatened retaliation against Gulf Arab states if they did not end the oil embargo and, later, of intervention if they imposed another embargo. Those threats failed: inappropriate and of low credibility, they caused resentment among America's Gulf Arab "friends" for being viewed as potential objects of US military action. Ambivalence accompanied resentment now that the United States was pointedly seen to be a potential threat as well as the ultimate source of their military security. However, naval display did contribute successfully to American diplomacy when in late 1973 it guaranteed tacitly one condition for Israel's acceptance of the cease-fire agreement with Egypt: the safety of shipping bound for Israel through the Bab al-Mandab. That display also showed forcefully America's determination not to tolerate interference with the

free passage of shipping through straits used by international navigation.

The minor adjustment of policy was also a continuation of America's original strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area because the US still sought, as shown, to avoid a naval arms race with the USSR. It succeeded because neither it nor the Soviets wanted or could afford to deploy more ships in the Indian Ocean. But fear in the US Senate of the potential for an arms race almost was strong enough to cause the Administration's justification for Diego Garcia to be turned against it: if the Soviet navy was going to exert "considerable influence", presumably with a growing presence, and as logistic facilities at Diego Garcia suggested an ability to support more ships in the Indian Ocean, might there not indeed be an arms race?

Although the Ford administration finally gained approval and money for constructing a support facility at Diego Garcia, worry about the possibility for an arms race remained strong enough to move the Carter administration in 1977 to begin arms control negotiations with the USSR. An analysis of the causes, purposes, substance and outcome of those negotiations is the subject of the next chapter.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, 1977-1978

Attempting to negotiate an arms control agreement with the Soviet Union in 1977-78 preoccupied American strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area during the Carter administration's first year in power and distinguished its early Indian Ocean policy from that of the Nixon and Ford administrations. This first attempt since before World War II to negotiate a primarily naval arms control agreement was made possible by President Carter's interest in it, a renewed Soviet interest in Indian Ocean arms control and stability in the US-USSR relationship and in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. On the US side the negotiations were based on arms control proponents' assumption that restricting and eventually reducing, if not eliminating the super-powers' forces and facilities would bring America more advantage and incur less cost and risk than the relatively unnecessary display of arms. An arms control agreement would avoid a potentially dangerous and expensive arms race, help to extend Soviet-American detente into the Third World, give the US a competitive advantage over the USSR and improve America's relations with the Indian Ocean states. Differences between the United States and the Soviet Union concerning their respective interests, actual and potential naval and air deployments, bargaining objectives and interpretation of detente made the negotiations difficult. The USSR's intervention in the Ethiopian-Somali war in 1977-78 and its simultaneous naval force increase prompted the US to postpone them in February 1978. America's own force increase in the Indian Ocean in 1979-1980 in response to the fall of the Shah of Iran, the taking hostage of the US embassy staff in Tehran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan assured the indefinite postponement of the talks.

This chapter analyzes the Soviet-American negotiations in 1977-78 for arms control in the Indian Ocean area.[1] First it notes earlier international proposals for Indian Ocean arms control and traces the development of that issue as a subject of policy within the US government from 1970 to 1977. Next it examines why the US and the USSR sought to negotiate an arms control agreement and what their bargaining objectives were; it also reviews the American armed forces' objections to the negotiations. Then the substance and course of the talks are discussed and the areas of agreement and difference between the two sides as of the end of the fourth, and last, round, in February 1978, are pointed up. Finally the reasons for the United States' postponement, first temporarily then indefinitely, of the negotiations are set forth.

## Proposals for Arms Control

The issue of arms control in the Indian Ocean area first arose in 1964 when the range of US Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missiles had become sufficient for them to hit the southern USSR from the Arabian Sea and when press reports about American plans to construct a logistic support facility at Diego Garcia first appeared. The Second Conference of Non-

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[1] For conceptual and topical background, consult Barry M. Blechman, The Control Of Naval Armaments Prospects and Possibilities (Washington, D.C: The Brookings Institution, 1975); George Quester, ed., Navies And Arms Control (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980); Richard Haass, "Naval Arms Limitation in the Indian Ocean", Survival 20 (March-April 1978), 50-57; ---, "Arms Control and the Indian Ocean", in Arms Control and Defense Postures in the 1980s, Richard Burt ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 143-160; Richard N. Haass, "Arms Control at Sea: The United States and the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean, 1977-78", The Journal Of Strategic Studies 10 (June 1987), 231-247; Beazley and Clark, Politics of Intrusion, pp. 50-70; Richard A. Best, Jr., "Indian Ocean Arms Control", United States Naval Institute Proceedings 106 (February 1980), 42-48; United States, Library Of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs Division, Means Of Measuring Naval Power With Special Reference To U.S. And Soviet Activities In The Indian Ocean, Prepared For The Subcommittee On The Near East And South Asia Of The (House) Committee On Foreign Affairs, Committee Print, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974.

aligned Countries, held at Cairo in October 1964, recommended "the establishment of denuclearized zones covering ... the oceans of the world, particularly those which have been hitherto free from nuclear weapons.... The Conference also requests the nuclear powers to respect these de-nuclearized zones...."[2] It condemned the "expressed intention of imperialist powers to establish bases in the Indian Ocean as a calculated attempt to intimidate the emerging countries of Africa and Asia...."[3] Then in December 1964, with both their own security and cultivating favour with the non-aligned movement in mind, the Soviets submitted to the United Nations a memorandum which "expressed support for the proposal to create nuclear-free zones in various parts of the world, including the Indian Ocean"[4], and censured America's plan to build a military base there. By the early 1970s signs of growing Soviet and American naval activity in the Indian Ocean suggested to the littoral states that the US and the USSR were starting an arms race which might threaten seriously their independence and security and increase international tension. Thus in December 1971 the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution sponsored by Ceylon (Sri Lanka) which declared the Indian Ocean to be a "Zone of Peace".* Its creation would arrest an arms race and eliminate nuclear weapons and all bases, logistic facilities and other forms of the "great powers'" military presence conceived in the context of their rivalry. The United States abstained from voting on the "Zone of Peace" resolution, claiming that it had a

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* On the "Zone of Peace" declaration and America's response to it, see Chapter Two.

[2] Devendra Kaushik, The Indian Ocean Towards a Peace Zone (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1972), p. 198.

[3] Ibid., p. 199.

[4] V.P. Kozin, "On Limiting Military Activities In The Indian Ocean", SSHA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya, no. 10 (October 1979), translated in United States, Central Intelligence Agency, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Soviet Union, January 14, 1980, p. 19. (Referred to below as CIA, FBIS, Soviet Union.)

legitimate defensive right to deploy its forces in the Indian Ocean as necessary and that it could not accept a legal regime which would qualify freedom of navigation on the high seas.

In the US in the latter half of 1970 the National Security Council examined the option of naval arms control in the course of forming America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. At that time Senator Henry Jackson proposed that the Nixon administration enter into arms control negotiations with the Soviets as a specific condition for Congressional authorization of money for a communications station at Diego Garcia.[5] In March 1971 the Soviet ambassador to Washington expressed to the State Department his country's interest in limiting super-power naval deployments in the Indian Ocean. And in June 1971 Leonid Brezhnev, then General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, stated, partly with reference to the Indian Ocean:

> We have never believed, and do not believe now, that it is an ideal situation when the naval fleets of great powers engage in lengthy cruises far away from their own shores. We are willing to solve this problem, but only ... on an equal footing.[6]

The US embassy in Moscow enquired in July 1971 about the USSR's specific intentions, but without a response. Indeed the Soviets did not show further interest in naval arms control until 1976. The principal reason for this indifference was resistance to the idea from the Soviet high command, not just from the Soviet navy, which, like its US counterpart, wanted to consolidate its role and presence in the Indian Ocean and acquire access to logistic facilities. Nonetheless an "inter-agency working group under joint ACDA-Defense Department chairmanship conducted" in 1971 "a series of studies to consider possible arms control approaches to

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[5] Congressional Record - Senate, 121, 1975, p. 25342.

[6] Kozin, "Limiting Activities", p. 19.

this area" and in 1972 and 1973 ACDA examined further the "possible approaches which might be pursued if and when the Soviets also indicated interest....[7]

From 1974 to 1976 the Indian Ocean arms control issue was linked closely to the Administration's request to Congress for money to expand Diego Garcia into a logistic support facility, as discussed in Chapter Three. While hinting in its rationale for Diego Garcia at the dangers from an increase in the Soviet Indian Ocean naval presence, the Executive branch concluded that arms control negotiations with the USSR were unnecessary, because an arms race would not occur: neither super-power's purposes would be served by one. A sizable minority in the US Senate, however, feared the potential for an arms race and wanted the US to negotiate with the Soviets in order to avert a race and remove the need to enlarge Diego Garcia. Although the Senate voted in July 1975 for Diego Garcia to be expanded, late in the year Congress held back the authorized money in order to compel the Ford adminstration to approach the Soviets for arms control talks. But in April 1976 the Executive branch ruled out an initiative because of the USSR's "inappropriate" involvement in the Angolan civil war. Congress persisted with its advocacy of arms control and in the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976 it stipulated that

> the President should undertake to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union intended to achieve an agreement limiting the deployment of naval, air, and land forces of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Indian Ocean and littoral countries. Such negotiations should be convened as soon as possible and should consider ... limitations with respect to -
>
> (1) the establishment or use of facilities for naval or land forces in the Indian Ocean and littoral countries;

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[7] From ACDA Work On The Indian Ocean in "Statement Of Hon. J. Owen Zurhellen, Jr., Deputy Director, U.S. Arms Control And Disarmament Agency" in U.S. House, Proposed Expansion, p. 19. ACDA is the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, an autonomous part of the State Department.

> (2) the number of naval vessels which may be deployed in the Indian Ocean, or the number of "shipdays" allowed therein; and
> (3) the type and number of military forces and facilities allowed therein.[8]

Indian Ocean arms control negotiations with the USSR had become important enough an issue for Jimmy Carter, Democratic Party candidate for President in 1976, to make a commitment to it in his foreign policy "platform".

Even before Carter was elected there was a sign that the super-powers might begin negotiations in 1977. In a letter on September 28, 1976 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations about "General and Complete Disarmament", Andrei Gromyko, then Soviet Foreign Minister, addressed the question of a "Zone of Peace" in the Indian Ocean. The littoral states, he suggested, were concerned that distant powers were "expanding their military bases and increasing their military presence". They considered those actions to be a threat to their independence and security and they were putting forward the idea of transforming the Indian Ocean into a "Zone of Peace", a proposal which the USSR regarded "with understanding". The "key question" was, he pointed out,

> to ensure that there are no foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean, that bases which have been established there are <u>dismantled</u> and that no new bases are established. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, it never has and does not now intend to build military bases in the Indian Ocean.
>
> In resolving the question of foreign military bases along these lines, the Soviet Union would be prepared to join with other powers in seeking ways to reduce on a reciprocal basis the military activities of non-coastal

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[8] United States, Congress, House, Committee On Armed Services, <u>Indian Ocean Forces Limitation And Conventional Arms Transfer Limitation, Report Of The Panel On Indian Ocean Forces Limitation And Conventional Arms Transfer Limitation</u> (H.A.S.C. No. 95-100), 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 1979, p. 3.

> States in the Indian Ocean and in the regions directly adjacent to it.[9] (Italics added.)

On the American side, in November 1976 a booklet was published by the United Nations Association of America entitled Controlling the Conventional Arms Race. Involved prominently in its preparation had been Cyrus Vance, soon to be appointed Secretary of State. Chapter Three, on "Deployment Limitations", had been the general responsibility of Paul Warnke, who became director of ACDA in 1977. That chapter dealt in part with the super-power competition in the Indian Ocean area and it recommended that the

> United States should press for negotiations with the Soviet Union aimed at concluding an Indian Ocean deployment limitations agreement including both naval vessels and shore facilities. Such an agreement should focus on permanent deployments, making allowances for a small number of port visits and rescue missions as well as limited transit by warships. It should require the dismantling of present Soviet and American bases, such as those in Somalia and on Diego Garcia.[10] (Italics added.)

The Chapter on "Deployment Limitations" stated that naval forces were "uniquely valuable" as an instrument of foreign policy both as a signal of interest and intentions and as a "means of projecting forces" around the world. But the Soviet and the American naval forces were also potential sources of danger and instability. Limiting the super-powers' force deployments in possibly "explosive" regions by reducing the size of those forces would enhance political and military stability and reduce the chance of naval confrontations.

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[9] United Nations, General Assembly, 31st Session, "'General And Complete Disarmament' Letter dated 28 September, 1976 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics addressed to the Secretary General", (A/31/232), September 28, 1976, p. 11.

[10] United Nations Association-United States of America, National Policy Panel On Conventional Arms Control, Controlling The Conventional Arms Race (New York: UNA-USA, November, 1976), p. 37. The following four paragraphs draw from pp. 27, 29-31.

Deployment limitations would have to take into account carefully local political and military circumstances because sometimes "great power" military presences might discourage conflict between states.

The Indian Ocean had not become "an area of intense naval competition between the superpowers" but their interest in establishing military bases and increasing their naval deployments there appeared to be growing. A deployment limitation agreement for the Indian Ocean would help to ensure that the Soviet-American naval competition and involvement in local disputes would not reach the proportions already attained in the Mediterranean. By agreeing to mutual disengagement before their arms rivalry gained added momentum the US and the USSR "could avoid a potentially costly and dangerous new dimension of their arms race." An agreement would forestall further attempts on their part to establish bases as well as "require the dismantling of existing bases such as those in Somalia and Diego Garcia."

An agreement would reduce America's political and military flexibility in the Indian Ocean area. "It would be more difficult for the U.S. to threaten or to apply force in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Southern Africa either to protect the important sea lanes or to aid friendly states." However, because a reduction in total naval inventories would not be required under an agreement, the "projection of U.S. naval power into the area would only be delayed, not eliminated, in case of an emergency." In view of the location of its bases, the United States could exceed the potential "surge" of Soviet naval forces into the area on short notice, should an agreement fail during a crisis. Also the greater staying power of American naval forces would enable them to operate for longer periods without nearby bases. And Soviet attack submarines would have much difficulty in sustaining effective operations in the Indian Ocean without use of local bases. As for potential submarine attacks on the sea lanes,

they would be deterred more by the incalculable risks of military interference with peaceful commerce "than by the presence of opposing naval forces."

Prospects for an Indian Ocean agreement "should be promising". Soviet and American deployments had "levelled off" after several years of growth. Neither side had "truly vital interests in the region (so long as hostile military action does not impede Western access to oil supplies)" and "a primary purpose of their respective forces ... is to counter each other, politically as much as militarily." Verification of violations of an agreement by surface vessels would be easy. No other outside power except France had the will or capability to deploy naval forces on a sustained basis and the littoral states "generally favor the withdrawal of foreign bases and naval deployments".

The above analysis and recommendation formed the Carter administration's initial policy rationale for Indian Ocean arms control, in which the President took a personal interest. His administration's strong commitment to arms contol reflected both a deep wish in the Democratic party after the Vietnam war to do everything practicable to avoid unnecessary conflict and Carter's intention to broaden <u>detente</u> with the USSR and to extend it into the Third World. Reducing the super-power competition there would restrain the Soviet Union from increasing its influence and would help to stabilize America's relations with it. As part of a wide range of arms control agreements, for example on conventional arms transfers, an agreement for the Indian Ocean area would also help to relegate the rivalry with the Soviets to its proper, secondary place in US foreign policy and mitigate its impact on the littoral states. Then America could attend to the more important tasks of improving its relations with those states and encourage the resolution of regional conflicts, which would lessen opportunities for interference by the USSR and improve the United States' political competitive position

against it.

The new Administration first expressed publicly its interest in Indian Ocean arms control when on March 9, 1977 President Carter announced a proposal made to the USSR that the Indian Ocean be "completely demilitarized". But when he was told of the meaning of demilitarization he modified his declared intention. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on March 16, 1977, Carter spoke of seeking "to establish Soviet willingness to reach agreement ... on mutual military restraint in the Indian Ocean." At meetings between Vance and Gromyko in Moscow from March 28 to March 30 at which America's new proposals for strategic arms limitation were rejected, the two sides agreed to create eight working groups for negotiating on various arms control issues. One working group was responsible for the Indian Ocean and its first session was arranged to be held in Moscow in June.

In the first half of 1977 both domestic US and international conditions were auspicious for Indian Ocean negotiations. At home the liberal wing of the American political establishment was in power, its more sanguine approach to relations with the USSR was ascendant and Congress approved of an Indian Ocean initiative. Abroad the USSR did not threaten the Persian Gulf nor was it engaged in "objectionable" behaviour, such as in Angola the previous year, which might prevent the start of negotiations. The Soviet and American force levels in the Indian Ocean were stable at a low level; there was no arms race. Relations among the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean states seemed to be tranquil and there was no threat to the flow of oil: the possibility of a new oil embargo, and American threats to intervene in response, had subsided. Thus the United States' need for a naval presence to contribute to its security objectives in the Indian Ocean area by routine display was relatively small. Controlling arms in order to avoid a potential arms race took priority over the requirement for

display.

## American and Soviet Arms Control Objectives

### The United States

In early April 1977 the Administration began a comprehensive inter-agency analysis of the issues involved in establishing a super-power arms control regime in the Indian Ocean area.[11] Taking part in the study, from which evolved the US negotiating position, were the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defence (International Security Affairs), the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The review concluded that there was in the Indian Ocean

> clearly a potential for a major increase in military presence. Any increase in the military presence of one side could lead to a reactive increase by the other. Stabilizing and perhaps eventually reducing military levels would pre-empt the development of an arms race.
>
> An arms limitation agreement of the type [the US was] seeking would prevent any significant increase in Soviet naval force levels in the region....

The study would have begun with an examination of America's interests and military presence in the Indian Ocean area. Recently that area had become of major economic and

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[11] Except where otherwise noted, this paragraph and the following four paragraphs draw upon "Written Statement Of Dr. Leslie Gelb" on Indian Ocean Arms Limitations in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Armed Services, Indian Ocean Arms Limitations And Multilateral Cooperation On Restraining Conventional Arms Transfers, Hearings Before The Panel On Indian Ocean Forces Limitation And Conventional Arms Transfer Limitation Of The Intelligence And Military Application Of Nuclear Energy Subcommittee, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 1978, pp. 5-7; "Statement Of Brig. Gen. James M. Thompson, USA, Director, Policy Plans and NSC Affairs, Office Of The Assistant Secretary Of Defense, International Security Affairs" in Ibid., pp. 27-29; Ibid., pp. 59-60. Dr. Gelb was Director, Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs in the State Department.

strategic value to the United States. A large percentage of the industrialized world's oil supplies originated in the Persian Gulf and crossed the Indian Ocean. The unimpeded flow of oil shipping to Western Europe, Japan and America was very important. Large numbers of US citizens lived in the area and American companies were expanding their investment there. Several US allies, including Australia and members of CENTO, bordered the Indian Ocean.* India was a major actor among the more than thirty other independent littoral and hinterland states whose stability and economic development America had an interest in encouraging. The Indian Ocean countries were important in their own right and were becoming prominent in international politics. Because they were near the vital interests of both super-powers, events in them had a special significance for global perceptions of the US-USSR balance of power and influence. Strategically the US was interested in the "nature and presence" in the Indian Ocean of Soviet naval forces, which could threaten the movement of oil shipping. US interests would be affected if the Soviets obtained bases adjacent to the West's sea lines of communication. The United States would be concerned by an increase in the Soviet presence, particularly a large and prolonged one.

The purpose of American military forces in the Indian Ocean area was to protect US interests by safeguarding the sea lanes, ensuring the security of allies, providing a capability to perform a wide range of operations, in crises if necessary, and by symbolizing America's commitment to its allies. The force level and activity of the US Navy in the Indian Ocean were comparatively low. The Navy's presence consisted of the permanent three-ship Middle East Force and cruises, averaging six to seven weeks, three times a year by 7th Fleet task groups. They and the MEF conducted routine port visits to many Indian Ocean states and US air and naval forces participated in exercises with America's CENTO

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* Only Australia and Thailand were formal US allies.

associates and ANZUS allies. The communications station at Diego Garcia, from where P-3Cs and other aircraft conducted reconnaissance, was being expanded into a logistic support facility. Bahrain provided a small support facility for the Middle East Force and US forces could use the new Australian naval facility at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia, which could support submarines as well as surface vessels. America had access rights to many ports and its P-3Cs enjoyed landing rights at airfields from Singapore and the Cocos Islands (Australia) to Karachi, Bandar Abbas (Iran), Masirah island (Oman), Djibouti, Kenya and the Seychelles. Naval-related tankers supplied 7th Fleet task groups with Saudi oil obtained at Bahrain.

Then the American arms control analysis addressed the Soviet Union's interest and presence in the Indian Ocean area. The USSR was among the three leading users of the Suez Canal. The Soviets had an interest in protecting their shipping lanes across the Indian Ocean which was the only year-round sea route from the European USSR to the Soviet Far East. They wanted a secure southern border and an outlet to the Indian Ocean. Soviet security was directly at stake because US ballistic missile submarines would be in range to strike at the southern USSR, should they be present in the Arabian Sea. Western dependence upon Persian Gulf oil made the Indian Ocean a possible pressure point against the United States and its allies. Although its political activity in the area in order to gain influence and support for its policies had been growing, the USSR had maintained a fairly small maritime presence there, the average Soviet naval deployment from 1975 to 1977 being 18 to 20 ships. About eight were combatants, of which one was a cruiser, three were destroyers and one or two were submarines. The rest of the Soviet naval squadron comprised four or five oilers and repair, space support, oceanographic and cargo vessels. The squadron used anchorages in international waters in the Gulf of Aden, near Socotra island, off east Afica and near Diego Garcia and one naval

vessel monitored traffic at the Strait of Hormuz. Soviet ships took on supplies and undertook repairs at Berbera, where there was also a communications station and an airfield and other facilities under construction. Occasionally Soviet ships made minor use of port facilities at Aden and in Iraq. Although the Soviets deployed more ships in the area than did the Americans, their force was no match in combat for an American aircraft carrier task group. By early 1976 Tu-95 aircraft and Il-38 anti-submarine warfare aircraft were using Somali airfields and Khormaksar air base near Aden for reconnaissance patols over the Indian Ocean.

> This was the first introduction of Soviet ground-based air[craft] in the region, and it was more than a symbolic development. The Soviets had previously lacked any air support for their Indian Ocean squadron, and this development suggested that the Soviets intended to develop an operational naval capability, as opposed to the largely symbolic deployments to date.[12]

America's objective in seeking an Indian Ocean arms control agreement with the USSR was, in the first stage of negotiations, to stabilize both sides' naval and air presence. An agreement would preclude the possibility of an arms race. It would keep the Soviet and American forces at a relatively low level and reduce the risk of super-power confrontation. An agreement would work to the long-term political benefit of the US in its relations with the littoral states: it would compel the Soviets and the Americans to compete for influence mainly by political and economic means, in which the US had an advantage. It would allay the Indian Ocean states' anxiety about a super-power arms race and it would be consistent with their efforts to create a "Zone of Peace". Militarily an arrangement which precluded a Soviet naval "build-up" would mean that America would not be forced to increase its defence budget in order to build more ships and deploy them in the Indian Ocean or to transfer forces from other areas for

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[12] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 68.

balancing a potential Soviet expansion. Stabilization would prohibit the proliferation of military facilities under the control or primary use of the USSR. That was very important because in order to counter the superior fighting power of an American aircraft carrier task group the Soviets would have to augment substantially their naval squadron with strike aircraft and station them in the Indian Ocean area.

> The United States sought to constrain Soviet ability to introduce or base fighter and bomber aircraft on the Indian Ocean periphery. This was the sine qua non of the US position; without such a provision the Soviet Navy would have been able to operate under the protection of land-based Soviet naval aviation while the Soviet Air Force could introduce large and potentially decisive amounts of power in the area. Stabilization of force levels would limit US air and power projection assets to the periodic appearance of carrier task forces; without some corresponding ceiling on Soviet land-based tactical air power, the United States and its allies in the littoral could have found themselves at a marked disadvantage.[13]

An agreement would prohibit the Soviets from "surging" forces into the Indian Ocean area in order to intimidate or carry out large operations against littoral states and threaten US interests. Thus it would minimize concern among US friends about an increase in the Soviet military presence and assure them that the military balance in the area would not swing in favour of the USSR. Lastly there was little risk in an arms control agreement: an attempt by the Soviets to bring in forces substantially in excess of the numerical limits set by an agreement would soon be detected and the US would be free to counter the increase. A bilateral agreement, adequately verified, which stabilized the two sides' respective force level and pattern of deployments and which prevented the USSR from acquiring access to further military facilities while letting the US keep Diego Garcia would maintain the US-USSR force balance and enable America to fulfil its foreign policy and security commitments.

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[13] Haass, "Arms Control At Sea", pp. 238-239.

The United States also examined why the Soviet Union sought an Indian Ocean arms control agreement. The USSR wanted to "restrict" (preferably eliminate) US strategic and tactical nuclear weapon systems, to preclude a large increase in the level or a change in the nature of the US force presence, to limit America's ability to "surge" its forces and to stop the US from expanding Diego Garcia. The Soviets wanted as well to create difficulties between America and its allies and friends and to enhance the image of the USSR as a leading proponent of arms control.

Advocates of arms control in the White House, the State Department and ACDA assumed that current regional military threats to America's friends and interests in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area were moderate and could be dealt with primarily by those friends. Current Soviet maritime forces were too small to threaten seriously US interests. American naval forces deployed in and available for operations in the area were adequate to display US interest and to counter politically and, if necessary, defeat in combat the Soviet squadron. But except for balancing the minor Soviet force deployment, the US presence was relatively unnecessary: American interests were satisfactorily secured by other policy instruments, and certainly a smaller US naval presence would still be adequate for normal display. Much more valuable, for example for showing the United States' commitment to Saudi Arabian security, were its participation in developing the Saudis' strategic concept and plans, its military sales programmes and training and advisory missions. There was, on the other hand, the potential danger of a naval arms race with the USSR, despite America's intention to avoid conflict with the Soviets and to exercise "tacit restraint" in its Indian Ocean strategic policy. Policy might not always be able to control its instrument, and this danger was greater than the need for a US naval presence. In order to avoid an arms race and possible confrontation the US and the USSR ought to negotiate an arms control agreement. Because the American

presence was relatively unnecessary and because an agreement would in effect remove its primary, counterbalancing purpose, an agreement should reduce and lead in time to the elimination of the two sides' forces and facilities in the Indian Ocean area.

Even if an agreement at first only stabilized the Soviets' and the Americans' presence, its benefits (see above) were clear and important while its risks and disadvantages were small. Provided efficacious means for verifying the movement of submarines could be arranged, secret advantageous Soviet evasion of the terms of an agreement would be difficult. As for the restriction of operational flexibility, "the gain to the United States of forestalling a Soviet air threat far outweighed the cost of sacrificing American flexibility in deploying military power" because by "accepting limits based in prior deployment patterns and by agreeing not to establish any new bases on the territory of friendly littoral states, the Soviets would freeze themselves into a position of permanent inferiority ..."[14] relative to the U.S. Nor would America's flexibility seriously be denied: a

> prospective agreement would contain a provision permitting the temporary suspension of restraints whenever the United States or the Soviet Union determined its national interests were at stake. ... [T]he two sides would respect the status quo as long as conditions did not take a drastic turn for the worse. Nothing except the political consequences of withdrawing from an arms control treaty would stop them from rapidly moving additional forces into the Indian Ocean in times of emergency.[15]

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[14] William Stivers, "Doves, Hawks, And Detente", Foreign Policy, no. 45 (Winter 1981-82), p. 133.

[15] Ibid., p. 136. According to Stivers, Ibid., p. 135, advocates of arms control considered that in the possible contingency of a coup or small conflict on the Arabian peninsula, the US "would be much more capable than the Soviet Union of intervening" because lacking "the mobility of US carrier task forces, the Soviets could not move as quickly and effectively...." A "massive, direct" Soviet attack into Iran to the Persian Gulf was judged to be "the least probable of

American naval forces could sustain larger operations longer without a facility such as Diego Garcia than could Soviet forces and US forces providing requested help to a friendly state would be given adequate basing support.

Just before the first round of negotiations, in June 1977, Carter outlined America's general objectives. The United States'

> first hope, and without delay, is that we might prevent any further build-up of military presence in the Indian Ocean: later prior notification of any military movements there, and perhaps later on, some reduction in the present level of military presence, which is fairly low at this time.[16]

More privately, "at the President's insistence, demilitarization would remain the ultimate US objective."[17]

Military Objections to Arms Control

That stabilization, not reductions was the US government's initial bargaining objective resulted from a compromise between the State Department and ACDA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), who opposed not merely reductions but the negotiations themselves.[18] In contrast to the enthusiasm of the arms control proponents, the public position of the JCS on Indian Ocean arms control was tepid. According to the Deputy Director, Politico-Military Affairs, Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a

> bilateral stabilization agreement which permits ... access while holding both the United States and the

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all contingencies."

[16] Beazley and Clark, Politics of Intrusion, p. 67.

[17] Haass, "Arms Control at Sea", p. 236.

[18] See Ibid., p. 237 and note Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power And Principle (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), pp. 174-175.

> Soviet Union to present force levels and patterns of activity in the Indian Ocean during normal periods would tend to stabilize the naval and air forces of both sides and still be in keeping with our low but discernable presence profile strategy.[19] (Italics added.)

The JCS had opposed formal arms control even before negotiations began. Then, in August 1977, the Chairman of the JCS issued a memorandum objecting to the US negotiating proposal which would have "restricted" naval deployments. And in January 1978 he recommended suspension of the talks.[20]

The Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed a stabilization or reduction agreement because it would increase the USSR's regional military advantage over the US: America's strength, its naval presence, would be constricted while the Soviets' strength, land-based forces in the USSR which were proximate to the Persian Gulf, would not be regulated. Also an agreement would reduce America's strategic freedom of action in crises. The JCS envisioned aggression by the Soviet Union or conflict within the Persian Gulf which, despite its tranquillity in 1977, was inherently unstable. Depending in an emergency principally (at least at first) on the Navy to carry out its strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area, the US might need to employ naval forces in larger number than an arms control agreement would permit. A narrow agreement, on however "equal" terms, governing naval or at most maritime deployments might prevent America from "surging" more forces and would curtail the operational flexibility of those forces allowed.

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[19] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Arms Limitations, p. 30. For a general analysis of Indian Ocean arms control from a military perspective, see Alvin J. Cottrell and Walter F. Hahn, Naval Race Or Arms Control In The Indian Ocean? (Some Problems in Negotiating Naval Limitations) Agenda Paper No. 8 (New York: National Strategy Information Center, 1978).

[20] See United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Armed Services, Department Of Defense Authorization For Appropriations For Fiscal Year 1981, Hearings On S. 2294, pt. 1., 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, p. 443.

A potential case in point was a Soviet attack into Iran in order to seize its oilfields. Although quite remote that contingency was given greater prominence by two US government analyses. A CIA report in April 1977 on Soviet oil production by the middle 1980s concluded that the USSR would not be able to meet the domestic and international demands for its oil with its own supplies. Presidential Review Memorandum 10 (PRM-10) "identified the military domain as the one in which the Soviets were making the greatest strides ... and also identified the Persian Gulf as a vulnerable and vital region, to which greater military concern ought to be given."[21] From PRM-10 followed Presidential Directive 18 in August 1977 which called for maintaining a "deployment force of light divisions with strategic mobility" which, along with "moderate" naval and tactical air forces, could meet contingencies in the Persian Gulf, Korea and elsewhere.[22] But that force was not then organized and land-based forces in the US did not have the mobility to reach the Persian Gulf quickly in response to a Soviet attack or to a crisis at the regional level.* The United States' only readily available and reliable power "projection" capability was the Navy, which could sustain a high tempo of combat operations only with at least two aircraft carrier task groups. An arms control agreement which confined the US to one aircraft carrier task group but did not restrict the USSR's land-based forces would hinder seriously America's initial ability to deal with a Soviet attack or regional aggression against a friend of the US.

An arms control agreement which reduced Soviet and American forces in the Indian Ocean could compromise the United States' political and symbolic naval counter in

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* Implicit in the requirement for a "rapid deployment force" was the recognition that the US Navy alone would be insufficient for managing a major crisis or conflict.

[21] Brzezinski, Power And Principle, p. 177.

[22] Idem.

peacetime to land-based forces in the USSR and if it banned nuclear-capable aircraft carriers, it would diminish US deterrence against potential Soviet aggression. An agreement might enable home-based Soviet forces to exert more influence in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. At the regional level a reduction agreement would weaken America's capability to display and signal and to help friends deter the land-based forces of potential foes. (A stabilization agreement would do so too, by preventing the US from increasing its regional force presence.) America's negotiation of an arms control agreement, the JCS feared, might be interpreted by Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean states as evidence of American weakness, indifference and passivity, as a further symptom of its post-Vietnam decline and as a convenient way to manage the withdrawal of the US presence from the area. Negotiations might thus be perceived to show the diminished importance of friendly states' security and stability to the US and a reduced American commitment and resolve to play a role in regional affairs. As a result a distancing from the US by its friends, greater regional instability and more active involvement by the USSR, if not also more regional accommodation to it, would jeopardize US interests and influence. The US military were aware that an Indian Ocean arms control agreement could set a precedent which the Soviets might use in order to try to curb America's strategic presence in other regions.

The JCS were anxious as well about more concrete matters. They were concerned, for example, that long-range aircraft with maritime applications based in the USSR would not be subject to an agreement. The JCS wanted to prevent the basing of Soviet strike aircraft in littoral states yet at the same time they were wary about fixing limits on potential American land-based strike aircraft deployments to the area: they were not certain how much air power might be needed, whether as a complement to the Navy in a crisis or as a partial substitute for it in peacetime. The Navy supposed that the Soviets would

try to negotiate at least a reduction of its use of Diego Garcia and other facilities in order to minimize America's capacity to support operations and it opposed restrictions on construction of facilities. Restrictions would favour the Soviets because they did not rely on extensive shore support. Also a bargain equating Berbera with Diego Garcia was risky: Diego Garcia was politically secure; Berbera was not. If under the terms of an agreement the USSR lost access to Berbera, the US might be obliged to curtail its use of Diego Garcia. At the technical level the asymmetry between the two sides' respective presence and consequent difficulties such as of definition, measurement, comparability and verification made the JCS sceptical about the possibility of reaching and implementing an arms control agreement which imposed equal restrictions on both sides. An agreement might well require America to give up more and get less than the USSR, in the view of the military, according to whom the armed forces were being undervalued as a necessary part of America's ability to protect its interests.

## The Soviet Union

Avoiding an arms race with America, reducing as much as possible, if not eliminating the US military presence and, above all, preventing (further) deployment of weapons systems capable of launching a nuclear attack against it were the Soviet Union's general objectives for arms control in the Indian Ocean area. Those objectives derived from a political, ideological and strategic analysis which recognised the importance of the size, many states, large population and immense natural resources, particularly oil, of the area. The Indian Ocean's sea lanes linked Europe, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean with Asia and the Pacific. They were vital to the USSR, which was "compelled" to use the Indian Ocean for military and commercial movement between its European and East Asian territory. Since World War II many littoral states had gained independence from the imperialist powers and the Indian Ocean basin had become an autonomous political, economic and

strategic region. The national liberation movement had become a "determining factor" there,[23] making it the heart of the Third World, of the "national liberaton zone" of new states engaged in progressive social and economic development. Yet many of those countries were incorporated in the international capitalist economy because the West depended on them for oil and raw materials and because Western powers kept a military presence in the Indian Ocean in order to maintain "neo-colonialist" domination over them. The American presence in the Indian Ocean was not meant to protect sea lanes or to counter a fictitious Soviet "threat". The real reasons for US military activity were, to exert pressure on the policy of the non-aligned countries and the oil-producers by way of "stabilizing presence" and to encourage the surviving racist and reactionary regimes and assure them of support in crises.[24] Nor did the USA "exclude further use of military force as a 'deterrent' against the national-liberation struggle and a safeguard for the interests of American big business."[25] Moreover the American presence threatened directly the security of the USSR itself in the south, with the most acute threat coming from ballistic missile-firing submarines in the Arabian Sea.

Despite being "under pressure" from the national liberation movement, the United States was nonetheless intensifying its naval activities in the Indian Ocean and creating a "ramified system of military bases ... so that the U.S. naval formations can operate more efficiently and ... so

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[23] B.D. Yashin, "Some American Approaches To Problems Of Peace And Security In The Indian Ocean", SSHA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya no. 1 (January 1978), translated in United States, Central Intelligence Agency, Joint Publications Research Service, USSR, no. 70707 (March 1, 1978), p. 32.

[24] A typical Soviet view of America's presence in the Indian Ocean is expressed by Sergei Vladimirov, "Indian Ocean: Dangers And Hopes", New Times, no. 29 (July 1977), pp. 18-20.

[25] Yu. Lugovskoi, "Pentagon Activity in the Indian Ocean", Soviet Military Review (March 1978), p. 51.

that the everyday activity - and also the combat activity, should hostilities break out - of the Soviet navy is complicated in every way possible."[26] America was forging a chain of bases in the Indian Ocean in order to link up with those from NATO Europe to Simonstown in South Africa and from Japan through Guam island and the Philippines to Australia, all of which bases, along with China, served to encircle the Soviet Union and intensify the danger to its security. The main Indian Ocean bases of the US and its allies consisted of North-West Cape and Cockburn Sound in Australia, Manama in the Persian Gulf and Masirah nearby and French bases at Djibouti, Mayotte (Comoro islands) and Reunion island. America's principal base was Diego Garcia, whose role was to "integrate" and reinforce the other US bases in the area. Diego Garcia was being expanded in order to support B-52 bombers and aircraft carriers which could strike at the USSR with nuclear weapons.[27] As a springboard for "gunboat diplomacy" and intervention, the US and allied system of bases threatened the security of the Indian Ocean states and added to regional tension.

The USSR's interests in the Indian Ocean comprised the security of its southern sea route and of its southern territory against potential attack by US ballistic missile submarines and all other weapons systems capable of delivering nuclear armaments over a medium or long range; supporting progressive states and the wider "national liberation" movement; and weakening the West's and also China's presence and influence. The Soviets sought greater political, economic

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[26] Yashin, "American Approaches", p. 34.

[27] Dimitri Kasatkin, "Imperialist Plans For The Indian Ocean", Asia & Africa Today, no. 4 (July-August 1977), pp. 16-18, examines the role of bases in Western strategic policy for the area.

and military access[28] to the area and they were "sympathetic" to a "Zone of Peace", especially if it might lead eventually to their proposed (in 1969) Asian collective security system. Extending detente to the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area was an important interest. Because US forces were a source of tension and a threat to regional and Soviet security, detente in its military aspect meant arms control as a way to minimize the American presence, avoid conflict and lessen the chance of nuclear war. Arms control would allow the USSR to maintain a balance with US forces at a low level in order to retain sufficient ships for deployment and reinforcement in areas of higher priority but it would still enable the Soviet Union to display a global military capability, to assert parity with the United States and to help advance Soviet regional status and foreign policy.[29]

The Soviets' objectives in Indian Ocean arms control negotiations with the US were, to prevent an arms race, thereby minimizing the danger of a direct military confrontation; to bring about the permanent removal from the area or prohibition of entry into it of all US nuclear weapons-capable systems - SSBNs, B-52 bombers, F-111 fighter-bombers and aircraft carriers, whose "dual capable" combat aircraft could carry nuclear as well as conventional

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[28] Vladimirov, "Indian Ocean Dangers", p. 19, repeats the standard denial in the middle 1970s that notwithstanding its use of Berbera in Somalia, the USSR did

> not have and never had military bases in this region, and never set up and does not propose to set up stationary military installations.... Soviet naval ships ... call from time to time at Indian Ocean ports, but only to replenish their supplies of food and fresh water or on official friendly visits.

[29] For background on Indian Ocean arms control from the perspective of Soviet naval policy, see Anne Kelly Calhoun and Charles Petersen, "Changes in Soviet Naval Policy: Prospects for Arms Limitations in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean", in Naval Power in Soviet Policy, ed. Paul J. Murphy, Studies in Communist Affairs, vol. 2 (n.p.: Published Under the Auspices Of The United States Air Force, 1978), pp. 233-245.

munitions; and to obtain the dismantling of Diego Garcia and other US and allied bases and to prevent America's acquisition or construction of other bases. Eliminating all Western military bases was a crucial prerequisite to avoiding an arms race and it would in effect deny America the ability to introduce land and air forces, whether against regional states or the USSR itself. That objective became even more important when in summer 1977 the Soviets became aware of the United States' decision to create a "rapid deployment force". The USSR also wanted at least to reduce the conventional forces of the US and its European allies to a level which the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron could better counter politically and militarily. In the negotiations the USSR would want to pay close attention to the superior qualitative characteristics of American naval combatants, their tonnage, weaponry, overall performance and endurance and their political and symbolic impressiveness. It would seek to reduce the comparatively larger number of political US port calls while avoiding the imposition of lower limits on the relatively larger number of logistic port visits which its ships made. Transits by ships across the Indian Ocean on inter-fleet transfers were more important to the Soviets than to the Americans and Soviet ships deployed there for longer periods than did US vessels. Thus the USSR would try to gain generous provision for the permissible length of time for deployments and for the number and duration of transits, which enhanced the display of Soviet power.

The fundamental motives of the United States and the Soviet Union for engaging in Indian Ocean arms control negotiations - to help advance detente and to avoid an arms race - seemed very similar on the surface and suggested that an agreement on mutually satisfactory terms was possible. But differences in the two sides' interpretation of detente and their negotiating objectives and marked asymmetries between their maritime presences posed thorny bargaining difficulties which made a successful outcome to the talks quite uncertain.

In the Soviet view detente meant continuing the political and ideological competition with America while reducing the risk of direct military conflict and eliminating "sources of military tension" and danger to regional and Soviet security, above all US nuclear weapons-carrying forces and Diego Garcia. Detente did not exclude forms of military intervention in support of a Marxist government. For the US detente meant mitigating the super-power rivalry, non-intervention in regional affairs and restraint in use of the armed forces in support of foreign policy. (Yet, as noted, the proponents of arms control perceived it also as a way to give America a competitive political advantage over the USSR.) The US sought initially a stabilization of the two sides' forces and facilities and it was interested in a later phase of negotiations which would concentrate on reducing their respective forces. But unlike the Soviets the Carter administration had not agreed among themselves about what America's ultimate bargaining objectives were, because of opposition from the military and civilians such as Brzezinski: they were reluctant to embark on negotiations which would regulate America's relative strength, its naval forces, but not the large land-based forces in the southern USSR. In the negotiations themselves many complex technical asymmetries would have to be dealt with, such as between ship capabilities, squadron and task group size and composition, length and frequency of deployments, operations and capability of land- and sea-based aircraft, transit patterns and logistic needs, support practices and availability of basing and support facilities.

## Arms Control Negotiations

### Round One

The first round of the negotiations took place in Moscow from June 22 to June 27, 1977. The leader of the Soviet delegation was Ambassador L.S. Medelevich and its principal military representative was Admiral V.N. Amel'ko. The head of the American delegation was Ambassador Paul Warnke; the chief

military representative was Admiral Thomas Hayward and, in subsequent rounds, Admiral Marmaduke Bayne. The purposes of the first round for each side were, to set forth its own and to probe the other's general negotiating position and objectives - to "exchange views on possible steps by the two parties which would promote arms limitation in the Indian Ocean area" and to gain "a better understanding of the parties' position on the problem and of the difference between them."[30] They agreed that arms control would not affect their rights and freedom of action under "the universally acknowledged rules of international law relating to the freedom of navigation and overflight, the unimpeded conduct of commercial navigation and oceanographic and other scientific research...."[31]

The Soviets' main objects of negotiation were Diego Garcia and the "network" of US military bases in the Indian Ocean, strategic nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers.[32] An agreement would have to take into account America's naval and air bases in adjacent areas, notably those in the Philippines, which supported its operations in the Indian Ocean. The bases there of France and Britain were subject to negotiation because those states were US allies. Simonstown naval base in South Africa was important too. In addition to aircraft carriers and other, conventional-only US forces in the Indian Ocean, American forces in the Mediterranean (the 6th Fleet) and in the Pacific (the 7th Fleet) had to be

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[30] United Nations, General Assembly, Meeting Of The Littoral And Hinterland States Of The Indian Ocean Summary Record Of The 3rd Meeting (A/AC.199/SR.3), July 9, 1979, p. 9.

[31] Idem.

[32] This paragraph draws partly from Alexei Petrov, "Peace For The Indian Ocean", Soviet News (London), July 12, 1977. Rear Admiral Robert J. Hanks, USN (Ret.), "The Indian Ocean Negotiations: Rocks And Shoals", Strategic Review 6 (Winter 1978), implies (p. 26) that the USSR sought "a complete ban on submarines in the Indian Ocean", not just on ballistic missile submarines.

reckoned with: they would be crucial to America's ability to "surge" forces into the Arabian Sea during a crisis and reinforce them. British and French forces had to be included in an arms control agreement too. Although America and its allies had started an arms race, that had not gone too far and it could be stopped. First there must be no deployments by aircraft carriers, SSBNs or B-52s. Next there must be no foreign bases in the area; established ones such as Diego Garcia and the Middle East Force's base at Manama, Bahrain must be removed and no new ones built. Then in

> solving the question of foreign military bases on these lines, the Soviet Union would be ready, together with other powers, to look for ways to reduce on a mutual basis the military activities of states without coastlines in the Indian Ocean and in areas adjacent to it.[33]

The Soviets would not give factual information about their presence in the Indian Ocean area, refusing to acknowledge, for example, their important use of Berbera.

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[33] Petrov, "Peace For The Indian Ocean". Alexei G. Arbatov, "Arms Limitation And The Situation In The Asian-Pacific and Indian Ocean Regions", Asian Survey 24 (November 1984), 1114, offers a retrospective outline of the Soviets' bargaining position. The first stage of an agreement, in which the levels of military presence would be "frozen" or stabilized,

> should include the levels of military presence of the parties' allies (the 'allies factor') and the availability of military bases for the U.S. and its allies, including their bases in the region directly situated in the Indian Ocean (the 'neighboring areas factor'). During the first stage, the parties should make a commitment not to send their strategic forces to the Indian Ocean and to refrain from creating an infrastructure there to support the operation of their strategic forces.

The US and the USSR could decide "not to send large naval forces to the Indian Ocean, not to hold military maneuvers, and not to create new military bases there. No power should try to establish its sphere of interest or influence in the Indian Ocean." A second stage in the negotiations would involve "the gradual and consecutive reduction of military activity and liquidation of foreign military bases."

They interpreted the United States' interests in the area narrowly - defence of sea lanes - in order better to justify strict limits on permissible US deployments[34] and they proposed that limits be applied only to warships, not to (the relatively more numerous Soviet) logistic and naval-related vessels. They proposed too that those limits be determined on the basis of the number of "ton-days" each side's naval forces could spend in the Indian Ocean annually.* Finally, as part of bringing militarily pertinent "adjacent areas" into consideration, the Soviets sought to enlarge the United Nations' definition of the Indian Ocean. It occupied an expanse, according to one Soviet account, from

> the southern tip of Africa in the west to Tasmania in the east, from the southern approaches to the Suez Canal to Torres Strait south of Papua New Guinea, and from the mouths of the Tigris and the Euphrates to the Antarctic ice-cap. This area includes the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal, and the Red, Arabian, Andaman, Timor and Arafura seas.[35] (Italics added.)

By including the Timor and Arafura seas in its definition of the Indian Ocean, the USSR intended to incorporate most, if not all of Australia into the Indian Ocean area. In consequence the Soviet version of Indian Ocean arms control would impose restrictions on Australian military forces, bases

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* The application of that criterion would allow the Soviets to keep more ships in the area longer than America, because US aircraft carriers were much heavier than all classes of Soviet combatant. An 80,000-ton aircraft carrier deploying for 30 days would accumulate 2.4 million "ton-days". This number of "ton-days" would permit a Soviet cruiser, two destroyers and a frigate to deploy for about three months. Depending on at how low a level an aggregate the "ton-days" allowance was fixed, the US Navy could be forced to cut back severely an aircraft carrier's deployment time in order to allow time for ships accompanying the aircraft carrier and for surface action groups, the Middle East Force and possible crisis responses.

[34] This point is adapted from Jack Fuller, "Dateline Diego Garcia: Paved-Over Paradise", Foreign Policy, no. 28 (Fall 1977), p. 186.

[35] Vladimirov, "Indian Ocean Dangers", p. 18.

and activities as well as Australian facilities used by the US to support strategic nuclear operations and conventional naval operations, notably North-West Cape and Cockburn Sound respectively. Australian-American defence cooperation under the ANZUS treaty such as joint exercises would be affected too.

The US side noted the absence of significant military competition between the Americans and the Soviets in the Indian Ocean and agreed with the USSR that an arms race ought to be avoided. It preferred stabilization of the super-powers' presences and, later on, their reduction. It rejected the Soviets' view of Diego Garcia as a "base"; that would be completed and used as planned, which did not include support for strategic nuclear submarines or B-52 bombers. Therefore, the matter of solving the "bases" issue before reducing military forces did not arise. Aircraft carriers would continue their usual Indian Ocean deployments and the US delegation neither confirmed nor denied the presence of nuclear weapons aboard them. Similarly it would neither confirm nor deny the operation of SSBNs in the Indian Ocean. The US would not discuss the activities and facilities in the area of regional states and its European allies. It could not negotiate for them; the talks were bilateral only. It was not prepared to discuss its bases in the Philippines and it rejected the inclusion of Australia within a definition of the Indian Ocean area. The ocean itself washed only that state's western coast. The US would not negotiate in a way that would infringe upon the sovereignty and security of its Australian ally.

Stabilization of the Soviet and American presences meant to the United States that both parties would not do anything which they were not already doing in terms of deploying aircraft, ships and submarines and using bases and facilities. The US called Berbera a Soviet base and sought to prevent the USSR from obtaining further bases or facilities. The American

side wanted also to stop the possible stationing at Berbera of Soviet attack aircraft. It defined broadly the Soviet maritime presence in the Indian Ocean, including non-combatants such as naval auxiliaries and space event support ships as well as fighting ships. Non-combatants and also some fishing trawlers had military-related uses such as intelligence gathering and monitoring of communications and could sometimes be used for political purposes. The Americans considered transits through the Indian Ocean as part of the USSR's presence in the area and thus subject to negotiation; transits must not be manipulated in order to side-step an arms control agreement. Submarines were, of course, to be counted; the way to verify their compliance with an agreement was a difficult problem which would have to be solved. For the United States the most satisfactory general measure of naval presence was "ship-days": because the Soviets maintained more ships in the Indian Ocean for a longer time than did the US, an arms control agreement based on an aggregate annual allowance of "ship-days" would curtail the Soviet presence more than the American presence.

Round Two

The second round of the negotiations was held in Washington from September 26 to September 30, 1977. The talks "had entered an advanced and practical stage" in which the two sides expressed "interest in achieving practical results...."[36] There had been

> a further exchange of views on the approaches to arms limitation in the area. Various aspects of the problem under consideration had been specified, elements of similarity in the positions of the two sides had been explored and questions which required a further effort to overcome the remaining differences had been clarified.[37]

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[36] United Nations, General Assembly, Ad Hoc Committee On The Indian Ocean, Summary Record Of The 49th Meeting (A/AC.159/SR.49), October 10, 1977, p. 3.

[37] Idem.

The American side put forward a draft proposal for an agreement which would stabilize at their June 1977 level the two parties' military presence, activities and facilities: the US and the USSR would not increase the size of their naval and air forces or alter significantly their pattern of deployment; neither would engage in forward deployment of forces "in a fighting mode", that is, neither would maintain more than one task group or squadron in the Indian Ocean at any time;* and they would not acquire further logistic facilities. The US said that it would undertake no further construction at Diego Garcia, once current projects were completed, if the USSR would agree to a similar restriction on Berbera. An initial agreement of five years duration would leave the Americans free

> to continue our routine pattern of activities. We would maintain our Middle East Force and continue our pattern of periodic task group deployments to the Indian Ocean. Our ships could continue to transit the area and to make routine port calls in littoral countries. We would maintain our facility on Diego Garcia. Our military forces would continue to participate in military exercises with our ANZUS and CENTO partners. The military forces of our allies would not be limited by the agreement.[38]

Equally the Soviets would be free to use Berbera and to continue their operational practices such as port visits, training cruises, oceanographic research and submarine movements. Among the subjects the agreement would not cover were "the deployment of ground forces or the provision of military equipment to littoral states. The agreement would apply only to United States and Soviet forces...."[39] After an adequately verifiable agreement had been reached, the US would

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* That would mean that the USSR would not be allowed to introduce an anti-aircraft carrier force, as it had done in 1971 and 1973, in addition to its usual deployed squadron.

[38] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Arms Limitations, p. 6.

[39] Ibid., p. 7.

be "prepared to consider mutual reductions in force levels during a second phase of the talks".[40] The American proposal avoided "more precise methods of limiting naval forces" such as "ceilings on overall ship tonnage and limits on the length of time that fleets could remain in the area" because they benefited either the Soviet or the American presence.[41]

The USSR apparently accepted the American approach of first "freezing", then in time reducing both sides' presence.[42] In their communique at the end of the second round the parties mentioned the "possibility of a step-by-step implementation of appropriate measures...;" the "initial steps should contribute effectively to preventing the build-up of arms in the ... area."[43] But the Soviet "concession" in accepting the US approach was only tactical and temporary: in the communique the delegations had also "expressed their intention to move promptly in the period of implementation of

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[40] Idem. An oblique indication of the nature of proposals for reductions already considered by the US, if not made by it in round two, came from Morarji Desai, then Prime Minister of India. He is reported to have alleged in early 1978 that the US and the USSR had agreed "on no increase in their bases or force levels in the area. It was then to be their objective to lessen their presence every year thereafter until it disappeared." Lieutenant Commander J.F. Giblin, U.S. Navy, Indian Ocean NALT: An Exercise In The Revision Of U.S. Foreign Policy (Newport: Center for Advanced Research, U.S. Naval War College, June 1979), p. 30. Further, by the time of the second round of negotiations, ACDA had contracted for a "preliminary comparative assessment of the relative impact on the U.S. and Soviet Union of a mutual complete basing denial of superpower General Purpose Naval Forces (GPNFs) in the Indian Ocean". (Italics added.) See memorandum (Serial 73-78) of May 4,1978 from Systems Planning And Analysis, Inc. to ACDA on Summary Report for Contract Number AC7WC120, Indian Ocean Naval Arms Control Assessment, p. 2.

[41] New York Times, September 26, 1977; ---, November 20, 1977.

[42] However, according to the New York Times of November 20, 1977, the Soviets and the Americans had not yet resolved the sensitive issues of what changes could be made to existing facilities and how free the two sides would be to establish facilities at other ports.

[43] United Nations, Record Of The 49th Meeting, p. 3.

such initial steps to further talks on reductions."[44] Then the USSR would press for its substantive objectives.

## Round Three

Round three of the US-USSR talks took place in Berne, Switzerland from December 6 to December 10, 1977. The Soviet side presented proposals for an arms control agreement which called for important reductions quite soon after the phase of stabilization. Those proposals indicated the Soviets' retreat from apparent acceptance of the timing of the US "freeze" approach back to their initial negotiating position. Probably that retreat was caused by the Somali government's expulsion of the Soviets from Berbera and their other Somali facilities in November because of their support for Ethiopia in the war with Somalia.

Although the State Department later denied that the Soviet Union had raised unexpected difficulties leading to a "snag" in the negotiations, a TASS report on December 20, 1977 suggested that the USSR had indeed become less flexible. At the negotiations the Soviet delegation had "agreed with a stage-by-stage approach..., but did so only to help bring closer the USSR-USA positions, since the United States proved to be not ready for radical steps in the sphere of military detente...."[45] The Soviet stand was well-known:

> "Daring, radical steps are required to have a fundamental solution of the question of consolidating peace in the Indian Ocean area -- it is necessary to eliminate all foreign military bases there and reduce the military presence of the non-coastal states."[46]

According to American sources the Soviet negotiators now insisted that an agreement to stabilize the super-power naval

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[44] Idem.

[45] CIA, FBIS, Soviet Union (December 20, 1977), A9.

[46] Idem.

balance

> would have to be coupled with a pledge by both parties to reduce their forces significantly in the near future. In addition, Moscow is said to have restated that an accord would have to ban nuclear-armed vessels - surface ships and submarines - from the region.[47]

Both proposals were unacceptable to the US side: the former because although the Carter administration did not oppose reductions in principle, negotiations on that matter were intended to follow a stabilization agreement; the latter because it would not permit America to send aircraft carriers into the Indian Ocean.[48] On the issue of facilities the Soviets wanted the US either to dismantle Diego Garcia or to accept an agreement whose provisions would permit them to compensate for the lost Somali facilities with ones in South Yemen, Ethiopia or both. (The USSR's interest in acquiring Indian Ocean facilities was shown before the loss of Berbera by its request in summer 1977 to the Maldives for use of Gan island, whose air facilities had been vacated by Britain in 1976. The Maldivan government rejected the Soviet request.) Further, the Soviets were reported to want again an agreement to govern French and British forces and facilities and to include Australia in the definition of the Indian Ocean area.[49]

A month later, on January 18, 1978, an article in Pravda intimated a somewhat moderated Soviet bargaining position, one which was nearer the US position in that it did not call for a quick reduction of the two sides' military presence or for the elimination of bases. A

radical approach to the solution of disarmament questions

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[47] International Herald Tribune, December 20, 1977.

[48] Idem.

[49] Christian Science Monitor, January 24, 1978.

> always promises greater effectiveness. But if one side is not ready for that, then a gradual approach, by stages can also be used. This can also prove useful and to a certain extent effective. But then it is necessary in applying this approach for the sides to agree on real, serious steps for the first stage. Consequently, the first stage -- the stage of "stabilization," "freezing" or "mutual restraint" -- must include provisions banning the entry into the Indian Ocean and deploying in its waters, on its shores and on islands those weapons systems which have not been there previously, restricting the presence of warships in the ocean and military aircraft in its airspace and at airbases to the present level, renouncing the construction of new military bases there and ending the expansion of existing bases.
>
> ... the "stabilization" or "freeze" should be the beginning of a process leading to a real reduction in the level of military activity in the Indian Ocean, including, of course, corresponding measures with respect to military bases.[50]

The article might have been intended to communicate that the USSR would be somewhat more accommodating in round four, thus keeping the US interested in the talks* and mitigating criticism by the JCS that the negotiations would give the Soviets an advantage over the United States.

## Round Four

At the fourth session of the negotiations, held at Berne from February 7 to February 17, 1978, the US and the USSR delegations "continued to discuss proposals put forward by both sides." There had been a "certain measure of agreement on a number of questions, including the desirability of a staged approach beginning with an agreement not to increase current military presence and moving on promptly to

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* Brzezinski and Brown had lost interest when the Soviets lost access to the Somali facilities and could no longer bargain on an equal basis.

[50] S. Vladimirov, "An Urgent Problem", Pravda, January 18, 1978 in CIA, FBIS, Soviet Union (January 24, 1978), AA 4.

negotiations on reductions."[51] A drafting group had begun work on initial joint draft texts of several segments of the agreement and two working groups had been established in order to examine and resolve technical issues. The discussions were characterized as "frank and useful."

"Frank" referred to the American delegation's expressed disapproval of the USSR's provision to Ethiopia of military advisers and equipment and its introduction of more than 10,000 Cuban troops in order to help the Ethiopian war effort against Somalia. The US side objected as well to the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron's increase from about 18 ships to about 35 ships in early 1978 and its operations in the Red Sea in support of Ethiopian troops fighting against Eritrean secessionist forces. The Americans' thinking was that

> Soviet naval operations in support of their political activities in the Horn [of Africa] called into question whether we had a common understanding of how a stabilization agreement would actually affect the behavior of our two sides. ...[P]olitical competition ... will continue. But the intention here was to limit the degree to which that competition would be supported by military activities. For our part, the way the Soviets supported their political activities in the Horn by increasing the level of their naval forces in the Indian Ocean was not consistent with a stabilization agreement. Unless we understand such an agreement in the same way, it would be meaningless.
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> We have made it absolutely clear to them that any agreement we sign will not permit increases in their military presence in the Indian Ocean.[52]

After considering a complete withdrawal from the negotiations, US officials "decided to downgrade efforts to achieve an agreement."[53] That decision marked a "shift" in policy

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[51] United Nations, General Assembly, Ad Hoc Committee On The Indian Ocean, Summary Record Of The 52nd Meeting (A/AC.159/SR.52), April 12, 1978, p. 3.

[52] U.S. House, Indian Ocean Arms Limitations, p. 7.

[53] New York Times, February 10, 1978.

reflecting

> a belief that Congress would be unlikely to approve any agreement as long as the Soviet Union continued to play an active role in the Somali-Ethiopian conflict. Officials said that the downgrading of the negotiations was also meant as a signal of the potential adverse consequences for Soviet-American relations.[54]

At the end of the fourth round the US delegation declined to arrange a date for a fifth round. Although the Soviet naval force increase was the immediate reason for America's postponement of the talks, the USSR's wider military intervention in the Horn war was the main cause. The Soviet role there raised, in the US view, a "key dilemma": "the inability of an essentially naval agreement to deal with the more basic issues of regional intervention by other military or non-military means."[55]

The "useful" character of round four alluded to a degree of progress reportedly made by the two working groups established to resolve technical problems rooted in the asymmetry between the structure, level and pattern of the Soviet and the American presence.[56] But problems still exceeded progress. Two of the most important ones were how to reach a common definition of "Indian Ocean", "presence", "stability", "strategic", "base" and "transit" and how to achieve balanced, comparable limits on the two sides' forces and facilities. The USSR accepted that only the western coast of Australia was part of the Indian Ocean but it did not agree with the US about the delimitation of the hinterland of the Indian Ocean area, which definition would govern the emplacement of Soviet land-based strike aircraft. Rejecting the Soviet proposal for excluding from the Indian Ocean

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[54] Idem.

[55] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 69.

[56] This paragraph draws in part from interviews with current and former US government officials.

aircraft carriers because they were part of US strategic forces, the Americans sought to work out how limits on aircraft carrier deployments could be translated into equal limits on Soviet forces, which did not include aircraft carriers. There was contention between the two sides about the distinctions between a "base" and a "facility". The definition of a "base" hinged on how much access to a port and use of it a side enjoyed and on the kind and quality of facilities a port had to possess in order to make it a "base". There was difficulty in distinguishing between a port call and a semi-permanent base[57] for the support of operational units. As in round three, the American delegation stated that the US would proceed with the expansion of Diego Garcia but it did not intend an agreement to prevent the Soviets from obtaining facilities compensating for those they had lost in Somalia. Questions quickly arose, however, about the acceptable number, type and use of those compensatory facilities and their comparability with Diego Garcia and the Middle East Force's use of facilities in Bahrain.

Among the differences between the two sides concerning "presence" was the definition of combatants. The Soviets wanted to limit all vessels with guns: American naval auxiliaries had guns; Soviet auxiliaries did not. The US wanted to count warships and submarines, including towed vessels, transiting the Indian Ocean. It wanted to take into account as well Soviet naval-related but non-auxiliary ships such as elements of the Soviet merchant marine which were part of the wider Soviet maritime military organization and which reflected the relatively greater Soviet dependence on afloat support. The Americans sought to determine what was an acceptable time for a transit before it became a presence. Sensitive about the USSR's possible use for political advantage of lengthy transits as quasi-deployments, they rejected a Soviet proposal for an allowance of 90 days for

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[57] Los Angeles Times, February 5, 1978.

transiting the Indian Ocean. By the fourth round of the negotiations the US and the USSR had only begun to consider a formula for the measurement of "presence", which was necessary as a reference point for a stabilization agreement. That such a formula would consist of a compromise involving a combination of "ship-days" and "ton-days" was easy to recognise but complex to elaborate satisfactorily. Also, submarine verification remained a difficulty: neither party wished to divulge information about its submarine movements. It was reported that flights over the Indian Ocean by patrol aircraft and aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons "would be subject to control"[58] but how to achieve equivalence on this point was not clear. Did it mean no B-52 or F-111 deployments in return for no deployments of Soviet "Backfire" strike bombers and other land-based strike aircraft, when none of the Soviet aircraft had a potential strategic nuclear role to perform? The Americans did not know what limits they wanted to place on the Soviets' land-based strike aircraft because they still had not thought through how the US itself might want to use such aircraft in the future.

By the end of the fourth round of negotiations the US and the USSR had concurred that an agreement would be bilateral, last five years and stabilize the two sides' respective air and naval presence at their level in spring 1977.[59] An agreement would prevent either state from increasing the level of its naval presence or changing the pattern of deployments. Naval ships, logistic facilities and land-based strike aircraft would be subject to control but commercial vessels, the deployment of ground forces, the provision of military equipment to littoral states, the forces of allies and political and economic competition would not be covered. The two sides had come to terms about a general framework for an

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[58] Idem.

[59] This paragraph derives mainly from U.S. House, Indian Ocean Limitation Report, p. 4.

agreement; an escape provision which would permit the two parties to withdraw legally from an agreement in the event of a major crisis or a change of circumstances which jeopardized "supreme" national interests;[60] and about a provision that there would be subsequent consultations on the implementation of the agreement and negotiations leading to mutual force reductions. But after the fourth round many major issues remained unresolved: the definition of the Indian Ocean, the scope of each side's current activities and force level, methods to measure military presence - no specific proposals on numbers and types of ships had been formally exchanged - and the number and type of facilities available to the two sides and their use of them. Also unresolved was the matter of strategic systems: the USSR wanted a provision for their prohibition from the Indian Ocean while the US insisted that they be left out of an agreement.[61] Even the two sides'

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[60] According to Haass, "Arms Control at Sea", "an allowance for surges was raised with the Soviets ... but no agreement was reached." fn. 28, p. 247.

[61] India, The United States And The Indian Ocean Report Of The Indo-American Task Force On The Indian Ocean (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, New Delhi: The Institute Of Defense Studies And Analysis, 1985) points out that "the draft agreement would have prohibited both sides from altering 'significantly past patterns and levels of military deployments' in the region, acquiring new bases and expanding then existing facilities." (p. 95.) Thus "since neither side had previously deployed strategic bomber aircraft in the region, neither could introduce such deployment." (p. 95.) But although the draft agreement stipulated that "neither side had previously established in the Indian Ocean 'facilities dedicated to supporting forward deployed submarines' and contained an explicit pledge that neither would introduce such facilities in the future", it

> did not cover operations by submarines relying on bases or support facilities located outside of the Indian Ocean.... This would have permitted dual-capable attack submarines to operate in the Indian Ocean, American and Soviet alike, and would not have precluded U.S. deployments of nuclear missile-firing submarines. (p. 101.)

Here "the bargain was going to be that the U.S. would give some assurances on strategic deployments to the Soviets, and

agreement that an initial accord would stabilize their presences concealed a formidable bargaining difficulty. The Soviets made their acceptance of an initial agreement conditional on US acceptance of their objectives for reductions which were incompatible with America's objective of stabilization (and perhaps reductions later on), about which it was not prepared to compromise.

## Eclipse of Negotiations

In April 1978 Vance pointed out that the Indian Ocean negotiations had only been postponed and would be resumed. But resumption was prevented by important new developments and their consequences which led to a change of emphasis in US strategic policy away from arms control. First, in 1978 the opinion began to prevail in the US government that the Soviet Union was not observing (America's version of) the "code" of detente. By continuing to interfere in Africa - intervention in the Horn, alleged support for an attack by Katangan rebels into Zaire from Angola and military assistance to the Patriotic Front guerrilla forces in Rhodesia, the USSR was showing unwillingness to moderate the competition with the US. At home it was repressing dissidents and its military "build-up" was proceeding unabated. Dwindling tolerance of the USSR and growing doubt about detente within Congress and the Executive branch led to increasing opposition to SALT II and, by association, to other initiatives to regulate arms. That opposition generated division among proponents of arms control

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the Soviets in turn would provide some assurances about land-based aircraft in the region." (p. 97.) But the USSR viewed aircraft carriers as strategic systems and was not prepared to restrict deployments of land-based aircraft, which might be needed against aircraft carriers, unless the US curbed its aircraft carrier deployments. The US, on the other hand, "was reluctant to accept limits on its carrier deployments in the absence of restrictions on Soviet land-based aircraft capabilities." (p. 105.) The super-powers disagreed also about "how to define the geographic boundaries of the Indian Ocean in such a way as to permit the U.S. to continue to use its bases in Western Australia for communication and other support of naval units, including submarines, and to upgrade and expand these bases as desired." (p. 96.)

which weakened their advocacy of the Indian Ocean negotiations. Some sought a renewal of the talks when in June 1978 the size of the Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean returned to its "normal", lower level as of spring 1977. On the other hand a more influential group decided to abandon the negotiations in order better to concentrate on the highest priority: completing the SALT II treaty and gaining its approval by Congress.

Second, the relative stability of the Persian Gulf was an essential condition for resuming the negotiations but in light of growing unrest in Iran, the US rejected the USSR's request in September 1978 to reconvene them. And when the Shah of Iran fell from power in January 1979, all realistic prospects for Indian Ocean arms control ended. By then the National Security Council and the Department of Defence had begun to devise a larger, more direct and active American military role in upholding Persian Gulf security. Soon, in summer 1979, the Executive branch decided as a matter of policy to increase the US naval presence in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area and to expand further the facilities at Diego Garcia. In December 1979 the US took initial steps to acquire access to regional military facilities in order to support the enlarged American naval presence and potential contingency operations by the "rapid deployment force". By that time two US aircraft carrier task groups were on station in the Arabian Sea in response to the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran in November, and their deployment was made continuous after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Their presence and the deployment of six other task groups during the previous year, not in response to a Soviet naval force increase but in order to signal America's greater concern for regional security and resolve to protect its interests, greatly exceeded the three cruises a year allowed by the arms stabilization concept. Its much enhanced naval presence was the most concrete indication that the United States had abandoned arms control for the Indian Ocean area.

## The Arms Control Negotiations

The Indian Ocean arms control negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union began in June 1977, when the likelihood of a naval arms race was negligible. Both sides were already practising de facto arms control and they were exercising "tacit restraint" because they realized that introducing more naval forces into the Indian Ocean area served no purpose in the then relatively stable conditions. Reaching an arms control agreement seemed feasible, even if one did not appear to be necessary. On the US side necessity was bestowed on arms control by its proponents in the Carter administration who were deeply reluctant to use the armed forces. A naval presence, they felt, had low utility for supporting US security policy in the Indian Ocean other than for counterbalancing the Soviet naval squadron. Preventing an increase in the super-powers' naval presences and in time negotiating their reduction would bring more benefit to US security policy for the Indian Ocean area than routine display by the US Navy. Nor would an arms control agreement critically impair America's maritime capability to respond to crises. An agreement would provide a stronger, more formal barrier to a possible arms race than would "tacit restraint".

Apart from an initial stabilization of the Soviet and the American forces and facilities, the US had not thought through what its negotiating objectives were. Stabilization was a compromise between arms control advocates and the US armed services and some civilian officials who opposed arms reductions, indeed the negotiations themselves. At bottom opponents thought that because the US depended more on its maritime forces than did the USSR in the Indian Ocean area, an agreement would impose more disadvantage and restraint on America than on the Soviet Union. Negotiations widened to encompass the USSR's strength, its geographically proximate land-based forces in the southern USSR, would not be acceptable to it.

Even had the clashing Soviet and American negotiating objectives been reconciled, serious technical difficulties overcome and an "equal" bargain made, an arms control agreement would have been of narrow relevance and uncertain efficacy. As the escape clause in the draft agreement suggested, neither side was prepared to accept an agreement inhibiting its capacity to respond to threats to its vital interests with a higher level of naval forces, even though that response might cause an arms race. ("Vital" could be interpreted broadly.) An agreement which stabilized forces already adequate to deal with minor threats tended to be superfluous. Of course that might not be so: if several minor crises occurred within a year, the US would be "compelled" not to respond perhaps to one of them in order to keep within its annual quota of three deployments by 7th Fleet forces. But if the US or the USSR did breach an arms control agreement at a low level, that violation would be the least likely to evoke a response by the other party. The case for an agreement implicitly had to postulate an intermediate range of interests and potential threats to them which were more than a party's routine naval forces could cope with. Here the Americans and the Soviets would have had to be willing to forgo increasing their naval presence because the advantages of observing an agreement - avoidance of a possible substantial long-term force increase by the other side and the moral and political approval by the Indian Ocean states - would still be perceived as greater than the interests at stake. On an occasion when one side's apparently less than vital interests were involved, the war in the Horn of Africa in 1977-78, the USSR's naval force increase indicated that it might not always be willing to exercise the restraint required by an arms control agreement. More restrained behaviour by the US if its intermediate interests were challenged would be questionable too.

America's willingness to be bound by an arms stabilization agreement or to reach an agreement which reduced

the two sides' maritime forces and facilities was never established. It postponed the negotiations initially because it objected to the Soviets' intervention in the Horn war and their simultaneous naval force increase in the Red Sea. But more importantly, as security and stability in the Persian Gulf began to decline from late 1978, the US assumed that increased naval display would make a more valuable contribution to achieving its security objectives at the regional level than would preventing a potential maritime arms race with the USSR. Why and how the United States modified its strategic policy in response to changing conditions in the Gulf will be discussed in the next two chapters.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## MAJOR MODIFICATION OF POLICY, 1979

In 1979 the United States adjusted its strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area from minor naval display to increased display and more direct and active deterrence against the Soviet Union. It was prepared also to deter Iraq more actively, if still tacitly, by the latter half of 1979, when intervention in the Persian Gulf in order to "protect" access to oil in the event of "turbulence" within (friendly) states became an acceptable policy option. The modification of policy was a response to deteriorating security and stability in the Gulf after the Iranian revolution and fall of the Shah and to the view, held chiefly by Brzezinski, that the USSR was becoming stronger, more adventurist and influential and was prepared to exploit regional instability at the West's expense. As part of signalling greater concern for its interests, reassuring friends that it was a dependable security actor and countering the Soviets politically as well as deterring potential aggression by them, America enlarged its naval presence in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, planned to approximate a land-based force presence in South-West Asia, began to organize a "rapid deployment force", decided to expand further Diego Garcia and made initial arrangements to gain access to military facilities in Oman, Somalia and Kenya. The United States' modified strategic policy was weakened by the unwillingness of friendly Gulf states, except Oman from December 1979, for political reasons to cooperate with it and provide access to their military facilities and by its slight readily available combat and logistic capability.

This chapter examines first the setting in 1979-1980* of America's policy revision and the initial adjustment of its

* For continuity of analysis the setting in 1979-1980 of the policy modification process is discussed in this chapter. That incremental process, not completed when the Carter

strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area and the security policy governing it. Next it investigates the origin and early conceptual development of the "rapid deployment force" and surveys the debate within the Executive branch of the US government about the armed forces' role and value in contributing to America's regional security policy. After discussing the Carter administration's policy decisions in summer 1979 and the "rapid deployment force" concept it created, the chapter concludes by noting why, in response to the "hostage crisis", America became more willing to use the armed forces and by outlining its additional strategic policy decisions in late autumn 1979.

## The Setting of Policy Revision

America, and its European allies and Japan to a critical extent, depended on oil from the Persian Gulf which had become less stable and less easily able to manage its security after the Iranian revolution and fall of the Shah in January 1979.[1] Whether by "turbulence" within the Gulf states or by conflict between them as in the case of the Iran-Iraq war beginning in September 1980, the possibility had increased that the flow of oil to the West would be interrupted and cause serious economic disruption. In the Gulf America's political position and influence declined markedly in 1979-1980. Of the three major Gulf states, its relations with Iraq and now Iran, particularly after the seizure of the US embassy staff in Tehran in November 1979, were unfriendly. And Saudi Arabia

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administration left office in January 1981, was lengthy and complex and in order to avoid unwieldiness of presentation, the analysis of policy is divided between this and the next chapter.

[1] Two useful sources which discuss the momentous events of 1979-1980, and from which this section draws, are Strategic Survey for 1979 and 1980-81 (London: International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1980, 1981); Colin Legum, Haim Shaked, Daniel Dishon, eds., Middle East Contemporary Survey vol. 3, 1978-1979; vol. 4, 1979-1980; vol. 5, 1980-1981. The Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980, 1981, 1982).

considered conspicuous and closer association with the US to be a liability because it had sponsored the politically unacceptable Camp David accords (September 1978) and peace treaty (March 1979) between Egypt and Israel. The ensuing diplomatic isolation of Egypt and limitation of the Saudis' freedom of political action undercut the moderating influence in the Middle East of the United States' two main Arab friends. As a result of the above developments, America's Gulf security policy founded on the Nixon Doctrine collapsed and the political basis for a modified security policy was weak. As the Gulf, above all Iran, became less stable, the Soviet Union seemed to pose a greater threat to it. The USSR's military intervention in Afghanistan from December 1979 reinforced America's concern that by its nearby military presence or by force of arms if it occupied Iran, the Soviet Union might come to exert immense influence over the Persian Gulf states, their oil and Western security.

## The Iranian Revolution

In Iran the revolution starting in 1978 led to the overthrow of Shah Muhammad Riza Pahlavi in January 1979, to the weakening of the central government and to continuous instability as political and religous factions struggled for power and to define the direction of the revolution. While the armed forces disintegrated, national minorities, notably the Kurds, sought to increase their autonomy. The economy deteriorated to the point of collapse because sharply curtailed oil production resulted in heavy loss of national income.

Besides becoming a prominent, if not the paramount factor in Iran's domestic politics, Shia Islam transformed its foreign policy.[2] The pursuit of objectives derived from

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[2] On the regional and international consequences of the Iranian revolution and the setting of Persian Gulf security in 1979-1980, consult Shahram Chubin, "Repercussions of the Crisis in Iran", Survival 21 (May-June 1979), 98-106; Valerie York, The Gulf in the 1980s Chatham House Papers No. 6 (London: Royal

secular nationalism and raison d'etat gave way to a commitment by Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the Shias, and his mullahs to unifying the Islamic world and asserting its independence from East and West. The overthrow of Iraq and the other Sunni governments in the Persian Gulf was called for because they had failed to obey Islamic law and the monarchical basis (exept for Iraq) of their rule was not legitimate. Further they had denied their Shia population its political, economic and social rights and they were dominated by America. More mundanely Iran declared its non-alignment in international politics. It withdrew from the Central Treaty Organization and in effect repudiated its bilateral security agreements with America and the Soviet Union. It disavowed its role as the main guarantor of Persian Gulf security and reduced its security perimeter to its frontiers and territorial waters: Iranian troops withdrew from Oman and the navy ceased to patrol the Strait of Hormuz and the sea lanes of the Gulf.

From the vantage point of the Gulf Arab states, the Iranian revolution transformed their neighbour from a source of stability to one of threat and insecurity. It exacerbated tensions within those states because the Shias in Iraq and

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Institute of International Affairs, 1980); ---, "Security in the Gulf: a strategy of pre-emption", The World Today 36 (July 1980), 239-250; Eilts, "Security Considerations in the Persian Gulf", pp. 79-113; Marvin Zonis, "Exporting The Iranian Revolution: United States Security In The Persian Gulf", prepared statement in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, pp. 123-134; Amirsadeghi, The Security Of The Persian Gulf; Shahram Chubin, ed., Domestic Political Factors Security in the Persian Gulf 1 (Farnborough, Hampshire: Published for the International Institute For Strategic Studies by Gower, 1981); Robert Litwak, Sources of Inter-State Conflict Security in the Persian Gulf 2 (Montclair, New Jersey: Published for The International Institute For Strategic Studies by Allanheld, Osmun, 1981); Avi Plascov, Modernization, Political Development and Stability Security in the Persian Gulf 3 (Aldershot, Hants.: Published for The International Institute For Strategic Studies by Gower, 1982); Shahram Chubin, The Role of Outside Powers Security in the Persian Gulf 4 (Totowa, New Jersey: Published for The International Institute For Strategic Studies by Allanheld, Osmun, 1982).

Bahrain, where they were a majority, and in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were incited by Iranian clerics to demonstrate and riot in protest against their position inferior to the Sunnis. The revolution heightened uncertainty about the resilience and stability of societies in transition to "modernity" because it showed that political unrest generated by modernization could undermine the authority of the conservative Gulf rulers if they did not respond astutely to demands for change. On the other hand the seizure of the Grand Mosque at Mecca in November 1979 by Muslim extremists suggested the necessity to accommodate to change carefully, within an Islamic context.

The Iranian revolution also altered the balance of power and pattern of relations among the Gulf states. It dissolved the informal association between the Saudi and Iranian monarchies intended to curb the influence of republican, socialist Iraq and prompted an improvement in relations between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The Saudis had neither the inclination nor resources to take on greater responsibility for Gulf security and because Iraq was now more powerful than Iran and Iran was more a threat than Iraq, caution required them discreetly to increase collaboration with the Iraqis, for instance by exchanging information about internal security. Most explosively the Iranian revolution shattered the detente between Iran and Iraq and reactivated the complex historical conflict between them. Having become the strongest regional military power, Iraq intended to assert its primacy not only in the Gulf but also, after the unacceptable "separate" peace between Egypt and Israel, in the wider Arab world. From the middle of 1979, friction between Iraq and Iran grew steadily as each tried to undermine the other. By summer 1980 Iraq had decided to attack Iran, intending to induce the collapse of its cleric-dominated regime and to establish Iraqi regional paramountcy. The danger to the other Gulf states from the Iraq-Iran war, which would last for almost eight years, was that they might be caught up in the conflict: the Iraqis would make heavy demands for their political and financial support

and the Iranians would threaten reprisals, bombing their oil installations, attacking their shipping or both if they continued to help Iraq.

The principal danger from the Iranian revolution at the international level, it was feared in the Gulf, was that greater regional instability might draw in more actively the super-powers individually and in competition; as a consequence the Gulf states' independence might be jeopardized. The USSR had intervened in the war in the Horn of Africa in 1977-78 and signed a "Friendship" treaty with Ethiopia in November 1978. One month later it signed a similar treaty with Afghanistan, Marxists having seized power in Kabul in April 1978. A coup by the pro-Soviet faction of the Marxist government in South Yemen in June 1978 was followed in autumn 1979 by a Soviet-South Yemeni "Friendship" treaty. As a result the USSR gained access to military facilities in South Yemen and Ethiopia. Because the Soviets always sought to "safeguard" the security of their southern territory as well as to increase their influence, they might be tempted to meddle in Iran, for instance by helping the communist Tudeh party to seize power. As for America it might be more prone to rash military intervention in a crisis within a friendly Gulf state in order to "protect" the West's access to oil. Military action by the leading "imperialist" power and abettor of Israel would be much more dangerous than helpful. Conversely America's "abandonment" of the Shah when somehow it could have done "more" to save him posed acute questions about the relevance and value of the US to the conservative Gulf Arab states' security, specifically about its means, will and dependability to help them, if requested. Already raised by America's inaction during the war in the Horn of Africa, their doubts about the United States' seriousness and resolve to pursue its own interests, much less to protect its "friends" (except where the USSR was clearly involved), weakened its influence and reputation. The failure of the US attempt in April 1980 to rescue the US diplomatic hostages in Tehran served to

reinforce the impression that the US was "ineffective".

From the US perspective the Iranian revolution was "the greatest setback for American interests in the Middle East in the post-war era."[3] First, Iran was no longer a reliable supplier of oil to the West and a lucrative market for Western goods and services, not least US arms. Besides leading to a doubling of the price of oil in 1979, the revolution highlighted the vulnerability of oil production to internal political disturbances and intensified the sense that other Gulf states were now more fragile and less able to assure their stability. As America's European and Japanese allies depended heavily on oil from the Gulf, the revolution was an acute reminder that a lengthy interruption of a sizable fraction of oil production there would trouble the entire Western economy. Second, Iran seemed more susceptible, if not actually subject to Soviet interference. Thirdly, withdrawal from the Central Treaty Organization by Iran and then by Turkey, whose political and economic instability was a large worry to NATO, and Pakistan, whose indifferent relations with America reached a nadir in late 1979, resulted in the formal demise of CENTO and the "northern tier" security concept on which it had been predicated. By economic and military support for and political association with the three "norther tier" states contiguous to or near the southern USSR, the US had tried to block Soviet political and strategic access to the Persian Gulf region. More immediately and importantly Iran ceased to be a close US friend which in accord with the Nixon Doctrine took primary responsibility for Gulf security and thereby protected generally parallel American regional interests and enabled the US to avoid an unwanted more direct strategic role. Losing Iran's willingness to cooperate with it and provide access to its bases in a contingency, America suddenly found its capacity to use and support its armed forces in the Persian Gulf reduced to a minumum. The collapse

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[3] Chubin, "Repercussions", p. 101.

of the Nixon Doctrine induced by the Iranian revolution and Iran's sudden change into a threat to regional stability compelled the US government to redefine its security policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area.

The principal outcome of the fall of the Shah for the Soviet Union was the serious political and strategic reversal to America rather than direct advantages for itself. The Soviets could not overlook the passing of a predictable, stable (until 1978) regime with which they had maintained detente and advantageous economic relations since the middle 1960s. Although Iran had adjusted its foreign policy in some ways happening to favour the USSR, the revolutionary "government" in Tehran did not become more compliant to it. History, contiguity, nationalism, Islam and strong anti-communist sentiments made Iran suspicious of the Soviets' avowed respect for its independence, as did their reaffirmation of articles 5 and 6 of the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921 which gave them the right of defensive intervention in Iran against a third party potentially threatening Soviet security. Rather than present dramatic "opportunities" to the USSR, instability in Iran required it to exercise caution and patience in order to put the two states' relations back on a steady footing.

## The Egypt-Israel Treaty

As their sponsor the United States viewed the Camp David accords and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty as a major stage towards a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arabs and the creation of an autonomous Palestinian homeland. The Middle East "peace process" would prevent a fifth Arab-Israeli war and another oil embargo. An informal coalition of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and, as the Carter administration had expected in 1977-78, imperial Iran would provide security and stability throughout the Middle East and help to check the Soviet Union's involvement there. America's role in regional security and its military presence could remain relatively

limited and inconspicuous. Egypt saw the "peace process" as a way to assert its "natural" leading role in the Arab world and to negotiate to resolution the outstanding issues between the Arabs and the Israelis: the latter's occupation of East Jerusalem and other Arab territories and the right of the Palestinians to an independent state. Egypt would also avoid further costly conflict with Israel, regain the Sinai peninsula, consolidate its informal alliance with America and obtain aid from it in order to rebuild its economy. The Israelis gave up the Sinai peninsula, important for its oil and their defence, but they gained diplomatic recognition from their most imposing foe and minimized the military threat from it. Having secured its southern front, Israel would be better able to deter Syria and achieve its security interests in Lebanon. The Israelis did not intend to make fundamental concessions about Palestinian autonomy or the status of East Jerusalem; nor would they change their settlement policy for the West Bank, all of which led to an impasse by 1980 in negotiations on those topics with Egypt.

Nearly every Arab state and all the Persian Gulf states except Oman found the Camp David accords and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty politically unacceptable, opposed them and cut diplomatic relations with Egypt.[4] The accords and treaty did not provide the framework for Israel's withdrawal from the Arab lands occupied since the 1967 war, the restoration to Arab sovereignty of East Jerusalem or the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination. By removing itself as a major source of pressure on the Israelis and concluding a "separate" peace with them, Egypt had broken unity on the most important general issue in Arab politics.

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[4] For Arab and particularly Saudi views about the "peace process" and the implications of those views for America's standing in the Persian Gulf, see Wall Street Journal, June 11, 1979; ---, December 14, 1979; ---, July 17, 1980; "Prepared Statement Of William B. Quandt" in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, pp. 139-146 and his subsequent testimony.

The failure of the Camp David approach to deal satisfactorily with the Palestinian question threatened to compromise the security of the conservative Gulf Arab states at both the regional and internal levels. Most of those states were host to sizable numbers of Palestinians a possible outburst of whose frustration they had to anticipate. Especially if it fused with grievances related more directly to Islamic issues and modernization, that anger could cause widespread domestic unrest and endanger the survival of governments and the steady production of oil. Managing internal security was linked closely with inter-state Arab politics in which the March 1979 treaty had strengthened the influence of "radical" states such as Syria and Libya and of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Their view now predominated that President Sadat had capitulated to "imperialist and Zionist diktat" and "betrayed" the Arab nation and its interests and in response to that view the Saudis broke their informal "alliance of moderates" with Egypt and aligned with the "radical" powers in rejecting the Egypt-Israel treaty. They did so not only to oppose the treaty in their own, more cautious right and to preserve as far as possible their moderating influence on the "radicals" but also to protect themselves politically. Arab solidarity was the best defence against what otherwise would be heavy criticism that as a US "pawn" Saudi Arabia was qualifying both Arab resistance to the Camp David "peace process" and its Islamic legitimacy as the guardian of the Muslim holy places, which included Jerusalem. In the future, unrelieved frustration in the Arab world about the Palestinian issue could lead to calls for another oil embargo of the West as a way to exert pressure on Israel to make real concessions. The conservative Gulf states could be caught between subversion, terrorism and sabotage of their oil installations if they refused to cooperate and, on the other hand, Israeli air attacks or American military intervention in "protection" of access to oil if they did launch another embargo. In either case the consequences for their security, stability and independence

would be dire.

America's sponsorship of the Egypt-Israel treaty strained its relations with all the conservative Gulf Arab states except Oman. In their view, by mistakenly expecting Saudi Arabia and its lower Gulf neighbours to support the treaty, America seriously misunderstood their interests and predicament. It wanted them to produce oil at a higher level than necessary for their needs and to restrain OPEC price rises but it did not try genuinely to resolve the Palestinian question. The United States had failed to use its leverage on the Israelis in order to bring them to conclude the comprehensive peace which it had promised in 1978. By sustaining the most inflammatory conflict in the Middle East, its "peace policy" endangered the conservative Gulf governments' rule and contradicted some of its own policy objectives. Besides creating an anti-American mood and helping to radicalize Arab politics, the "peace policy" gave the Soviets a further opportunity to increase their regional influence. Generally, the "peace policy" implied, the Arabs' outlook and sensitivities were not as important to the US as those of Israel and that made conspicuous political association with the US much more a risk than a benefit. The conservative Gulf Arab states' rejection of America's "peace policy" pointed up the differences in threat perception and policy priority between them and the US and that difference prevented closer security cooperation with it after the fall of the Shah. The Gulf states emphasized internal, then regional issues of a political character, above all the Arab-Israeli conflict and the issue of the Palestinians, as the primary threats to their security. For all its efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli impasse, the US identified, particularly from 1979, the Soviet Union with its "adventurist" tendency and close-by military power as the most serious potential threat to the Persian Gulf, if not the most immediate threat to it.

## The Soviet Military Intervention in Afghanistan

The Soviet Union's military intervention in Afghanistan beginning in December 1979 was the first Soviet occupation of a state outside the Warsaw Pact since World War II. According to the USSR its intervention was intended to defend the Marxist regime in Kabul beleaguered by "counter-revolutionary" forces and to ward off "outside aggression" from America, China and Pakistan.[5] By preventing Afghanistan from becoming an "anti-Soviet stronghold" possibly with US bases, the Soviet Union had averted a security threat on its southern border. The Soviets did not plan to stay permanently in Afghanistan, provided a political solution - international acceptance of the Karmal* government and normalization of relations with it, particularly by its neighbours - was reached. Nor would they turn Afghanistan into a "springboard" for military action

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* Babrak Karmal was the leader installed by the Soviets in late December 1979 after they had murdered President Hafizullah Amin.

[5] This and the following paragraph draw on Georgi A. Arbatov, Willem Oltmans, Cold War Or Detente? The Soviet Viewpoint (London: Zed Books, 1983), pp. 2-3, 164-197, for the USSR's explanation of its intervention in Afghanistan and its declining relations with America in 1979. Raymond L. Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 887-965, discusses "Afghanistan: Soviet Intervention and the American Reaction, 1979-80". Thomas T. Hammond, Red Flag Over Afghanistan (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984) seeks to explain "Why the Soviets Invaded Afghanistan" (pp. 130-147). See also Henry S. Bradsher, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1983). A range of views about the USSR's policy towards and relations with the Persian Gulf states and the broader South-West Asian region around 1980 is provided by Fred Halliday, Threat From The East? (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1982), rev. ed.; Shahram Chubin, Soviet Policy Towards Iran And The Gulf, Adelphi Paper No. 157 (London: International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1980); Adeed Dawisha, Karen Dawisha, eds., The Soviet Union In The Middle East (London: Published by Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1982); Alvin Z. Rubinstein, Soviet Policy Toward Turkey, Iran And Afghanistan (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982); ---, "Soviet Policy Toward South and Southwest Asia: Strategic and Political Aspects", in Rubinstein, ed., The Great Game, pp. 81-114.

against Iran and Pakistan. That they were trying to obtain direct access to Persian Gulf oil and to a "warm water" port on the Indian Ocean was "baloney even from a purely military viewpoint."[6] The USSR would never have chosen Afghanistan and its difficult terrain as the way to draw closer to the Gulf and the Arabian Sea; a military push to "warm water seas" would invite World War III. The denial of an offensive motive underlying the intervention was given highest authority by Brezhnev in January 1980:

> ...absolutely false are the allegations that the Soviet Union has some kind of expansionist plans with respect to Pakistan, Iran or other countries in [South-West Asia]. The policy and psychology of colonialists are alien to us. We don't covet other people's land and we don't long for other people's wealth. It is the colonialists that are attracted by the smell of oil.[7]

An important consideration in the USSR's decision to intervene in Afghanistan was that it had "nothing to lose": America's foreign and defence policies had already taken a change harmful to the Soviet Union and detente. Among the actions showing the United States' return to the Cold War were the Senate's refusal to ratify the SALT II treaty of June 1979, the Carter administration's entente with China, its decision to make an additional increase in its annual defence budgets and to create a "rapid deployment force" and the NATO states' decision to increase their annual military budgets and to approve the emplacement of US intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe by 1983. Further, in November 1979 the US had sent to the Arabian Sea "a swarm of warships with planes and nuclear weapons" which in light of the fall of the Shah and the conservative Arabs' rejection of the "peace process" signified a dangerous militarization of American foreign policy.

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[6] Arbatov and Oltmans, Soviet Viewpoint, p. 193.

[7] From an interview with L.I. Brezhnev in Pravda, January 13, 1980 in The Current Digest Of The Soviet Press 32 (February 13, 1980), 3. (Referred to below as CDSP.)

In America the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan crystallized accumulated public resentment towards the Soviets because, it was felt, they had been violating the "code" of detente at the expense of American influence and prestige[8] since their intervention in the Angolan civil war in 1975-76, indeed since the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war. And in contrast to the United States' self-restraint in the 1970s, the USSR continued its "build-up" of strategic and also conventional, notably "power projection" forces well above the level thought to be necessary for its defence. Within the Carter administration the view espoused above all by Zbigniew Brzezinski began to prevail that the US had to be more vigorous and resolute in countering the Soviet Union's aggressive quest for influence; if not opposed more stoutly, Soviet "expansionism" in the Third World would undermine American and Western security. The Administration's changing attitude towards the USSR caused its moral idealism and emphasis on the regional dimension of international politics to yield primacy as an influence on policy to calculations about the balance of power between the USSR and America and to the "tighter" linkage of regional politics with the super-powers' global competition. Detente gave way to confrontation and a new emphasis on "containment". Arms control, nuclear

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[8] For a US government view of the reasons for the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and its possible ramifications, see the testimony by Marshall Shulman, special adviser on Soviet affairs to Secretaries of State Vance and Muskie, in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, East-West Relations In The Aftermath Of The Soviet Invasion Of Afghanistan, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, pp. 32-43. For unofficial views of the nature, "offensive" or "defensive", and significance of the intervention, consult United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On The Budget, First Concurrent Resolution On The Budget - Fiscal Year 1981, Hearings, vol. 1, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980. Richard P. Cronin, Afghanistan: Soviet Invasion And U.S. Response Issue Brief Number IB 80006, Congressional Research Service, The Library Of Congress Date Originated: 01/10/80, Date Updated: 03/26/81; Stuart Goldman, U.S.-Soviet Relations After Afghanistan Issue Brief Number IB 80080, Congressional Research Service, The Library Of Congress Date Originated: 08/11/80, Date Updated: 02/20/81 analyze the state of super-power relations in 1980.

non-proliferaton and human rights were supplanted in priority by issues of security and strategy and by new programmes for enhancing the United States' capability for faster and better sustained distant military deployment. In contrast to its previous passivity, the Carter government was becoming more inclined to intervene abroad should the USSR threaten vital American interests.

The US perceived Afghanistan as the latest, most serious and not necessarily the last instance in a series of Soviet interventions in the Third World. The USSR's interventionist tendency, its growing military strength, its proximity to the weak and unstable Persian Gulf, the expected expanding need for oil of the USSR's Warsaw Pact allies and its seemingly inadequate capacity to supply their need - all these factors raised a possibility that America had to take into account: even were it a quite unlikely "worst case", the Soviet Union might attack Iran, seize its oil fields and occupy the northern side of the Strait of Hormuz, from where it could easily interdict oil shipping from the Gulf. Exercising predominant influence on the Gulf Arab states and indirect but still large influence on Western Europe and Japan, and through them America, the Soviet Union could shift the global balance of power to its advantage. More concretely, in the US view, the USSR's occupation of Afghanistan extended its geopolitical position farther around the Persian Gulf region to the Pakistani frontier and gave it an ability to conduct combat operations throughout South-West Asia and farther out into the Indian Ocean. (The USSR's ability to support its naval operations in the Arabian Sea had been improved in 1979 when it acquired access to naval facilities in Vietnam. This was a condition of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship signed in November 1978.) The Soviet intervention made even worse for America the collapse of imperial Iran as a source of security in the Persian Gulf but most of all it pointed up the crucial location and importance of Iran which was still a national, religious and political "buffer" against the Soviet

Union. Iran was the state where there was the greatest risk of a direct confrontation between the US and the USSR. Both had defensive interests there and neither was certain of the "rules of behaviour" other than to exercise caution.

In South-West Asia Pakistan, Iran and all the Gulf Arab states condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan; the USSR had sent its armed forces across an international boundary and occupied a fellow Muslim state. Already facing Indian forces in the east, Pakistan now saw on its north-western frontier Soviet forces which by raids into its territory might try to stop it from supporting the Afghan resistance and to exert pressure on it to recognise the Karmal regime. Nonetheless the Pakistanis and the Iranians too regarded the Soviet intervention primarily as defensive, intended to keep a Marxist government in power and Soviet influence intact. There was no immediate direct Soviet military threat to them. In the Gulf Iraq had been apprehensive about the expansion of the Soviet Union's presence in South-West Asia since its heavy involvement in the Horn war of 1977-78. The USSR's intervention in Afghanistan, its "balanced" relations with the Iranian enemy and its "Friendship" treaty signed with Iraq's rival, Syria, in 1980 reminded Baghdad of the limited, strictly expedient nature of its own alliance with the Soviets since 1972. Saudi Arabia and the other conservative Gulf states interpreted the Soviet intervention to be not so much a potential military threat as the latest development in the steady expansion of the USSR's geopolitical presence and access to military facilities around their periphery. The likelier Soviet danger to their security was indirect, through attempts by Soviet "proxies", particularly South Yemen, to subvert them. The USSR's intervention added to the conservative Gulf states' impression that the balance of power and influence in South-West Asia between the US and the USSR was tending towards the Soviet Union. The USSR seemed to be "on the advance" while America appeared weak, confused and in retreat. But although the

Saudis had become disillusioned and more ambivalent about their relations with the United States, they kept their political distance from the Soviet Union. Their ties with America were still essential in many ways and they continued to view the Soviets with deep suspicion and ideological aversion.

## Initial Modification of Policy

After the fall of the Shah America's immediate policy objectives for the Persian Gulf were to try to limit the extensive damage to its relations with Iran caused by the revolution and to encourage a stable, secular and moderate Iranian republic. The US sought to reassure the conservative Gulf Arab states anxious about the new danger to them from Iran and uncertain about the nature and credibility of America's role in promoting regional security that it would play a constructive part. It sought as well to deter military action against Iran by the USSR, warning the Soviets to respect Iran's independence. Reinforcing President Carter's hope expressed in an interview on January 13, 1979 that Iran would be "free of any outside domination by the Soviet Union",[9] the US government's formal statement of policy towards Iran after the Shah's departure declared: "... no outside power should exploit instability in Iran ... for its own advantage. The overriding American objective for Iran is simply that it should have the freedom to work out its own future free from such interference."[10] In the Department of Defence's annual report issued in late January 1979, Harold Brown observed that the Soviets had been "relatively restrained and cautious in their policy toward Iran during

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[9] New York Times, January 17, 1979.

[10] From The Present Situation in Iran and its Implications, Prepared Statement of Hon. Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State For Near Eastern And South Asian Affairs, in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, U.S. Policy Toward Iran, January 1979, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 1979, p. 25.

recent months, particularly as regards direct military action."[11] But, he suggested, the "hypothetical contingency" of a Soviet military intervention in Iran "could well require a U.S. response."[12]

The politics of the Iranian revolution, the leading subject of whose obloquy was the United States, prevented improvement in relations between Tehran and Washington. But towards reassuring friendly Gulf states about the reliability of the US commitment to their security America was able to take quick action. In the middle of January 1979, several weeks after refraining from sending an aircraft carrier task group to the Arabian Sea lest it worsen the political turmoil in Iran, reduce even further the Shah's rapidly dwindling chances of survival and provoke more active Soviet interference there,[13] the Carter administration sent, in

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[11] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1980, p. 106.

[12] Ibid., p. 107. In early December 1978, "concerned not only by the deteriorating situation in Iran but by signs of growing Soviet interest, [Brzezinski had] requested the Defense Department to initiate contingency plans for the deployment of U.S. forces, if necessary, in southern Iran so as to secure the oil fields." Brzezinski, Power And Principle, p. 372.

[13] In late December 1978 Brzezinski had tried in vain to convince Carter to dispatch the Constellation aircraft carrier task group to the Arabian Sea in order to display support for friendly Gulf states' security, to allay their fears about Soviet regional "advances" and to respond to their complaints about insufficient US attention to them and to underline America's warning to the USSR not to intervene in Iran. The movement of the Constellation from Subic Bay towards the Strait of Malacca, in order to be closer to the Arabian Sea if ordered to go there, and then the Administration's decision not to send it did give an impression of the US as weak and indecisive. That decision had been sought by the State Department, which had persuaded Carter to turn down an earlier proposal, in November 1978, for a strong American show of force. The advocate of demonstrating US power had been James Schlesinger, a Secretary of Defence under President Ford and now Secretary of Energy. He agreed with Brzezinski about the geopolitical importance of Iran to the US and the potentially very dangerous international consequences should the Shah's regime fall, for which reasons they favoured a military government, then a military coup in Iran. Schlesinger

response to a Saudi request, unarmed F-15 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia on a "demonstration" visit. It had already sent a small naval force, without a "provocative" aircraft carrier, to maintain a continuous naval presence (October 1978 to June 1979) and help to signal greater US concern for regional security. More importantly, in February 1979 Brown paid the first visit by an American Secretary of Defence to Saudi Arabia. He presented a personal letter from Carter for King Khalid which "'offered to consult more on security issues' and was designed to make it clear ... that the Carter administration was seeking a larger role, politicallly and militarily, in the Persian Gulf region, especially in view of the situation in Iran."[14] Brown avowed America's "'willingness and ability'" to "'provide the extra strength needed to meet a foe from outside the region.'"[15] Referring to the virtual stoppage of Iranian oil production, he emphasized the importance of close American ties with Saudi Arabia, whose security had become "pivotal" to the US. "In the next few months" the American government would take

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stressed that it was not only the Shah who was under attack in Iran; there was also a direct challenge to the United States. He accordingly urged the President to demonstrate graphically the American commitment to the Shah and thereby discourage other countries - notably the Soviet Union and Libya - from meddling in the Iranian crisis. He also believed that a convincing show of American military power would help bring order back to Iran, since it would indicate to the Shah's enemies that there were indeed limits to what they could hope to achieve, and that demands that the Shah be removed were not viewed with favor in Washington.

The Energy Secretary was not talking about a purely symbolic act, but arguing that the United States undertake to project considerable military force into the Persian Gulf, in the form of strengthening American forces in places like Diego Garcia, moving aircraft carriers into the area, and stationing significant numbers of Marines within striking range of Iran. [Michael Ledeen & William Lewis, Debacle (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), p. 162.]

[14] New York Times, February 12, 1979.

[15] New York Times, February 11, 1979.

concrete steps to defend and arm further the Saudis and other friendly Gulf states.[16] Arms supplies to North Yemen and Sudan would be increased sharply and the delivery of advanced fighter aircraft purchased by Saudi Arabia might be accelerated. Brown also sought, without success, as shown below, to establish the basis for a broad, long-term security collaboration with the Saudis.

The most tangible display of America's intention to become more actively involved in support of Gulf security came in response to an attack into North Yemen in late February 1979 by Soviet-armed South Yemeni forces. Saudi Arabia became alarmed at the possibility of being drawn into the conflict and it and the US were anxious about the presence in South Yemen of Soviet and Cuban military advisers. By early March American military advisers and arms shipments began to arrive in North Yemen. The US sent long-range surveillance aircraft (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia and dispatched an aircraft carrier task group to the Arabian Sea. Those measures were meant to help "prevent South Yemen, which the administration sees as a client of the Soviet Union, from scoring a military victory over North Yemen, a neighbor ... of Saudi Arabia."[17] Besides showing America's resolve to uphold Saudi security and to counter the USSR's involvement in the region, those steps represented the beginning of a change of attitude in Washington and in Carter himself towards a greater willingness to make more active use of the armed forces as an instrument of foreign policy. Indeed Carter was "one of the strongest proponents of a military response over Yemen...."[18] In contrast to its abstention from sending an aircraft carrier task group to the Indian Ocean during the war in the Horn of Africa in 1977-78 (see fn. 27 below), the United States would apparently no longer avoid a show and perhaps an actual use of

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[16] New York Times, February 13, 1979.

[17] Washington Post, March 7, 1979.

[18] New York Times, March 13, 1979.

force in order to protect its interests in the Persian Gulf.

In the same interview on January 13, 1979 in which he had voiced concern about possible Soviet interference in Iran, Carter in effect revoked America's Gulf security policy founded on the Nixon Doctrine. He did not view Iran as a "policeman" vital to Persian Gulf security: "Well, I am not sure the presumption that one nation has to be the policeman for a whole area is sound"; one was not needed "in any region of the world to maintain order by dominating others on (sic) having an overwhelming military force."[19] The collapse of imperial Iran not only undermined the Nixon Doctrine - reliance principally on Iran to protect US regional security interests - it also "effectively demolished a decade of U.S. strategy in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf"[20] premised upon it. America was left "strategically naked, with no safety net" and "its collection of military assets and bilateral relationships ... were largely artifacts of a previous era and were bound together by no strategic concept for the protection of U.S. regional interests."[21] Because there was more uncertainty and a greater sense of insecurity in the Gulf after the fall of the Shah, because the conservative Gulf Arab states did not seem readily able by themselves to compensate for their reduced security and because America's interests now seemed to be more at risk, enlarging the United States' regional security involvement on a long-term basis appeared to be necessary. But although the Carter administration agreed among themselves that "something should be done" to increase that involvement, the State Department and the National Security Council and Department of Defence began to "debate about the nature and form of the response"[22] and particularly

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[19] New York Times, January 17, 1979.

[20] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 70.

[21] Idem.

[22] Washington Post, January 24, 1980. For the debate, see below.

about the use and utility of America's armed forces for protecting US interests. In the case of Iran, the State Department probably argued, "internal military power had proved ineffective in the hands of the Shah, and external U.S. military power irrelevant as the ... revolution proceeded."[23]

In contrast to the State Department, too preoccupied with negotiations for the Egypt-Israel peace treaty to give sufficient attention to revising America's security policy for the Persian Gulf, Brzezinski had already identified the Soviets as the main threat to the region and begun to advocate a larger, more direct and active strategic role there for the US. Only America could contribute the extra political, economic and military resources needed to check the growing power and adventurist tendency of the USSR and help to uphold Gulf security. The Soviet Union posed a political more than military threat to regional security and to the extent that it was military, that threat was more indirect - the use of the armed forces for gaining influence or for intimidation or indirect intervention - than direct. Brzezinski acknowledged that the most imminent threat to the Persian Gulf came from within that region and as the Iranian revolution intensified in December 1978, he expressed "immediate concern" about "regional instability":

> An arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to [the US] threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries.[24]

Other "key nations in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, are prone to the same domestic disorders that have

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[23] Idem.

[24] Zbigniew Brzezinski, U.S. Foreign Policy: A World Review Address to the Foreign Policy Association, Washington, D.C., December 20, 1978, Official Text International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, December 21, 1978, p. 8.

struck Iran ..." and the Soviets seemed to be "increasingly inclined to exploit these difficulties."[25] Because it had tried to extend detente into the Third World as part of reaching a broad accommodation with the Soviet Union and to avoid using the armed forces, the Carter administration had failed to respond with resolve to the Soviet intervention in the Ethiopian-Somali war in 1977-78. America's decision at that time not to dispatch an aircraft carrier task group on a "show of force" sent the wrong signal to the Soviets, in Brzezinski's view. A "show of force" would have convinced them that the US was "serious ... that detente should be both reciprocal and based on restraint" and that they could not "use military force in one part of the world - and yet maintain cooperative relations in other areas -"[26] without endangering detente. The USSR's policy was "indirect expansionism" and the United States' passivity during the war in the Horn of Africa had "emboldened" the Soviets to be more "assertive" and "intrusive" elsewhere. The US government had underestimated the "psychological effect" of the Soviet intervention in the Horn which, "together with Soviet advances in Afghanistan and Southern Yemen, had fed regional fears that Moscow was moving to 'encircle' the Gulf."[27] Further, the

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[25] New York Times, Janaury 1, 1979.

[26] Brzezinski, Power And Principle, p. 186.

[27] New York Times, January 1, 1979. More direct action, a "show of force" by an American aircraft carrier task group, would have reduced the harmful "psychological effect" on friendly states caused by the Soviet and Cuban intervention in the Horn war, according to Brzezinski. (All quotations below are from Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp. 182-183, 186.) His view then was "that the deployment of an American aircraft carrier task force near Ethiopia would send a strong message to the Soviets and would provide more tangible backing for our strong words" of warning to them "that we did not wish a confrontation but that the Soviets were running the risk of creating one in a region which was very sensitive to us."

> To a great extent our credibility was under scrutiny by new, relatively skeptical allies in a region strategically important to us. ... [I]f Soviet-sponsored Cubans determined the outcome of an Ethiopian-Somali

combination of Soviet geopolitical "momentum" and the end of Iran as a stabilizing agent in the Persian Gulf and a strategic buffer against the Soviet Union, to which would be added in February 1979 the assassination of the American ambassador to Afghanistan and the Yemeni conflict, tended to strengthen a dangerous impression: "in disarray and retreat", "America had lost all capacity to influence regional events."[28] As a result of losing confidence in the US, the major "states of the Persian Gulf would conclude that they should accommodate to the rising wave of Soviet influence and

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> conflict, there could be wider regional and international consequences. There would be greater regional uncertainty and less confidence in the United States.

Because the US was responsible for giving regional powers the confidence to "repel" Soviet and Cuban influence, it was important that they "not see the United States as passive in the face of Soviet and Cuban intervention in the Horn and in the potential invasion of Somalia - even if our support was, in the final analysis, only for the record." Nonetheless if America and also France deployed an aircraft carrier,

> it would certainly make the Cubans think twice about participating in the invasion of Somalia, while tangibly demonstrating our concern and presence. Just placing the carrier in the area did not mean that we were going to war.

But Vance and Brown opposed sending an aircraft carrier to the Arabian or the Red Sea. In fear of being "sucked in" the conflict, Vance thought that for America to put its "'prestige on the line and to take military steps is a risk we should not take.' ... [T]he United States should not put an aircraft carrier in the area unless we were prepared to use it" for a specific purpose. In Brown's view if Somalia were invaded and President Siad Barre overthrown, "it would be viewed as a failure of the U.S. task force to do its job, and that failure would impair the credibility of such task forces in future crises elsewhere - in short, a U.S. bluff would have been called." Carter rejected Brzezinski's proposal to send an aircraft carrier task group to the Horn of Africa and Brzezinski judged his colleagues to be "badly bitten by the Vietnam bug and as a consequence [they] are fearful of taking the kind of action which is necessary to convey our determination and to reassure the concerned countries...."

[28] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", pp. 70, 71.

power before they themselves were swept away.[29]

The armed forces' contribution to a larger US security role in the Persian Gulf region would, in Brzezinski's view, be essentially political: increased display and deterrence. More display would emphasize tangibly America's very important, indeed vital interest in the Persian Gulf and its security and it would show US concern about greater instability in the region and the USSR's threat to it. More display and the preparation of home-based land and air forces for distant operations would help to show America's commitment to contribute as appropriate to Gulf security, principally vis-a-vis the USSR, and the seriousness of that commitment. An improved military capability and a revived willingness to use it would assist to re-establish America's credibility as a major regional security actor and to reassure friendly states about US reliability. Measures such the Indian Ocean arms control negotiations which suggested that relative to the USSR, America was in decline and in retreat strategically and was only trying to manage its weakness would be abandoned. By signalling America's new resolve to defend its interests by recourse to arms if needed, larger regional display and the organization of home-based forces would counter more vigorously the Soviet Union's political use of its armed forces and help to deter their potential more direct uses. The more definite probability of a US response would check the Soviets' military adventurist tendency.

The modification of America's security policy and strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area began in December 1978 in the National Security Council and the Department of Defence when "it became evident that the Shah's regime was disintegrating...."[30] Brzezinski ordered a series of studies by the NSC in order "to identify the elements of a

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[29] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[30] Ibid., p. 71.

strategic approach." His initial thinking was that

> the Iranian crisis had made a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt all the more important and that together, the two countries could offer a military and political alliance that could substitute for Iran's power. 'There is no question that a peace agreement in the Middle East is now more urgent in strategic terms.... It would bolster the forces of moderation and provide a bulwark of moderation against the Soviets.'[31]

New arms sales to Pakistan, Turkey and Arab countries would contribute to their defence. Also, in his "arc of crisis" speech in December 1978, Brzezinski had mentioned the United States' intention to "develop a more rapidly deployable force" better capable of "projecting military power in measured ways" for defence of America's "major interests worldwide - as, for example, in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, or in Korea...."[32] The United States had to "be able to prevent regional instability or conflicts from getting out of hand and becoming the causes of a major confrontation"[33] between the super-powers. In the Department of Defence some officials started to consider Israel "with its highly efficient military forces" as the new "second pillar" of Persian Gulf security.[34] But others noted the risks of reliance on regional powers for protecting US interests and were sceptical about the "second pillar" concept. Similar to Brzezinski they "advocated a larger military role for American armed forces in the region, including an increase in the naval presence and the design of special ground and air forces for combat in the area."[35] That view reflected the conclusions of a position paper on military options for safeguarding US interests in South-West Asia which

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[31] New York Times, January 1, 1979.

[32] Brzezinski, World Review, pp. 3, 4.

[33] Ibid., p. 4.

[34] New York Times, January 1, 1979.

[35] Idem.

had been drawn up in early 1979 by the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Brown's instruction.

> The final paper, submitted to the President via the Secretary of State, recommended acquisition of regional military facilities, emphasized the need for an expanded naval presence in the Indian Ocean, called for increased military assistance to the regional countries, and, most important, underscored the absolute necessity of upgrading American capability to intervene with military force in the area.[36]

From December 1978 Brown too had begun to refer to forces for intervention in distant regions. In early January 1979, for example, he noted the growing danger of super-power engagement in a Third World conflict in which access to natural resources was at stake. America "might have difficulty in avoiding the choice between active participation in the conflict, not necessarily with ground forces, or suffer severe damage to US interests."[37] Planning was going ahead, he remarked, for a mobile specialized force which could respond to contingencies outside the NATO area. However, as Brown made clear in the Department of Defence's annual report in January 1979, "[m]ost of the contingencies strictly internal to the Middle East would not appear to warrant any direct U.S. involvement."[38] The American forces available for response to a "hypothetical" Soviet attack upon Iran "would be neither appropriate for nor planned for maintaining internal security and the domestic order. These are not the responsibilities of the United States, and particularly not of the U.S. military."[39]

A Persian Gulf security policy to replace the Nixon

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[36] Maxwell Orme Johnson, The Military as an Instrument of U.S. Policy in Southwest Asia (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), p. 13.

[37] International Herald Tribune, January 4, 1979.

[38] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1980, p. 106.

[39] Ibid., p. 107.

Doctrine was outlined in February 1979 by Brzezinski in an NSC memorandum and by Brown during his visit to the Middle East.[40] That policy proposed to broaden the regional basis of Gulf security and to expand America's strategic role - to include more active deterrence as well as intensified display - primarily against the Soviet Union. First, the US would try to forge a closer linkage between local, Gulf security and wider, Middle Eastern (Arab-Israeli) security, encouraging collaboration among Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the conservative Gulf Arab states and "moderate" nearby countries such as Turkey. Their co-operation would compensate for the collapse of imperial Iran, reverse the deterioration of security in the Persian Gulf and enable friendly Middle Eastern powers to continue to take primary responsibility for security there. America's support for security within the Gulf would be kept as limited and indirect as possible and consist of helping to advance the Arab-Israeli "peace process", supplying more economic and military aid, in order to enhance friendly states' capability to manage their security, and participating in patrolling the shipping lanes. Second, the US would make a larger, more direct and active contribution to regional resistance to further expansion of Soviet influence and power. The more active potential for a direct American military response would deter direct Soviet military action. The US would take requested and appropriate military measures such as increasing its regional display in order to help regional states deal with political uses of Soviet power and indirect Soviet military involvement such as support for South Yemen. The American naval presence in the Arabian Sea would be augmented and a force would be organized and based in the US for rapid deployment to South-West Asia, if needed. In order to show America's greater commitment to Persian Gulf security

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[40] For an early assessment of the "new security formula in the Middle East", see R.K. Ramazani, "Security In The Persian Gulf", Foreign Affairs 57 (Spring 1979), 821-835. Note by the same author, "The Genesis of the Carter Doctrine", in Middle East Perspectives: The Next Twenty Years, eds. George S. Wise, Charles Issawi (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1981), pp. 165-180.

the US Navy and the "rapid deployment force" would require access to regional military facilities for logistic support of display in peacetime and contingency operations against the USSR.

The justification and guidelines for an expanded American strategic role as part of a "security framework" for the Persian Gulf were set out by Brzezinski in an NSC policy paper in late February 1979.

> The crucial problem ... was the continuing dependence of the United States and its allies on oil from this vulnerable and volatile region.
>
> Any one of several potential misfortunes, including collapse of Carter's Camp David program for Egyptian-Israeli peace and internal collapse in Saudi Arabia, could gravely damage the position of the West. There was no mention of a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but the possibility was foreseen that the projection of Soviet force in unspecified fashion closer to the center of the region could bring about a new crisis.
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> The "security framework" to shore up friendly nations and augment U.S. power was conceived as a loosely constructed yet clearly cooperative arrangement among moderate states, including Egypt, Israel and Jordan. Saudi Arabia would be closely associated but treated as a special case in view of its sensibilities regarding any association with Israel. Peripheral states in the area, including Morocco, Sudan and Turkey, would play a cooperative role and benefit from U.S. aid and arms.
>
> U.S. forces in the area and facilities for their support would have to be increased. Oman would be brought into the alliance, and given protection and assistance. The overall cost of military assistance would be $10 billion to $15 billion over five years, in addition to existing outlays, (sic) The greater part of the buildup, though, would be in such U.S. elements as the "rapid deployment force", based at home but ready to move to trouble spots abroad.[41]

The National Security Council was revising America's Gulf security policy as Brown visited the Middle East. The purposes of his trip were to convey Carter's recognition of

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[41] Washington Post, January 24, 1980.

the importance to the US of the Middle East and its security and to lay the groundwork for stronger, long-term security cooperation with the Saudis and other "pro-Western" states and for a larger American military involvement. Taking a "line" it had not espoused since Vietnam, the United States had "'made a policy decision about a more active role in the area.'"[42] According to Brown America was "intent on 'new patterns of security cooperation' in the Middle East to head off expansionist efforts by the Soviet Union."[43] An anonymous "senior defense official" observed:

> All the governments recognize that the region does face serious threats from the outside. They also recognize that there are internal problems in each of the countries and between some of them. We have been trying to draw their attention to the first without underestimating the other two problems.
>
> We think we've succeeded.... They see that prospects for Iran being a strong pillar of security are clouded at best. They see there is a tendency for the Soviets to fish in troubled water. They look upon the United States to provide protection from direct Soviet threat, and they realize that the United States has to confine its military commitment and isn't in the business of protecting them from one another.[44]

At the start of Brown's visit an unnamed "high official" had stated that the Americans not only "will stand by [their] friends in the region ... against external threats" they "will also try to help reduce and ... end the internal conflicts in the region so that these conflicts don't exacerbate the tensions from outside."[45] He referred implicitly to a crucial part of the regional "security framework", the Camp David accords and the imminent peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. The treaty and the conservative Arab states' support

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[42] New York Times, February 19, 1979.

[43] Idem.

[44] Idem.

[45] New York Times, February 11, 1979.

for it - urging their support being a further purpose for Brown's visit to Saudi Arabia and Jordan - was considered by the US to be even more central to the stability of the Middle East after the fall of the Shah. Besides completing the initial phase of resolving the most dangerous conflict in the Middle East and thus averting a potential oil embargo by the Gulf Arab states, the Egypt-Israel treaty was intended to encourage the envisioned informal grouping of Israel, "pro-Western" Arab states and Turkey for regional security collaboration. If followed by a resolution of the Palestinian issue, that treaty would remove a leading means by which the USSR could gain more influence in the Arab world, while the informal "coalition" would generate a political counter and a degree of military deterrence against the Soviets and their regional "proxies". And if the Americans supplied Egypt with large amounts of weapons, President Sadat proposed grandiosely to substitute for the Shah; he would take on an interventionist role and "assume responsibility for insuring stability in a region stretching east from Algeria to Afghanistan and south from the Mediterranean to Somalia or beyond...."[46] The US also foresaw Saudi Arabia "stepping up" its military role in the "potentially vulnerable" Persian Gulf emirates.[47] As a result of the treaty, the creation of an informal regional security "bloc" and the assumption of greater security responsibilities by individual states, America would become more acceptable politically in the Middle East as a security partner against the Soviet Union. Its own deterrence against the Soviets would be easier and less risky to maintain. The US would be more able to gain access to regional facilities but otherwise it could remain safely in the background.

During its talks with the Saudis Brown's delegation offered to expand the US naval presence in the Indian Ocean

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[46] International Herald Tribune, February 22, 1979.

[47] New York Times, February 11, 1979.

and the logistic facility at Diego Garcia as part of the "new patterns of security cooperation in the Middle East". That offer met the Saudis' wish for somewhat larger and more frequent American naval deployments, discreetly "over the horizon" from where they could protect shipping, display a clear capability to counter the Soviet naval squadron and help to show steadfast US support for Gulf security. The two sides were reported to have discussed "the creation of a 'quick strike force' of American paratroopers and marines to be used in case of a request for help by Saudi Arabia or other oil-producing nations threatened with the turmoil of a Soviet-supported coup."[48] The US delegation was prepared to consider a "specific American involvement in the region, including creation of a Persian Gulf command led by Americans or further military help..."[49] but the Saudis sought only to obtain more US arms. The Americans raised as well the issue of acquiring access to Saudi military facilities. However, for political reasons related most immediately to the unpopularity in the Arab world of the impending Egypt-Israel peace treaty with which the United States was closely associated, they were not willing to permit American troops on their territory or to allow the US access to their facilities. This "finding", confirmed by US approaches to other regional powers, "led the Administration to defer looking for possible bases"[50] until December 1979 (see below).

Foreshadowing in part the "Carter Doctrine" enunciated in January 1980, the first high-level public declaration about US security policy for the "post-Shah" Persian Gulf and the contribution to it by the American armed forces was made by Brown in a television interview on February 25, 1979, shortly after his return from the Middle East. The US supported the independence of the regional states, he remarked, and

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[48] New York Times, February 13, 1979.

[49] New York Times, February 12, 1979.

[50] New York Times, January 25, 1980.

"[p]rotection of the oil flow from the Middle East is clearly part of [America's] vital interest."[51] The United States saw, as did the Gulf states, "a possible threat from outside the region", from a "major power" and it was "prepared to defend its vital interests with whatever means are appropriate, including military force where necessary...." However, the use of force was "not necessarily appropriate in every individual instance." In another interview on the same day James Schlesinger articulated similar views, but with less clear allusion to the Soviet Union. The US had a "commitment ... to the preservation of stability in the Gulf..." and it "must intensify its efforts to bring stability ... and to ensure the security and independence of the states in that area. This is of vital importance...." America "must move in such a way that it protects those interests, even if that involves the use of military strength or of military presence...."

Beginning with the interviews of Brown and Schlesinger, the Administration's ideas for increasing America's military presence in the Persian Gulf region began to emerge into the public domain. When asked about the potential use of the armed forces, Brown said that the "less intrusive and less obvious forms of U.S. presence or possibly military influence, such as ship visits and so on, are clearly the right way to begin such activities, and ... may be as far as we want to go."[52] Schlesinger remarked that America was "prepared to

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[51] All quotations in this paragraph are taken from Preserving Access To Middle East Oil, Excerpts from Remarks made during CBS and NBC television interviews on February 25th, by Defense Secretary Harold Brown and Energy Secretary James R. Schlesinger..., Official Text, International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, Tuesday, February 27th, 1979, pp. 1-2. See also New York Times, February 26,1979; International Herald Tribune, February 26, 1979. In March 1979 Vance too asserted that the US had "vital interests" in the Persian Gulf. He considered Saudi territorial integrity and security to be a "matter of fundamental interest to the United States." Washington Post, March 19, 1979.

[52] New York Times, February 26, 1979.

discuss the question of a military presence in the area with the states involved, and that would have to be worked out in response to their desires and with some flexibility."[53] The US military presence for the Persian Gulf being considered by the Administration, he remarked further, "would involve military personnel. Whether it would involve a deployment of troops as the phrase goes - which usually refers to combat arms of the ground forces - is another question."[54] That the American presence would not include military bases was confirmed at the highest level, by Carter. On February 27, 1979, as Saudi Arabia's rejection of the US request for access to its military facilities became more widely known, he said, "We have no plans to establish military bases..." in the Persian Gulf or "to station troops in Saudi Arabia...."[55] Military bases, Carter suggested, would "encroach" on the independence of "individual nations". Nor did America "intend to become involved in the internal affairs of another country."[56]

In the Department of Defence studies were being conducted and proposals considered for expanding on a long-term basis the usual US presence in the Indian Ocean as part of making a stronger show of American commitment to Gulf security.* An important measure under examination was the "creation of a permanent new U.S. fleet, which would be designated the 5th Fleet, to provide a security force for the entire oil region ... [of] the Persian Gulf."[57] A new fleet would be a "very

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* The possible expansion of America's Indian Ocean presence, particularly the Middle East Force, had been under study by the US Navy since the end of the war in the Horn of Africa in March 1978.

[53] International Herald Tribune, February 26, 1979.

[54] Idem.

[55] New York Times, February 28, 1979.

[56] Idem.

[57] New York News, March 9, 1979.

major commitment by the United States to the defense of that area" and the "significance of this would not be lost upon the Soviets."[58] A permanent fleet would provide a continuous counter to the Soviet naval squadron in the Indian Ocean, not just when intermittently an aircraft carrier or a surface action task group was present. It would provide a more powerful force which, "based" at sea, would avoid provoking regional countries and it would enhance the United States' flexibility and speed of reaction in crises. A fleet would satisfy

> Saudi Arabia's desire to have larger American naval forces patrolling in the Indian Ocean, over the horizon and out of sight to avoid stirring up political tensions in the Arab world but close enough to deter Soviet intervention in the region and to be available when the Saudi monarchy feels threatened.[59]

The new fleet might consist of an aircraft carrier battle group, if not also helicopter carriers and other amphibious assault ships which could be used for requested defensive intervention. Other ideas for enlarging America's Indian Ocean presence included increasing the frequency of naval task group deployments to the area from three to four a year; augmenting from three to five ships the Middle East Force, which then could better monitor the Gulf sea lanes and make more port calls; expanding the logistic facilities at Diego Garcia and perhaps stationing a repair ship there so that other vessels could operate more efficiently and longer; and gaining access to additional facilities for use by P-3C maritime patrol aircraft.[60] There might be initiated regular demonstration visits to the Gulf by US fighter aircraft and training exercises might be conducted there, some with the host state's forces. Joint military planning with regional

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[58] Idem. See also New York Times, March 1, 1979; Baltimore Sun, March 8, 1979.

[59] New York Times, August 3, 1979.

[60] Norfolk Virginian Pilot, April 6, 1979.

countries was another possibility. Proposals for augmenting the American naval presence faced the problem of what resources could be afforded for the Indian Ocean: the 6th Fleet and the 7th Fleet, from which the larger presence would be drawn, were at the minimal level for meeting their responsibilities in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific respectively. How larger deployments could be supported without routine access to regional facilities was another serious problem.

## Origin of the "Rapid Deployment Force"

The ultimate military source of credibility for America's Indian Ocean presence, a capability for combat on land, depended, in the absence of US forces based in South-West Asia, on ground and air forces in America able to move to the region quickly and on a relatively large scale and to sustain their operations. Those ground-based forces would form the core of the "Rapid Deployment Force", for America's conventional deterrence of the USSR. Presidential Directive 18 (PD-18), promulgated in August 1977, had specified that in order to respond satisfactorily to a "minor" contingency simultaneous with a conflict between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the US must prepare and maintain a "deployment force of light divisions with strategic mobility independent of overseas bases and logistical support" and "moderate naval and tactical air forces which could be used in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Korea, or elsewhere."[61] The requirement for a light and mobile deployment force derived from the assumptions and conclusions of a study on "global power relationships", Presidential Review Memorandum 10 (PRM-10) of June 1977, which contained the document "Military Strategy and Force Posture

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[61] U.S. OJCS, United States Military Posture FY 1982 Supplement, p. 55. Haffa, The Half War, pp. 50-67, 113-131, examines the conceptual and organizational development of the "rapid deployment force" from 1977 to 1980. Paul K. Davis offers Observations On The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force: Origins, Direction, and Mission Rand Paper P-6751 (Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, June 1982).

Review".[62] One source drawn upon by the latter document was a review in April 1977 by the CIA of the USSR's medium-term need for oil which concluded that the Soviet Union would become a net importer of oil perhaps before 1985. "Military Strategy and Force Posture Review" expressed concern about the Soviet armed forces' ability to threaten the West's access to Persian Gulf oil by interdicting tankers or by directly attacking the oil-producing states. The Soviets' expected need for oil greater than their capacity to produce it, their proximity to the Gulf and their growing ability to "project" military power farther beyond their frontiers, the heavy dependence of America's allies on Gulf oil and the United States' own increasing dependence on it meant that the contingency in which the USSR attempted to seize part of the Persian Gulf had to be taken seriously.

The findings of PD-18 were reflected in Brown's first annual defence report, in January 1978. The Persian Gulf, he observed, was a region in which America and its allies had a vital interest and with whose security their own security was linked. There had to be taken into account the contingency of "action by the Soviets to deny the United States and its allies access to the resources of the Persian Gulf."[63] "Soviet control of the vital oil-producing regions of the Persian Gulf ... could destroy the cohesion of NATO and perhaps NATO's ability to defend itself"[64] and could undermine also the security of the entire industrialized world. In the Gulf "rival local forces might become engaged initially without external involvement. However, the Soviets could intervene..."[65] there and such "clashes", whether or not the USSR was involved, "not only might require the dispatch of

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[62] New York Times, January 6, 1978.

[63] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1979, p. 78.

[64] Ibid., p. 8.

[65] Idem.

appropriate U.S. forces to the scene in support of friends; they could precede and even set off a crisis or conflagration in Europe."[66] In expressing concern about a potential Soviet attempt to deny the West access to Persian Gulf oil with 23 "divisions (mostly low readiness at this time)" and 400 "fighter/attack aircraft ... in the vicinity of eastern Turkey and Iran", Brown judged a Soviet attack to be "unlikely except as part of a much larger conflict...."[67]

In January 1979 Brown's next defence report mentioned "serious problems" which

> could arise in the region of the Persian Gulf. As we have been seeing in the case of Iran, domestic instabilities constitute the greatest immediate danger there. Nevertheless, we cannot preclude the possibility of outside intervention following from these internal disruptions.
>
> The situation in Iran is illustrative of what could happen. Continued instability there could lead to attempts by Iraq to settle old scores. Iranian forces, if they were not diverted by internal disorders, should be more than adequate ... to deal with this possibility. If Soviet forces were to intervene, however, either in support of attacks by others or under the pretext of defending the USSR from threats based in Iran, they could certainly overwhelm Iran's capability for defense.[68]

And there was "always the oil of Iran and the Arabian peninsula to tempt forces from the outside."[69] Brown understood the "events hypothesized" not to possess "imminent plausibility" because the USSR's policy towards Iran had been

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[66] Idem.

[67] Ibid., p. 78.

[68] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1980, p. 106.

[69] Ibid., p. 96. Elsewhere in his annual report for FY 1980 Brown referred to the "combination of traditional Russian interest in ... the Persian Gulf and the growing costs of Soviet domestic energy supplies which, under deteriorating regional conditions, could propel the Soviet Union toward various forms of intervention...." (p. 55)

cautious and Soviet forces in the Caucasus had "remained at a low state of readiness. However, if ... they were to move to a Category I state of readiness and attack (which would take several weeks of preparation, we estimate), their intervention could well require a U.S. response."[70] As for "most of the contingencies strictly internal to the Middle East", they "would not appear to warrant any direct U.S. involvement."[71] The American forces envisioned for responding to a hypothetical Soviet military adventure were, Brown declared (see above), neither suitable nor intended for maintaining political order and security within regional states. Up to early 1979 responding to a Soviet military adventure in the Persian Gulf was, according to the annual US defence reports, the principal, if not exclusive reason for potential American military action there. US military planners gave relatively little attention to possible intervention in regional or internal conflicts because the Gulf seemed to be comparatively stable and Iran secure as the regional "gendarme".[72]

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[70] Ibid., p. 107.

[71] Ibid., p. 106.

[72] But according to Charles A. Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West The Dilemmas of Security (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), to the small extent that the Carter administration did pay attention to contingency planning for the Persian Gulf, "intraregional contingencies, such as Iraqi aggression in the lower Gulf", took priority over ones involving the USSR until the middle of 1979. (p. 100) In 1977, he points out, "it appeared that a quick strike unit for the Middle East would deal primarily with domestic unrest, not larger and more conventional contingencies." (p. 56) Davis, Observations, p. 8, indicates that there was minimal contingency planning for the Gulf by the Department of Defense except for "brushfires". Haffa, The Half War, pp. 54-56, 128, confirms the apparent primacy of non-Soviet contingencies, inter-state and internal, in the very limited US contingency planning for the region and also notes that neglect of the half-war contingency "had occurred with the implicit assumption that the 'half-war' would occur at a low level of conflict and not [become] a high-intensity scenario." (p. 117) On the other hand, he observes, "a Joint Chiefs of Staff strategy review" completed in summer 1978 which recognized the need for a joint-service "rapid deployment force" "questioned the reliance on the '1-1/2 war' strategy that had obscured the

"Protective" seizure of Gulf oil would be made unnecessary, and exist only as a hypothetical contingency, because the Middle East "peace process" would prevent another Arab-Israeli war and Arab oil embargo.

A contingency in the Persian Gulf, "which could involve Soviet forces", was "an appropriate case for ... U.S. force planning"[73] for a minor contingency, observed Brown in his defence report in January 1978. That was because the Persian Gulf was an area of volatility and importance and "because forces committed to this theater could become tied down - and therefore not immediately available for transfer to Europe...."[74] Also the Gulf was "sufficiently distant from the United States to make exacting demands" on capabilities "such as lift, base structure, and communications...."[75] The US could visualize a large-scale conflict developing outside Europe, Brown generalized in his annual report in January 1979, but it could not readily imagine "another and separate large war with another major power breaking out, simultaneously with one in Europe, that would require a large U.S. intervention on the ground and in the air."[76] But a concurrent lesser contingency seemed to be quite plausible, and a conflict in the Persian Gulf would subject America's force posture to a most rigorous test. That region was one of "many areas of the world", Brown declared in his report in 1978, where "conflict would mean not only conventional warfare but also an increased probability of nuclear exchanges.[77] Deterrence of "military violence" was of "utmost importance"

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reality that a 'half-war' could also become a counter-Soviet conflict of great intensity." (p. 61)

[73] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1979, p. 81.

[74] Idem.

[75] Ibid., p. 92.

[76] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1980, p. 98.

[77] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1979, p. 79.

to America and it did

> not rule out the use of nuclear weapons if the United States, its friends, or its forces are attacked. However, we continue to believe that we and our allies are best served by basing our collective security on a firm foundation of conventional military power. We cannot depend on tripwire theories or abstract calculations about cool and studied escalation. What we seek in conjunction with our allies is a major conventional capability sufficient to halt any conventional attack.[78]

While acknowledging that "the feasibility of providing the necessary countervailing power" for credible deterrence and defence against the Soviet Union was "once again in question", Brown continued to "believe" that if the US prepared for "a limited number of critical and demanding contingencies" such as in the Persian Gulf and deployed its forces "prudently", it and its allies could "produce a conventional deterrrent to a high standard of confidence."[79] The defence posture which "permitted" the US to respond "effectively" to a "relatively minor" contingency involving the USSR in the Persian Gulf and to a simultaneous major contingency in Europe was

> a limited number of land combat forces, in large part relatively light (though their actual configuration will depend on the nature of the forces they might be expected to encounter), consisting of both Marine and Army combat divisions with their support; naval, amphibious lift, and tactical air forces; and strategic mobility forces with the range and payload to minimize our dependence on overseas staging and logistical support bases.[80]

The light land forces not immediately required for an initial defence of NATO - the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Air Assault Division and a Marine Amphibious Force - were thought

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[78] Idem.

[79] Ibid., p. 80.

[80] Ibid., pp. 9, 92.

to be "adequate" for a defence of the Persian Gulf.[81] Brown emphasized the capacity for rapid deployment by the light forces because a Gulf conflict could be "short and intense". Brzezinski too favoured "such a flexible force" because there was "greater likelihood of Soviet involvement in such areas as the Persian Gulf"[82] than elsewhere, he commented in March 1978. In intimation of the preclusive or pre-emptive character of America's future regional strategic policy for deterring the USSR, he wanted "to insure that American forces would arrive ahead of Soviet units", because "speed was crucial."[83] In the view of Brown and Brzezinski, deterrence and defence against the USSR depended not on larger numbers of US forces but on America's capability to move its forces to the Persian Gulf with sufficient rapidity to prevent a Soviet fait accompli.

In 1979 the weaknesses of a "rapid deployment force" became clear. The United States' aircraft for speedily moving

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[81] Brown does not discuss in his defence reports the adequacy of the three light US divisions and several wings of aircraft for possibly high intensity fighting against heavier (armoured) Soviet or Iraqi forces or both together. Although American contingency and force planning assumptions tended to discount help by attacked friends, the role and efficacy in combat of the imperial Iranian, if not as much the Saudi armed forces would have been important. Even in 1980, after the collapse of the Iranian armed forces and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Brown stated: "At present, we appear to have enough divisions and tactical air wings to meet current demands, even if those demands should comprise simultaneous contingencies in Central Europe and the Persian Gulf." (U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 118.) United States, Congress, Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Projection Forces: Requirements, Scenarios, and Options (April 1979) suggests (p. 21) that four US divisions, six air wings and two aircraft carrier air wings would be needed to assist Iran against a "worst-case" attack. A scenario using modified assumptions about a Soviet attack "might call for a maximum U.S. commitment of two divisions and three air wings, supplemented by two carrier groups, to reinforce Iran." (p. 24)

[82] New York Times, March 24, 1978.

[83] Idem.

men, kit and supplies to a crisis in the Persian Gulf alone, without a simultaneous contingency in Europe, were inadequate in number for carrying much more than a light brigade. And in a concurrent contingency many transport aircraft and ships would be committed to Europe as the higher priority. Also, Brown observed in the US defence report in 1979, although America

> would expect to deploy fewer forces in any limited contingency than in a NATO war, such contingencies differ from a NATO war in ways which may place greater demands on some of our mobility forces. First, we cannot predict where such contingencies will occur. Second, we are likely to have fewer mobility assets available for a limited contingency. It is possible that we would not get help from our NATO allies; there probably will be little or no prepositioned equipment and supplies; and, at least in some cases, we would be less willing to divert civil ships and aircraft from their normal business. Finally, operational problems will be greater. In particular, we may be operating over longer distances with few or no intermediate bases, and reception facilities may be limited.[84]

Thus instead of moving light divisions, much less heavy ones possibly needed in the Persian Gulf but committed to Europe, the best the Department of Defence could hope for soon as a realistic objective in improving its mobility forces was to gain "the capability to deploy quickly (and support) <u>at least a small force</u> to distant locations without reliance on foreign bases or overflight rights."[85] (Italics added.) Further, PD-18's stipulation that US forces be able to operate independently from foreign bases was impracticable. As the memorandum (see above) from the JCS in early 1979 indicated, the US would need access to regional military facilities for

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[84] U.S. Defense, <u>Annual Report FY 1980</u>, p. 202. U.S. CBO, <u>Projection Forces</u>, pp. 22-23, 44-45, and United States, Congress, Congressional Budget Office, <u>U.S. Airlift Forces: Enhancement Alternatives For NATO and Non-NATO Contingencies</u> (April 1979), pp. 54-58, discuss the role of airlift in a Persian Gulf contingency.

[85] U.S. Defense, <u>Annual Report FY 1980</u>, p. 202.

its force deployments. Finally the "rapid deployment force" was not ready to fight: it lacked suitable training, organization and planning on an individual and joint-service basis and there were insufficient amounts of weapons, equipment, munitions and spare parts.[86] With inadequately prepared forces and a deficient capability to move and sustain them, the United States could not meet at acceptable risk a "minor" contingency in the Persian Gulf involving the USSR which was simultaneous with a war in Europe. In his annual defence report delivered in January 1980, Brown concluded that

> [w]e have never fully acquired the agility and the mobility required by ... a reinforcement strategy. We have tended to settle for a lower level of combat-readiness than is desirable for sudden and rapid long-distance movement and prompt fighting effectiveness. Despite our desire to build barriers to the early use of nuclear weapons, we have economized ... on the nuts and bolts needed to sustain a non-nuclear conflict in a particular theater for more than a relatively short time.[87]

America's incapacity to deploy quickly to the Persian Gulf and sustain much more than a light brigade was becoming apparent as the Shah's regime disintegrated. Its collapse in winter 1979 undermined the Iranian armed forces' assumed ability to put up a relatively stout resistance to a Soviet attack which, in planning terms at least, had long provided

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[86] John M. Collins, Clyde R. Mark, Petroleum Imports From the Persian Gulf: Use Of U.S. Armed Forces To Ensure Supplies Issue Brief Number IB 79046, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress Date Originated: 04/26/79; Date Updated: 11/26/79, observe that a

> shortage of paratroopers, particularly those with technical skills, is posing a problem for the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division. The most serious deficiencies are in communications, intelligence, field artillery, combat support, and administration, especially among the top four non-commissioned officer grades. The division is taking non-jump qualified troopers rather than leaving positions vacant. (p. CRS-21)

[87] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 99.

the essential "first line" for the United States' regional deterrence against the USSR. Iran's strategic policy towards the Soviet Union had consisted of maintaining forces with very modern US arms thought to be sufficient to cope with and make too costly a limited Soviet attack for limited purposes. Imperial Iran had to depend on American help against a large Soviet offensive or a Soviet and Iraqi attack, holding it up until US reinforcements arrived: the Nixon Doctrine had always implied direct American military assistance, with ground forces or possibly nuclear weapons, against an attack by a "nuclear" power as the other, ultimate part of Iranian deterrence against the Soviets. But in the detente of the earlier 1970s, the US government had perceived little need for American ground forces to contribute to deterrence against a Soviet attack the likelihood of which was considered to be negligible. Thus the US Navy had felt able to claim in 1974 that an aircraft carrier task group in the Arabian Sea provided an "effective counter" to Soviet divisions in the southern USSR. The policy and psychological link between America's Indian Ocean presence and its "global" military capability - its home-based land forces and the strategic nuclear deterrent - could safely remain tenuous and latent.

At the narrow military level in the Persian Gulf in early 1979, the collapse of America's only friend able to contribute substantial forces to its defence resulted in a sudden acute deterioration in the perennial imbalance of power between the USSR and the Americans and (the now unfriendly) Iranians. The United States' conventional forces available for response to a Soviet attack into a weaker and more vulnerable Iran were too inadequate, if not ultimately in number, in structure, preparation, organization and logistic support to generate credible deterrence: the US could not inflict an unacceptably high cost on an attack by the Soviet Union relative to the value of its objectives with a high degree of confidence in all circumstances. The balance of power had changed as well among the regional states. Iraq had become the strongest

power and the demise of the Iranian deterrent against a potential Iraqi attack against Saudi Arabia or Kuwait was thought by US military planners to make the Saudis more susceptible to Iraqi pressure. The Saudis themselves were not confident that America could and would give them the help they might need against potential Iraqi and now also Iranian military action.

In early 1979 Brzezinski and Brown too recognized that the US had to establish credible conventional deterrence against a potential Soviet attack into the Persian Gulf; that was an essential condition for the security of US interests there. America now had to compensate for and exceed Iran's lost combat capability instead of tacitly complementing the Shah's forces as a distant reserve "ultimately" available to reinforce them in a conflict with the USSR. Compelled to become more direct, American deterrence had also to become more active by way of preparing forces to fight and in their display.

While Brown and Schlesinger tried in late March 1979 to enhance the political and psychological aspects of deterrence against the Soviet Union, declaring America's vital interest in the Gulf and warning of its intention to defend its interests with force if necessary, the US armed services were working on initial contingency planning and on identifying the specific force and logistic requirements for a "rapid deployment force". It was reported in April 1979 that the Department of Defence would "establish a force of 100,000 troops, including 40,000 combat soldiers, for use in defense of American interests in sensitive areas..."[88] such as the Persian Gulf and North-East Asia. The Navy, the Marines and the Air Force were defining their individual role in a quick US reaction to crises such as interference with shipments of oil from the Persian Gulf, and the Army intended to take the

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[88] New York Times, April 20, 1979.

leading part in the "force of 100,000 troops". Its planners envisioned the formation by autumn 1979 of a "'unilateral corps' of forces not committed to the defense of Western Europe or earmarked for reinforcement of troops there (sic) This corps would be the reservoir from which troops would be drawn to meet contingencies abroad."[89] In studies of logistic needs the main emphasis was on improving America's inadequate mobility forces, because the "key to success" would be the speed with which the "intervention" force moved to the Gulf. Although the US had deferred its search for access to military facilities in the Middle East, contingency planners expected "local help" in crises.

The Department of Defence had taken little concrete action to create a combined-service "rapid deployment force" and to plan for its use in Persian Gulf contingencies until directed to do so by Brzezinski and Brown from December 1978,[90] and even then it moved slowly for much of 1979. Its main priority was security in Europe and improving NATO defence, which was the focal point of contingency planning and competition for scarce budgetary resources by the armed

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[89] Idem.

[90] "Because of the trust it placed in the Shah of Iran's armed forces as a stabilizing influence, the [Carter] administration ha[d] not paid much attention to the problem" of contingency planning for the Gulf. Juan Cameron, "What If? US Military Strategy for the Middle East" (Reprinted from Fortune, May 7, 1979 in) Military Review 59 (November 1979), 10. Before 1977, according to Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, p. 84, the US armed forces "had done virtually no planning for operations in the Middle East. The European Command had drawn up contingency plans for the region, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff had found them inadequate and failed to approve them." And when in 1977 the Program Analysis and Evaluation section of the Office of the Secretary of Defence began to carry out "analyses of a number of potential conflicts in the region, some involving a confrontation with Soviet forces and others focusing on hostilities with regional states", its analysis was hampered by a "dearth of information about and interest in military operations in the Gulf area. Intelligence sources could not provide reliable analyses ... simply because they did not perceive a need to collect it."

services. They did not want to become involved in and divert limited manpower and materiel to a Gulf conflict that might become "another Vietnam", an unconventional war unpopular at home.[91] The US "military command structure placed a further obstacle in the path of the RDF."[92] The European Command, whose jurisdiction covered the Near East and the Persian Gulf region, and the Pacific Command, under whose jurisdiction came Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Indian Ocean, treated the Persian Gulf-South-West Asia area as a responsibility secondary to Western Europe and North-East Asia respectively. Thus they were not willing with sufficient vigour to compete for resources for a "rapid deployment force", to organize it and to do the appropriate contingency planning. But at the same time EUCOM, PACOM and also Readiness Command competed for control of the "rdf" in order to keep it from one another and their competition delayed its institutionalization. Yet further opposition to it came from the State Department. It too wished to avoid "another Vietnam" and it sought not to provoke an anti-American reaction by Middle Eastern states, which might perceive a revived US interventionist tendency. Nor did the State Department want to jeopardize detente and negotiations with the USSR on issues such as strategic arms limitation and arms control for the Indian Ocean area.

Despite opposition to the "rapid deployment force", preliminary work for it had gone ahead. As a result of earlier requests, in 1977, from Brzezinski and Brown and also the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) section of the Office of the Secretary of Defence and the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had made or were completing in 1979

> several detailed staff studies on U.S. capabilities for limited contingencies and on comparisons of U.S. and Soviet power-projection capabilities. These background

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[91] Ibid., p. 88.

[92] Ibid., p. 89.

> studies had considerable influence in shaping ideas about what should be done if funds and national priorities permitted. Although not intended as decision documents, they were the origin of most of the RDF-related program initiatives in late 1979 and early 1980. They also set a framework for much of the discussion of military strategies.[93]

A very important study was Capabilities for Limited Contingencies in the Persian Gulf, completed in July 1979. It had been commissioned by Brown in early 1978 "after an interagency study concluded that the Persian Gulf was the most likely flashpoint for a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States."[94] Prepared by "military officers as well as civilian analysts" in the Office of the Secretary of Defence, the 70-page report was the "most extensive military study of the region ever done by the Government." It examined America's ability to respond to "a number of potential contingencies, including a Soviet attack on Iran, an attempt by the Russians to bomb major oil facilities in the Persian Gulf and a Soviet submarine campaign against Western oil tankers in the Indian Ocean" and also a Soviet attack upon Saudi Arabia. Then it discussed the various military options open to the United States in those contingencies. Capabilities for Limited Contingencies in the Persian Gulf was "said to have laid down the groundwork for the Administration's [later] effort to bolster local defences and to establish a presence in the region by American forces."

The study stated that the Soviet Union's "control of Persian Gulf oil would 'destroy NATO and the American-Japanese alliance without recourse to war by the Soviets'" and that the USSR had military advantages such as proximity to the Persian Gulf. It pointed out further that "unlike Western Europe, the Soviet-American military balance consisted not of the forces

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[93] Davis, Observations, p. 14.

[94] The following three paragraphs draw from New York Times, February 2, 1980.

that Washington and Moscow kept in the region but the men and equipment that each could rapidly move to the area in the event of conflict." The contingency involving the Soviet armed forces' "'sudden seizure' of Iran" was "'the worst case from the U.S. point of view.'" The USSR "might be tempted to exploit political turmoil in the country 'in order to seize a historical opportunity to change the worldwide balance.'" All 23 Soviet mechanized divisions in the Caucasus, Transcaucasus and Turkistan military districts, "consisting of about 200,000 troops", could be "mobilized and moved into northwest Iran in about a month." They could be supported by "70 tactical fighters, including 35 advanced fighter-bombers code-named Fencer by NATO, and 193 longer-range bombers, including 19 of the new type code-named Backfire." The USSR had "103 navy bombers and about 10 submarines that it could commit against American aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean." Although the Soviet forces contiguous to Iran were not as well equipped as those in Eastern Europe, implicitly they would be adequate to deal with the Iranians who "'will not soon be able to contribute effectively to their own defense.'" In the

> unlikely event that American forces were invited to bolster Iranian defenses, the report estimated that it would take 30 days to get about 20,000 soldiers and four tactical fighter squadrons, a total of about 72 planes, to the country, leaving the Russians with more than a five-to-one advantage in forces.
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> The only opportunity for stopping a Soviet thrust ... would be to impede the invaders in the rugged terrain along the Soviet border and in mountains to the southeast. 'Unless the mountains can be exploited or substantial assistance can be obtained from allies,' ... 'the Soviets will surely prevail easily because of their large advantage ... in ground forces.'

But in considering "the problem of dissuading Moscow from attacking Iran", the study concluded that

> '[i]n principle, a deterrent based on mountain defense should be feasible - especially if the objective is to guarantee delays and casualties for the attacker.' To do this, it calls for the creation of highly mobile units

that would be able to fight in rugged mountain terrain.

Otherwise there was the prospect that in order to "'prevail in an Iranian scenario'", the US "'might have to threaten or make use of tactical nuclear weapons.'"

Capabilities for Limited Contingencies in the Persian Gulf was "more optimistic" about America's ability to cope with attempts to disrupt the movement of oil tankers from the Persian Gulf. The USSR could not, as had been believed, close the sea lanes reasonably easily by mining the Strait of Hormuz and by attacks from submarines and aircraft. In 30 days, it was surmised, Soviet submarines and bombers could sink "about 30 percent of 550 loaded oil tankers in the sea lanes...." But by then, when "'Soviet submarines would have severe problems because of the long distances between the region and their home bases,'" "American antisubmarine warfare planes and interceptors flown into the region would quickly produce 'results favorable to the West.'" The Strait of Hormuz "'could be reopened in about two weeks by helicopter sweeping forces.'" This assessment assumed, however, that the

> United States could make full use of local naval bases in such countries as Oman and Djibouti. [The report] also noted that it 'would be an ominous development if the Soviets built major regional port facilities for resupplying submarines' in the area and also maintained that [America's] 'ability to deny the Soviets a submarine resupply sanctuary near the Cape of Good Hope will depend on cooperation from South Africa.'

There was a bigger threat to Western oil supplies from Soviet air attacks upon oil facilities in the Gulf states. Approximately 65 per cent of all Persian Gulf oil passed through only three facilities, Ras Tanurah and Juaymah in Saudi Arabia and Kharg island off Iran. In the event of war with the Soviet Union, they would be "'prime targets'". By destroying eight "'critical'" pumping sites at those facilities, raids by "long-range fighter-bombers such as the Sukhoi-19 Fencer ... and intermediate bombers such as the

Backfire" from Soviet bases some 900 miles away would give the USSR "'high confidence of virtually shutting down the facilities.'" No plans existed for repairing damaged oil installations and "'repairs might take months or years.'"

When the report examined the capabilities of America and the USSR to intervene in a state not contiguous to the Soviet Union, it discussed "'the projection balance'", "the amount and rate at which the two sides could send military forces into the region by sea and air.'" The Soviets possessed

> 'several distinct advantages: they are much closer to the Persian Gulf (roughly 1,000 nautical miles vs. 7,000 nautical miles); their initial forces could arrive earlier; and they have a substantial number of forces at a high level of readiness: seven airborne divisions, in particular.'

But America had important advantages too: "'aircraft carriers; more reliable sea lines of communication; more effective long-range airlift and refueling.'" During the first 30 days of a crisis, "for example in Saudi Arabia",

> 'the United States would probably be able to project by air and sea more and more powerful ground forces than would the Soviets now and in 1985.' Further, during the same 30-day period, the report said that Washington could send 432 fighter planes into the country while Moscow could only fly in 272 aircraft.
>
> The report said that in the event of simultaneous crises in the Persian Gulf and Western Europe, shortages of C-5 and C-141 transport planes would prevent the United States from flying forces to the Gulf region for about two weeks. It also warned that 'under certain circumstances,' Moscow might be willing to launch a sudden, surprise strike in the Persian Gulf using its seven airborne divisions. The divisions ... could be flown into the area in two or three weeks and 'the United States could not match this type of deployment.'

Capabilities for Limited Contingencies in the Persian Gulf made many recommendations for "improving the American military posture in the region, strongly endorsing such efforts as

creating a special 'rapid deployment force' for use in the Persian Gulf and gaining greater access to ports and airstrips..." and improving America's mobility forces. It called also for the creation of an "emergency repair capability" for oil installations. As a means of "shoring up" the security of Saudi Arabia and the lower Gulf states, the study called for arrangements for "storing military equipment in the area as well as Egypt and Israel for use by American forces in the event of war." The report was "cautious about American involvement in conflicts in the region that do not involve direct Soviet or Iraqi aggression" because they were "'likely to be low-level affairs with a guerrilla character.'" Furthermore there was reason to question America's

> current competence to assist local governments in these matters - [its] weapons are too sophisticated, [its] methods of war inappropriate, [its] knowledge of the region scant. The Saudis, British, French and Jordanians (and perhaps in a few years, the Egyptians) are all potentially better suited to assist such states as Yemen and Oman.

Debate about the Role and Utility of the Armed Forces

In May 1979 debate began in earnest between the State Department and the National Security Council and Department of Defence about the armed forces' role and utility, political as well as military, in a security policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area which would replace the Nixon Doctrine. The debate became more active after May 11 when the Policy Review Committee of the NSC acknowledged the Arabs' rejection of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty as a basis for a wider settlement between Israel and the Arab states and Palestinians. Despite the undermining of that essential part of the political foundation for America's post-Shah policy for an informal Middle East-wide coalition which was to have been the main guarantor of security within the Persian Gulf, the State Department and the NSC and Department of Defence agreed that the "peace process", critical in its own right, should go ahead. Disagreement arose, however, as the two "sides" tried

to determine what ought to be America's strategic contribution to Gulf security. That disagreement derived from their conflicting emphases, informed by differing institutional outlooks, concerning the priority of threat to regional security, the ability of friendly Gulf states to deal with that threat, the extent to which American armed forces were needed to contribute to Gulf security and their likely political impact.

From its "regionalist" viewpoint the State Department considered that a greater American strategic role was unnecessary. Threats to the Persian Gulf came primarily from within it and friendly states still could cope with them, even if with less safety and certainty than before. A larger US force presence was liable to provoke Gulf states and suggest American interventionism more than reassure the friendly countries about America's interest and commitment to regional security. Inappropriately managed, the US forces could add to, not reduce tension and instability. Improbable Soviet aggression was already deterred adequately by American forces from the "global" level. Brzezinski and Brown took a "globalist", geopolitical perspective according to which the USSR was the most compelling threat to the Persian Gulf. Only America could counter politically and deter the Soviet armed forces and it could do so best, in a way most reassuring to friendly states, from the regional level, with an enhanced naval presence, land-based forces in the US ready for operations in South-West Asia and visits, demonstrations and exercises by the latter forces which would approximate a continuous American land presence.

The State Department's view of America's appropriate regional strategic role was expressed in an exposition of de facto US policy for the Persian Gulf and wider Middle East region. Presented to Congress in late July 1979 that exposition was entitled Analysis Of Developments In Middle East 1978-79 And Their Implications For U.S. Policy: The

Middle East 1978-79: Forces Of Change.[95] The US government had supported consistently the security and stability of the Arabian peninsular states and was co-operating actively with friendly countries towards those ends. It sought to reassure friends about its commitment to regional security and to "deter adventurism by adversaries". Because of the strategic position of the Arabian peninsula/Persian Gulf, the American government would be "very concerned about ... destabilizing events in any of the states of the region..."[96] such as internal subversion supported from abroad and about external attacks. America's ability to advance the Middle East peace process remained the "most effective means" of protecting its regional interests.[97] That was because the peninsular states saw progress towards a durable peace as the "primary requirement for long-term security and tranquility".[98] The United States had engaged in intensified dialogue with the peninsular states about regional security in the wake of the Iranian revolution and it had tried to foster their confidence that it was sensitive to their security concerns. The fall of the Shah had "necessarily led to a change in the mix of means available ... to assure [US] security interests" but America did not believe "that this change will imply a substantially greater direct U.S. role."[99] Its policy would remain "to strengthen the hand of moderate and friendly states in the

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[95] From "Prepared State of Hon. Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs" in United States, Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Review of Recent Developments In The Middle East, 1979, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 1979, pp. 7-14. This exposition of de facto US policy draws also from "Supplemental Questions Submitted By Lee H. Hamilton To The Department Of State And Its Responses", Ibid., pp. 46-75.

[96] Ibid., p. 54.

[97] Ibid., p. 53.

[98] Idem.

[99] Idem.

area to provide for their own security."[100] It had "modestly increased the security role it plays in the Middle East in the past year ... in response to the requests of friends for support."[101] The US had shown during the Yemen conflict in February-March 1979 that it "could and would aid friends quickly when faced by attack from outside" and it had begun a "new arms relationship" with the Egyptians in order to meet their "real defense needs."[102] It had decided to increase its regional military presence (see below), but only "marginally", because a larger US presence - all forces "stationed on the ground" - "would be inimical to the interests and desires of ... friends."[103] Military power, "alone or even primarily, will be unable to secure and promote anyone's interests unless it supports and takes account of the indigenous forces for change...."[104]

In the event of danger to friendly states from within the Arabian Peninsula/Persian Gulf region the form of a US response would depend on an evaluation of the particular circumstances, and America would act in close co-operation with friendly regimes. Although the US preferred to confine its resonse to "diplomatic means" and did "not wish to intervene militarily in the Persian Gulf"[105], it would nonetheless defend its "vital interests in the region with appropriate additional means, as necessary."[106] The serious potential economic and political consequences of recourse to "additional means" would have to be weighed with great care

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[100] Ibid., p. 54.

[101] Ibid., p. 14.

[102] Idem.

[103] Idem.

[104] Idem.

[105] Ibid., p. 54.

[106] Idem.

before a decision to employ force was made. Also, a military exercise that far away from U.S. shores would imply some military risks but the US believed that it had "the means necessary to reduce those risks to tolerable proportions."[107]

The United States was "keeping a close global watch on Soviet intentions and activities" and maintained that no outside power should attempt to exploit instability in Iran, with which the US wished to improve relations, or to infringe upon Iran's independence or territorial integrity. At present there was "no evidence of any significant outside interference"[108] there. Elsewhere increased shipments of arms to "certain governments" (South Yemen) from the USSR and its supply of advisers and support for their military operations created the impression that America might be unwilling or unable to help its friends and defend its interests. Harold Brown's visit to the Middle East in February 1979 was part of an effort to arrest that mistaken impression. There was "no lack of understanding of the military power [America's] adversaries can dispose over this region"[109] and the US was "prepared to act purposefully with appropriate responses"[110] against the use of that power, if required. But the appropriate military capability for contributing to regional states' security "if a situation developed where they felt their security was threatened by forces from outside the region" was "American <u>global</u> strength."[111] (Italics added.) The US played a critical role in upholding a balance at the global level which discouraged outside pressure on the security and stability of the Persian Gulf.

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[107] Idem.

[108] Ibid., p. 72.

[109] Ibid., p.14.

[110] Ibid., p. 46.

[111] Ibid., p. 15.

According to the State Department the role of the armed forces in America's post-Nixon Doctrine security policy for the Persian Gulf ought to remain quite limited. American forces could not and need not substitute for the Shah's forces. With relatively minor adjustments they were already adequate, within the inherent limits of military power, to help assure US interests. The additional protection of those interests by the armed forces playing a larger, more direct and active role would be small. Indeed a sizable increase in America's regional military involvement and presence and the organization of home-based forces for intervention were inappropriate. Those forces would be unsuitable because they had little actual ability to protect American interests and to influence events in the most probable "threat situations": much of the conflict and instability in the Middle East was political, economic and social rather than military and it occurred within states. Armed intervention in order to "secure" access to oil if regional states became "difficult" or if they "lost control" in domestic unrest would only worsen the political conditions which in the long-term were the principal source assuring uninterrupted oil supplies. Hints in public about military intervention (see below) were redolent of US threats and attempted intimidation of the Arab Gulf from 1973 to 1975. Such threats and, the State Department had long claimed, the creation of a "rapid deployment force" would suggest a new US interventionist policy, provoke states and increase regional tension. Further, they would worsen America's relations with the Middle Eastern states, make acceptance of even a limited US military presence more difficult and damage the United States' credibility as "peace-maker" between the Arabs and the Israelis. In rejecting proposals for the US to be ready to use military force in order to "guarantee" access to oil supplies, President Carter reflected the State Department's judgement when he commented in late July 1979 that US military action would result in the sabotage of the oil fields and make America's political and security problems in the Persian Gulf

more difficult.[112] The State Department would have concurred too with Brown's observation on July 5, 1979 that the West's vulnerability to shortages or disruptions of oil supplies or to rises in the price of oil was a serious security issue but steady production of oil and access to it were "by no means a purely military problem. In fact, the militay (sic) leverage that can be brought to bear is very small indeed."[113] More important for protecting US security interests in the Persian Gulf than the armed forces was a long-term national programme for reducing America's dependence on oil.

A bigger US strategic contribution to Persian Gulf security was unnecessary for helping to cope with regional threats to friendly countries, in the view of the State Department.[114] After the fall of the Shah those states were still able to take primary responsibility for dealing with the likely, limited threats to them. Iraq and now Iran were perceived as the main threats, individually and insofar as their reviving conflict might entangle the other Gulf states. However, the nature of the threat posed by them was more political and ideological or religious than military. Although Iraq was now the strongest Gulf military power, it was improving, at least tactically, its relations with the

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[112] New York Times, August 1, 1979.

[113] U.S. Defense Secretary Harold Brown Discusses The Energy Crisis and SALT-2 Excerpts from a TV interview on Thursday, July 5th Official Text, International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, July 9th, 1979, p. 1.

[114] For aspects of the State Department's reasoning as elaborated in this and the next paragraph, see, for example, International Herald Tribune, June 23-24, 1979; Financial Times, July 5, 1979; New York Times, December 1, 1979. Harold H. Saunders, The Middle East Problem in the 1980s Special Analysis No. 81-8 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981); Conversations with Harold H. Saunders AEI Studies 346 (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1982); David D. Newsom, "America Engulfed", Foreign Policy, no. 43 (Summer 1981), pp. 17-32, discuss retrospectively from a State Department point of view the role and value of the US armed forces within the context of politics in the Persian Gulf and American policy for the region.

other Gulf Arabs and it was preoccupied with, if not militarily balanced by Iran. Regional politics, not US armed forces, were the best defence for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait against the contingency of Iraqi incursions foreseen by military planners. America's supply of very modern arms to Saudi Arabia was appreciated for assisting it to present a degree of deterrence against limited forms of Iraqi or Iranian aggression. But a bigger regional military presence on the part of the American supporter of Israel, rival of the USSR and enemy of Iraq and Iran was politically unacceptable to the Saudis and would, they feared, compromise their independence and regional influence. On the other hand, implicit in the State Department's indication noted above that the US would defend its vital interests "with appropriate additional means, as necessary", direct US armed intervention in reinforcement of friends was not ruled out in the case of a relatively large and immediate military threat. Should the United States' help be sought against the threat of an Iranian air raid or in the event of another Yemeni conflict, an indirect American military response such as sending advisers and AWACS or resupplying munitions and critical equipment would very likely suffice. At most in a realistic "bad case", a limited direct employment of US air power might be called for and that would be readily available. Should an American naval presence be required as part of an international response to Iranian attempts to interfere with the movement of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the US could deploy to good effect an aircraft carrier and other, specialized ships. In "normal" conditions a slightly enlarged US naval presence would be useful because, in the case of the Middle East Force, it could better help to monitor the Gulf's shipping lanes, show America's steadfast interest in regional security and provide a more reassuring display of support for friends.

Substantially more US forces deployed in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area would add little, in the State Department's opinion, to counterbalancing politically and

deterring the Soviet Union because, as pointed out, it understood that internal strains and local tensions, not a meddling USSR, were the main threats to regional security. Nor were the USSR's armed forces, although growing in long-range operational capability and enjoying access to military facilities in South Yemen and Ethiopia, the principal means by which the USSR "challenged" the security of South-West Asia and tried to increase its influence there. That "challenge" came from the Soviets' political involvement with and economic and military aid to ideologically sympathetic states and "radical" powers around the periphery of the Gulf region all of which had voluntarily and independently sought a Soviet connection. The United States' armed forces could not prevent Soviet political "penetration" or, for example, the USSR's indirect military intervention in the Horn war in 1977-78 in response to Ethiopia's request and the subsequent Soviet-Ethiopian alliance. Only as part of America's own general political, economic and security relationships with regional countries could the US Navy in the Indian Ocean and home-based forces counter the USSR's regional involvement. As for a potential Soviet attack into Iran in order to seize its oil resources, that was already deterred by American forces, conventional and nuclear, at the global level. The USSR recognized the importance of Iran and the Gulf Arab states to the West: an attack against them would, like trying to seize Western Europe, cause a war. The Soviets would be cautious about engaging in lesser direct uses of the armed forces because the United States already had a conventional capability adequate to respond to those uses. On the other hand, America had to remember that a unilateral "defensive" intervention by it in the Gulf could evoke a Soviet counter-intervention and lead to great danger. Similarly a sizable increase in the US naval presence in the Arabian Sea could prompt a Soviet force expansion and ruin the possibility of a regional super-power naval arms control agreement.

Brzezinski, on the other hand, persisted with

propositions (see above) which he had been expounding since early 1979 and urged a larger, more direct and active role for the armed forces in America's security policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. Their better preparation and enlarged regional display would help to show America's heightened interest in South-West Asia, specifically the Persian Gulf[115], to "reassert" US power and influence, to better counter and deter the Soviets[116] and to reassure friendly countries about the United States' commitment and reliability as an actor in regional security. The armed forces' greater role would be valuable because in showing America's renewed willingness to defend its interests they would give necessary substance to US policy and strengthen its credibility.

The State Department's judgement that the armed forces already contributed adequately to America's security policy for the Persian Gulf was mistaken.* Its preferred strategic policy - continuing with minor, essentially symbolic naval display and depending on the strategic nuclear deterrent and

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* The discussion below is not attributed directly to Brzezinski; it pursues a line of reasoning generally conforming to his known position.

[115] By early August 1979 Brzezinski was characterizing the Middle East as a "vital strategic zone", equal to Western Europe and the Far East in importance to the United States. International Herald Tribune, August 4-5, 1979.

[116] However remote, the possibility of a Soviet attack into the Gulf could not be ignored. The potential for Soviet military action seemed to be most serious in Afghanistan, where "creeping intervention" by the USSR as the Marxist government in Kabul faced widespread rebellion caused Brzezinski increasing apprehension. In early May 1979 he had warned

> the President that the Soviets would be in a position, if they came to dominate Afghanistan, to promote a separate Baluchistan, which would give them access to the Indian Ocean while dismembering Pakistan and Iran. [Brzezinski] also reminded the President of Russia's traditional push to the south, and briefed him specifically on Molotov's proposal to Hitler in late 1940 that the Nazis recognize the Soviet claim to preeminence in the region south of Batum and Baku. (Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 427.)

home-based land forces - was too weak and politically inappropriate. That policy relied on the extremes of power embodied by the aircraft carrier: one aircraft carrier was an important symbol and its aircraft could strike with tactical nuclear weapons but it had relatively little power usable for conventional ground operations. Also, conventional and nuclear forces in the US were too remote physically and psychologically from the Persian Gulf to exert an immediate impact on the USSR and on regional states in support of American security policy. Thus by proposing that the US need not adjust its strategic policy and improve the capability of its forces to operate in South-West Asia, the State Department's "policy" would send the wrong message, that America was not serious about Gulf security and its role in it, thereby weakening both.

The armed forces had more utility than the State Department thought. As the ultimate, physical recourse of a super-power, America's military capability was a basic part of the setting of international politics. The armed forces were a necessary if not sufficient means for influencing states' perceptions, policy, expectations and behaviour and their calculation of risks and how to deal with them. The Gulf states and the Soviet Union respected military power and the former were sensitive to its political symbolism. They were quite sensitive also to the global and the regional balance of power between the US and the USSR and to changes in it. The extent to which America improved the readiness of its forces for combat and the way it displayed some of them in South-West Asia would increase the Soviets' and the Gulf countries' responsiveness to US policy: the USSR would exercise more restraint and regional states would be less susceptible to Soviet pressure and more confident about their security.

In principle the single strongest, most convincing way to support America's Gulf security policy would be to base conventional land and air forces in the region. Unable to

withdraw easily, they would be the most appropriate for showing that the US was deliberately giving hostages to fortune and was willing to share in the fate of friendly Gulf states. Their long-term presence would prove tangibly the enduring importance of US interests - they were worth defence on land - and the constancy of America's commitment to their defence. Visible, immediately available land forces would be the most credible as a political balance and for deterrence against home-based Soviet ground and air units because they would be a counter-presence in kind. Although unable to "match" the USSR in a balance of forces close to South-West Asia, the American capability would still be substantial enough in the event of conflict to disrupt operations by first-arriving Soviet forces and avoid a fait accompli before rapidly deployed reinforcements from the US could be introduced. The United States would be able to avoid the "compulsion" to launch tactical nuclear strikes from an aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea.

However, America had to deploy an enlarged, continuous naval force as its main presence in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area because political conditions in the Gulf prevented it from stationing a ground force there. Naval display was less intrusive and provocative than a land presence. Enlarged, it would balance more emphatically the Soviet naval squadron and, made continuous, it would reassure friendly states more than the earlier US naval presence. But naval forces were politically less valuable than a land presence. They were a weaker indication of resolve than land-based forces because at bottom the principal military balance with the USSR and among the Gulf states was on the land and even much strengthened naval forces possessed less and less relevant capability for ground operations than land and air forces. Also, naval forces' flexibility, which enabled them to withdraw as easily as to stand offshore for a lengthy time,

suggested less reliability of commitment.[117]

In order for America to maximize the efficacy of its regional display and deterrence it had to approximate as much as possible a land-based force presence. Visits, demonstrations, training and exercises in South-West Asia by land and air detachments from the US, prepositioning war materiel in the region and acquiring access, however conditional, to military facilities there would complement a home-based "rapid deployment force" and a naval presence and reassure more than provoke friends, otherwise they would not allow them. An "approximate" land presence in the form of prepositioned materiel and available facilities would expedite a "rapid deployment force's" response to a sudden crisis in the Persian Gulf. On the other hand it would help America to avoid "repeating the heavy-handed intervention of Vietnam or incurring the costs of more U.S. bases abroad."[118]

## Policy Decisions

Debate about the role and value of the armed forces took place at meetings of the Policy Review Committee (PRC) of the National Security Council on June 21-22, 1979. Those meetings were an important part of the Carter administration's review of "the implications of and options for U.S. policy in the Middle East and Indian Ocean."[119] According to Brzezinski a

> series of particularly important meetings was held in the middle of June 1979, in which the overall strategic issues were sharply debated. Vance and Christopher generally argued that the United States should not become more involved, while Brown, Schlesinger ... and I argued for a more active American policy which would combine efforts to move the Arab-Israeli peace process forward with wider security arrangements. At one point in that debate, Schlesinger argued forcefully that American military presence in the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf area

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[117] See Chubin, The Role of Outside Powers, p. 124.

[118] International Herald Tribune, August 4-5, 1979.

[119] International Herald Tribune, June 23-24, 1979.

> should 'balance' the Soviets, and when Vance and Christopher reacted negatively, I not only backed Schlesinger but stated that in fact [America's] objective ought to be military preponderance, since the area was vital to the United States while not of equal significance to the Soviets.[120]

The PRC meetings considered a study by several government agencies of "changes in the region's security situation, including the implications of the West's growing dependence on oil from the Persian Gulf, political and military gains by the Soviet Union ... and turbulence in Iran and elsewhere"[121] and it discussed a "Pentagon paper" outlining four options for increasing America's regional military presence. Reported to concur with the National Security Council and Department of Defence in "principle that greater U.S. military strength ... was needed",[122] the State Department agreed to the most gradual expansion of American power offered by the four-option Pentagon paper. That consisted of a "modest but symbolically significant increase in U.S. military presence in the Middle East and Indian Ocean":[123] augmenting the Middle East Force from three ships to five ships and enlarging the number of regular naval task group deployments to the Indian Ocean from three to four a year. Also US Air Force combat aircraft would stage more routine demonstration visits to friendly Arab countries and a new emphasis would be put on military sales and high-level contacts with Oman and the smaller shaikhdoms of the Gulf.[124] New military sales totalling $1.2 billion were approved for Saudi Arabia.

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[120] Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 447. Christopher was Vance's deputy.

[121] New York Times, June 28, 1979.

[122] Washington Post, January 24, 1980.

[123] Washington Post, July 1, 1979. Carter authorized the increase in September 1979.

[124] Washington Post, January 24, 1980.

In early July 1979 Brown characterized the intended expansion of America's military presence in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area as

> a series of signals: a signal that we want to cooperate with ... friends in that area and when that cooperation entails requests on their part for larger presence in one form or another, we respond. It is also an indication that we have vital interests in that area and are determined to respond ... to requests from the countries ... who may now or in the future be concerned about external interference ... with their own future and with [US] vital interests.[125]

The State Department could accept the idea of signalling so long as an enlarged presence remained sufficiently limited not to appear threatening to the Gulf states or to cause a naval arms race with the Soviets. The modest US force increase would be "responsive" to Saudi Arabia, which, as shown above, had expressed worry about the safety of shipping in the Gulf, asked America to increase its naval presence along the sea lanes and wanted it to counter discreetly the USSR's regional military presence. There was "still deep disagreement", however, between the State Department and the NSC and Department of Defence about how [much more] to strengthen American forces in the Indian Ocean and how quickly to do so.[126] But "[g]radually, the Pentagon and Brzezinski ... [became] the driving forces on many aspects of regional policy."[127] Thus despite the State Department's caution and doubt about the value of further increases in the US military presence and although "no dramatic changes in American deployment patterns could be expected soon", the increases in display decided on in June 1979 were "said by several officials to constitute a turning point in American policy in

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[125] Brown Discusses Crisis, p. 2.

[126] New York Times, June 28, 1979.

[127] International Herald Tribune, June 23-34, 1979.

the region."[128] They were part of a trend which "was likely to result in a gradual but significant augmentation of American naval and air forces in the region during the coming year."[129]

The steady expansion of the US military presence continued to be sought above all by Brzezinski, who thought that the modest force increases approved by the Policy Review Committee were not strong and credible enough a signal to the Soviets and the Persian Gulf states of the seriousness of America's interest in the Gulf and resolve of commitment to its security. He wanted to deploy in the Arabian Sea a "Fifth Fleet" roughly the size of the 20-ship Soviet squadron but superior to it in combat capability. That idea was rejected by Brown as "too expensive and not necessary."[130] The formation of a separate fleet for the Indian Ocean "would impose heavy strains on the Navy and imply a long-range commitment that the U.S. government might prefer not to make."[131] In view of the finite number of ships in the Navy and its other commitments, Brown preferred "the flexibility of moving carriers and other vessels more frequently from the Western Pacific into the Indian Ocean."[132] In two of the now intended quarterly naval deployments to the Indian Ocean

> not headed by aircraft carriers [there would be] guided-missile cruisers as flagships. Some thought also is being given to occasional substitution of a Marine amphibious force with a helicopter carrier as the main ship. This would meet a desire for including aviation in the quarterly visits as often as possible and would familiarize Marines with the area.[133]

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[128] New York Times, June 28, 1979.

[129] Idem.

[130] New York Times, August 3, 1979.

[131] Baltimore Sun, June 6, 1979.

[132] New York Times, August 3, 1979.

[133] Baltimore Sun, October 19, 1979.

Deployments by naval, air and also ground forces to the Middle East for joint training exercises with Egypt and possibly Saudi Arabia were other ways of enhancing America's regional military display and the Department of Defence was considering them along with "more formal and regular joint military consultations and planning exercises."[134] The US government was discussing "gingerly" "an offer from ... President Anwar Sadat to open Egyptian facilities for more U.S. aircraft and ship calls."[135] Also the possibility of prepositioning American military supplies in "key states" was under examination during summer 1979, when plans were approved for expanding anew the logistic support facilities at Diego Garcia. Finally the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff continued to deliberate about establishing a new military command structure for the Middle East by detaching jurisdiction for US security and strategic activities there from the European Command and investing it in a senior officer and his staff stationed somewhere in the region. "The Middle East commander in chief would probably not have combat units under his control but would be able to draw on earmarked 'assets' from other commands in times of crises."[136]

## Evolution of Purpose and Plans for the "Rapid Deployment Force"

The "rapid deployment force", whose creation and potential use was a major subject of debate at the meetings in June of the PRC, was, along with intensified display, the main initiative in the modification of America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area envisioned by Brzezinski. The State Department objected to it strongly but Carter's approval of the "rapid deployment force" concept was one of the decisions which Brzezinski was determined would "ultimately come out of the wide-ranging Middle East review"

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[134] International Herald Tribune, June 23-24, 1979.

[135] Washington Star, July 1, 1979.

[136] International Herald Tribune, June 23-24, 1979.

and manifest the Administration's resolve "to move beyond the post-Vietnam era and to use military power abroad again if necessary to protect U.S. interests."[137] By the time of the PRC meetings in June the US Army had announced that it was preparing a "Unilateral Corps", a "quick-strike" force of 110,000 troops from all the armed services for response to crises in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere outside the NATO area. The concept of the "Unilateral Corps" was

> to give the unified commanders, such as the commander in chief for the Pacific, a force they can call upon for help without going through the time-consuming process of identifying and rounding up available units.
>
> The Army plan ... does not envision assembling the corps at one place. Instead, the combat troops and support units would stay where they are. They would be equipped to respond as a corps quickly, however.[138]

The "Unilateral Corps" was not "a new addition to U.S. striking power"; the military had to "make do with the troops it already has and work around current shortages of ships and [air] transports to send units and weaponry to distant [places]."[139] In confirming these points on July 5, 1979 Brown said that the Army's work was only one part of the Department of Defence's examination of how much it needed to enlarge America's capability for moving its forces to areas outside NATO.

Brown's remarks, the announcement about the "Unilateral Corps" and the PRC meetings took place against the background of a reduction in the output of Persian Gulf oil, rising OPEC oil prices and petrol queues and disgruntlement in America. When asked on July 5 in what circumstances the United States would "commit forces to act" in the Middle East, Brown replied

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[137] Washington Post, July 1, 1979.

[138] International Herald Tribune, June 23-24, 1979.

[139] Idem.

that the US would commit forces if its vital interests, not only oil, "were involved". He alluded to a US role in an international reaction to a blockage of the Strait of Hormuz and referred indirectly to "possible Soviet expansionism" into the Middle East, "a strategic area in geographical terms".[140] The "worst case" circumstances requiring American intervention in the Persian Gulf were suggested by "several senior military and civilian officials in private conversation."[141] They "echoed" the blunt statement by Senator Gary Hart that the US "'may be forced to use military force to preserve the oil flow'" and should military action be taken against one of its suppliers of oil, it "'may be forced to intervene.'"

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[140] Brown Discusses Crisis, p. 4.

[141] This and the other quotations in this paragraph are taken from New York Times, July 5, 1979. For a discussion of the United States' military capacity to "protect" access to Persian Gulf oil, consult Collins and Mark, Petroleum Imports From the Persian Gulf. "Protecting Oil Supplies: The Military Requirements" is analyzed by General Sir John Hackett in Third World Conflict and International Security pt. 1 Adelphi Paper No. 166 (London: International Institute For Strategic Studies, 1981), pp. 41-51. Geoffrey Kemp discusses "Contingency Planning and Persian Gulf Options" in United States, National Defense University, Continuity And Change In The Eighties And Beyond Proceedings Of The National Security Affairs Conference, 23-25 July 1979, (Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C., November 1979), pp. 61-76. For a view counselling against military intervention in circumstances not involving the USSR, see The Atlantic Council Of The United States, Oil And Turmoil: Western Choices in the Middle East The Atlantic Council's Special Working Group on the Middle East, John C. Campbell, Rapporteur, Andrew J. Goodpaster and Brent Scowcroft, Co-Chairmen (Washington, D.C.: The Atlantic Council Of The United States, September, 1979), p. 34:

> The existence of a stronger US military posture should have the purpose, and the result, of deterring military action by Soviet or by Cuban or other proxy forces under Soviet direction. US forces should not be intended for intervention in local revolutions or intra-regional conflicts. They should not be seen as the means of assuring the West's oil supply through unilateral intervention, although they might be called on by local states to help protect oil facilities and could have the mission of preventing any interference by force by other external powers.

> One possibility of constant concern to planners is that of a foreign-supported rebellion in Saudi Arabia or an invasion of that country by Soviet-controlled forces from Southern Yemen. Either would threaten the United States' chief source of overseas oil.
>
> Another situation, unlikely but possible, is that Saudi Arabia might drastically reduce oil shipments to the United States for international political reasons, such as dissatisfaction with American policy toward the West Bank.

"American sources" "conceded" that there was "no certainty" whether the oil fields would be "found intact in the event of intervention." The "main problem after a successful landing" of US airborne forces, "senior officers" pointed out, was sustaining the force with the "necessities of combat or occupation. In a largely empty area such as Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, great quantities of food, fuel, water and ammunition would have to be flown in daily until seaborne supply lines were established." "The Soviet Union's reaction to an American intervention [wa]s a critical issue" too and US defence officials differed among themselves about the likelihood and scale of a Soviet response.

Throughout summer 1979, pressed by Brzezinski and subjected to memoranda from Brown, the OJCS "conducted extensive studies of rapid response force options ..."[142] and drew up recommendations for a US command structure for the Persian Gulf region. (For Brown's choice of a command structure, see below.) In late summer Brzezinski and Brown gained acceptance in the National Security Council of the "rapid deployment force" concept and of a second purpose for the "rdf". It not only had to help deter potential military action by the Soviet Union but now the US had also to be prepared to intervene with it, preferably upon request, in the Persian Gulf (and elsewhere) in order to protect American interests in circumstances - increasing "turbulence from within" the region - not involving the USSR.

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[142] Johnson, Military Instrument, p. 62.

President Carter's acceptance of the "rapid deployment force" and its second, interventionist purpose and his approval of budget programme "items" for it "emerged ... in detail from considerations by the Joint Chiefs [of Staff] along with the rest of the Defense Establishment" at meetings in August and September 1979 of the NSC's policy and programme review committees.[143] At those meetings, where America's general security policy and "defense posture" were assessed, the Carter administration concluded that the US had to be better prepared psychologically and materially to use the armed forces in support of policy. This new emphasis derived from a now more acute awareness, caused in good part by the Iranian revolution, of four trends. First, the developing world was in "great danger of plunging into chaos"[144] and in the Middle East "further turmoil" and instability could cause a major disruption in the supply of oil and harm the security and economic well-being of America and the West. Without the oil producers' recognition of the limit to the loss of oil supplies which the consuming states and the global economy could endure, the danger of international economic disorder almost could equal in severity the military threat from the Soviet Union. Second, the USSR's capacity to fight on two fronts and to deploy power at a distance from its territory was growing. Soviet military action and internal or regional conflicts, in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, could occur simultaneously and would put "heavy pressure" on America's conventional military "posture". Third, "future events" would create an increasing demand for high combat readiness and great speed of movement to theatres of operations but the United States' readiness to fight and its capability promptly

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[143] United States, Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Preview Budget Briefing Fiscal Years 1981-1985 Five-Year Program, Hearings, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 1980, p. 60. The hearings were held on December 13 and 14, 1979.

[144] Ibid., p. 28. The four trends justifying the "rapid deployment force", its concept, purposes and programmes were not articulated in public, by Brown, until December 1979-January 1980.

to mobilize and move large forces over long distances and to sustain them in combat without resort to nuclear weapons was inadequate. America had been able "to get away with a relatively unbalanced posture in recent years" not only because of the limited reach and "sluggishness" of "potentially hostile forces" but also because of the "aura of great U.S. military power". That "aura" had "to some degree" "even substituted for its substance and its presence in many of the disturbances with which [America has] had to contend."[145] But, fourth, lately "expectations about the availability and effectiveness of American military power" might "have fallen too low" and unless reversed those expectations could "lead to miscalculations about U.S. will and capability, and to a growing temptation to use force against the United States, our allies, or our other vital interests -- especially if that use can be quick, economical, and decisive."[146] Also, "exaggerated" perceptions of declining American military strength compared to that of the USSR had had a political impact in the Third World adverse to the United States; confidence in it as a serious, steady security actor had declined.

In order to be able to respond adequately to possible contingencies distant from the US and to help to restore America's strategic credibility and reputation in South-West Asia, the Executive branch decided to organize and improve the armed forces' capability for rapid deployment. By September 1979 the Department of Defence had devised, in addition to the "rapid deployment force" concept, two major projects for enhancing strategic mobility. And by December, it had identified the units available for the "rapid deployment force", worked out, for the short-term at least, the command arrangement for it and determined the responsibilities of the commander of the "rapid deployment force".

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[145] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 99.

[146] Ibid., p. 100.

On September 19, 1979 Brown presented to the US Senate the "RDF concept". Although a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict was

> the most serious contingency which the U.S. must plan for, it is far more likely that the U.S. will find its interests challenged in other parts of the world either by the Soviet Union or by some other power or circumstance. The disruption of oil supplies caused in part by the turmoil in Iran was a vivid reminder of how U.S. interests can be jeopardized by events in the Third World. The Middle East, Africa, and Asia remain areas of potential conflict. The U.S. must maintain the capability to dispatch appropriate forces to remote places in support of ... friends and allies.[147] (Italics added.)

America's objective was "to have forces available which can be used to respond to a limited contingency or send (sic) to a second theater during a NATO war without degrading NATO defense." The US did not intend

> to set up a rapid deployment force as a separate unit of a given size. Instead [it] will have rapid deployment forces which would be available for use in limited contingencies. The forces designated for rapid deployment would be drawn and tailored to meet the requirements of the contingency at hand. The Army component, for example, could range from a platoon of rangers up to a multi-division corps, numbering over 100,000 men with supporting units. The Army elements would operate in conjunction with Air Force, Marine, and naval elements as appropriate.

The Department of Defence was "engaged in a programmatic and planning effort to enhance U.S. capabilities to rapidly deploy forces to distant parts of the world ..." and the "first step in this effort has been to identify units which are not earmarked or assigned for early deployment in the event of a

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[147] The U.S. Defense Budget For Fiscal Year 1981 A review by U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown in testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee of the U.S. Senate, September 19th, 1979, Official Text International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, September 20th, 1979, p. 12. All quotations in this paragraph come from this source, except where noted.

NATO contingency...." "The rapid deployment forces include right now", Brown remarked in December 1979, "the greater part of the Marine Corps, a number of Army units including, but not limited to, the 82nd Airborne and 101st Air Assault division and various air and naval units."[148]

The second step, enlarging America's stock of transport ships and aircraft, followed from a recognition that speed of response was "likely to be crucial in a limited contingency."[149] As Brown declared in December, the United States' needs

> in coping with non-NATO crises center not so much on additional combat forces as on our ability to move those forces over vast distances to where they are needed quickly enough to be of use. In some cases, that might be to turn the tide of battle; in other ..., most cases ..., that would be to deter the outbreak of fighting in the first place.[150]

The intention here was "to cut the deployment time for the first substantial combat unit by at least a factor of two and perhaps by a factor of three from what it now is. The subsequent build-up would also be completed much more rapidly...."[151] To assure that it could "deploy decisive force swiftly enough", Brown declared in December 1979, the Administration was "undertaking two major airlift and sealift enhancement intitiatives", which were given high priority in the defence budget for Fiscal Year 1981 beginning in October

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[148] Establishing America's New Rapid Deployment Force, Opening Remarks by U.S. Defense Secretary Harold Brown at a Press Conference at McDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, Thursday, December 27th, 1979, Official Text International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, December 28th, 1979, p. 1.

[149] The U.S. Defense Budget For Fiscal Year 1981, p. 12.

[150] U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 12.

[151] Establishing America's New Rapid Deployment Force, p. 2. This paragraph draws from Idem; U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 11; U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 116.

1980. The first initiative was 14 Maritime Prepositioning Ships that would carry in dehumidified storage the heavy equipment and supplies for three Marine brigades. Those ships were as important a part of America's capability to "project" military power as were naval combat vessels and they would be stationed in peacetime in remote areas near to where US forces might be needed. Although not designed for amphibious assault, the Maritime Prepositioning Ships would be able to disembark their equipment over a beach if a port were not available. In a contingency the Marines and their kit not suitable for prepositioning such as helicopters would be airlifted in; the Marines would "marry up" with their gear and be ready for battle in about a week. The second initiative was the development and production of a fleet of an aircraft, the C-X, able to carry "outsize" equipment such as tanks over intercontinental distances. The C-X would be used in a conflict

> to deliver the outsize equipment of the advance forces necessary to secure airbases or the ports or beaches needed by the maritime prepositioning ships to deliver their heavy gear. After the initial phases, they would assist in additional deployments, resupply and, if needed (sic) intra-theater movements.[152]

The need for prepositioning ships and additional cargo aircraft contributed to the Carter administration's decision in summer 1979 to raise the annual real increase in future US defence budgets from three per cent to five per cent beginning from October 1980. Part of the two per cent increment was intended for expanding the number of ships to be constructed for the US Navy over the next five years from 67 to 95.[153] The extra ships would better enable the overburdened Navy to provide the "strong maritime component" of the "rapid

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[152] U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, pp. 11-12. The Department of Defence was taking other measures too for improving US strategic mobility. See Chapter Six.

[153] U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 12.

deployment force".

The "Hostage Crisis" and its Consequences

The taking hostage of the diplomatic staff at the American embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979 forced the Carter administration "to focus more acutely on the repercussions" real and potential of the Iranian revolution "for stability in the Islamic world and for Washington's influence in the Middle East."[154] The seizure of the US embassy staff re-emphasized the importance and the instability of the Persian Gulf and it made intervention there in circumstances not involving the Soviet Union politically more acceptable to American public and Congressional opinion. The "hostage crisis" accelerated the organizational development of the "rapid deployment force" and prompted a search for military facilities in South-West Asia access to which would provide critical support for American military operations in a conflict and for larger naval deployments in peacetime and crisis. Despite the State Department's continuing doubts about the value of a substantially enlarged US regional military presence, the Administration decided that deploying two aircraft carrier task groups in the Arabian Sea was necessary for making a serious and determined response to events and trends in the security of South-West Asia in autumn 1979.

In the Administration's view the revolution in Iran had encouraged Sunni as well as Shia fundamentalism, and religious ferment, shown, for example, by Shia rioting in Saudi Arabia, could strain further the precarious stability there and in other Gulf states, Pakistan and Turkey. More worrying to officials in the Department of Defence was the "high probability that Iran eventually will slide into ever-increasing turmoil. A breakdown of central authority ... would heighten chances for separatist violence, almost surely

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[154] New York Times, December 10, 1979.

involving neighboring Iraq, Turkey and Pakistan."[155] And it could encourage Iraq to attack Iran and seize the province of Khuzistan with its Arab population and oilfields. The likelihood of Soviet intervention in Iran "remained small" but if the turmoil there worsened seriously, "a rebellion by Azerbaijani separatists could invite Soviet military intervention"[156] or

> Moscow might get 'greedy', throwing its weight behind a drive to replace the Ayatollah's mullahs with a more disciplined, leftist government. A pro-Marxist takeover ... would constitute a heavy strategic blow to the West, bolstering Soviet influence with radical Middle Eastern governments while putting new pressures on Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt and Israel.[157]

The "hostage crisis" in Iran, Brzezinski's assistants in the NSC noted, had deflected attention from the USSR's "growing intervention in Afghanistan's civil war and from a less-overt Soviet drive to expand influence in Yemen and Southern Yemen in what is seen as an effort to pressure Saudi Arabia and Oman."[158] The security of Saudi Arabia was the "chief concern" of US defence planners. The Iranian revolution had added to the Saudis' "longstanding ... fears over the fragility of their monarchy"[159] and to doubts about the value of America's security commitment to them. An arms agreement between the USSR and South Yemen concluded soon after the two states had signed a "Friendship" treaty in October 1979 had surprised the Americans and "deeply disturbed" the Saudis, reinforcing their anxiety about the potential for Soviet influence in Iran. Finally, in the "edgy atmosphere" of autumn 1979 the

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[155] New York Times, November 25, 1979.

[156] Idem.

[157] Idem.

[158] New York Times, December 23, 1979.

[159] New York Times, November 25, 1979.

> seizure of the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca, which triggered a lethal mob attack against the United States Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, only substantiated the belief of many analysts that the world's most important oil-producing area was indeed caught up in an 'arc of crisis'[160]

in which US influence seemed as precarious as the security of its interests and friends.

The "hostage crisis" was perceived in Washington not only as a symptom of unrest and instability in South-West Asia but also as a "political and psychological watershed"[161] for the US. It was closing the post-Vietnam era of America's excessive international passivity, its virtual rejection because of felt guilt and self-doubt of even the possibility of armed intervention abroad. The shock from the seizure of the US embassy staff and frustration about the inability to secure their release were bringing about

> an important shift of attitudes ... that, many believe, will have a significant long-term impact on the willingness of the United States to project its power in the third world and to develop greater military capabilities for protecting its interests there.

America's humiliation in Iran had stirred in the "foreign policy community" "an acute sense of long-term vulnerability...." Feeling that the US had a right to protect its legitimate interests anywhere in the world, that "community" now was tending "toward more assertive policies, expanded military capabilities, and an inclination to treat the Middle East as a sphere of influence where Washington must be prepared to use its power." The "jolt" to America's pride had made "defensive" intervention politically much more acceptable even to "liberal" Democratic party critics of

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[160] Idem.

[161] All quotations in this paragraph are from New York Times, December 2, 1979.

America's involvement in Vietnam such as Frank Church, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He was

> prepared in principle to endorse military intervention even in friendly countries if Western oil interests are threatened.
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> 'The highly volatile and unpredictable politics of the Middle East, the wave of hysteria in the Islamic world, the explosive possibilities of countries like Saudi Arabia and Iraq', ... 'all of these have led to a mood that we must be prepared to take action to protect vital interests.'
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> 'The vital interests of the United States, Western Europe and Japan in Saudi oilfields would necessitate military action if our interests were threatened....' 'If that required organization of strike forces, there would be strong support ... on Capitol Hill.'

But the more assertive mood, officials in the Executive branch and Congress cautioned, signified a shedding of qualms about the use of military force, not a "reckless rash of interventionism." Although a more active role, including direct intervention if necessary, for the US armed forces in the Persian Gulf and wider Third World had become politically more acceptable, it did

> not mean everyone thinks [the Americans] should barge around and be interventionists. Nor does it mean that all problems are solvable by showing your muscles. But it does say that military forces are back in the array of Presidential options if things get bad enough and ...

resort to force was judged to be appropriate. By the end of 1979 the potential need for "defensive" intervention within the Persian Gulf could be used to justify increased defence spending, specifically for the "rapid deployment force": "now ... the public can see that defense spending relates to protecting oil supplies, and that gives it more of a bread-and-butter impact with more public support."

The seizure of the US embassy in Tehran and America's inability to secure the hostages' release by peaceful means

caused the Carter administration to make a careful study of the military options for gaining their release and that drew high-level attention to the immense practical difficulties of deploying and sustaining armed forces in South-West Asia. Meeting with Brown and the Joint Chiefs of Staff on November 24, 1979, Carter ordered them to prepare a report in which they reviewed thoroughly America's military capabilities in the region and discussed "what could be done quickly to provide emergency U.S. operating access ... - overflights of friendly nations, transit and operating facilities available to U.S. forces".[162] They were directed as well "to draw up a list of long-range options for strengthening American forces in the area."[163] The "sobering conclusions" of their report presented at a National Security Council meeting on December 4 was that "U.S. ability to project military power in the region - beyond a show of naval force - was extremely limited."[164] And just sustaining the two aircraft carrier task groups which were in the Indian Ocean by the end of November in response to the "hostage crisis" and in order to reassure the Saudis, "to say nothing of bringing in the sort of major ground combat force which would be required for assault operations, was difficult."[165] At that NSC meeting "the deteriorating situation in Iran and the growing evidence of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan were carefully assessed"[166] and Carter "ruled out the use of military force

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[162] Washington Post, January 24, 1980.

[163] New York Times, December 10, 1979.

[164] Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 72. Sick observes also, Idem, that the high-level review of US military capability available for operations in the Persian Gulf "dramatized the perpetual dilemma of the inadequacy of military power alone to influence internal political events in regional states. In fact, it was quickly concluded that indiscriminate show or use of force might well be counterproductive to fundamental U.S. interests."

[165] Washington Post, January 24, 1980.

[166] Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 446.

in the crisis in Iran for the time being...."[167] Then the meeting considered proposals for improving the United States' capability for military operations in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area and decided to start looking for access to military facilities there and "to do so quickly. Success in this quest would place the United States in a position to sustain larger ... forces ... on a routine, regular basis."[168] After hurried study by the State Department and the Defence Department of which countries might provide "host nation support" and after consultations among Brown, Brzezinski and Vance and then Carter's approval of the initiative, a group of officials from the State Department and the Defence Department left America on December 17. And in the course of its week's travels it made successful preliminary approaches to Oman, Somalia and Kenya for access to their facilities.

A major proposal for improving America's operational capability approved by the NSC was that preparation and organization of the "rapid deployment force" be accelerated. As Brown would point out in January 1980 in his annual defence report, which reflected the Administration's strategic thinking as it had evolved in the latter half of 1979, there was a "wide range of contingencies that could arise in the Middle East", an "unstable" and "unpredictable" region. Some contingencies might result from Iraq's military superiority in the Persian Gulf. It would be "unwise to focus ... planning on only one specific threat -- especially a Soviet threat to countries [Iran] with which our relations are at present so

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[167] New York Times, December 10, 1979. However, the US did begin to prepare the means to rescue the US hostages in Tehran. Sick, "Evolution of Strategy", p. 72.

[168] Washington Post, January 24, 1980. Access to regional military facilities, Brown remarked in U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 24, would provide "the ability to exert military power where that was appropriate and it is not always appropriate."

fluid."[169] The "prospect of renewed turbulence in the Middle East ... and the possibility of new demands on [America's] non-nuclear posture" required "precautionary actions", in addition to increasing the US naval presence in the Gulf and the Arabian Sea, for helping to "contribute to regional stability...."[170] But readying a "rapid deployment force", Brown stated in order to lessen worries in the Persian Gulf about the reviving interventionist tendency in America, should not

> be taken to suggest a U.S. intention to threaten the sovereignty of any country or to intervene where we are not wanted. Rather, mobile, well-equipped, and trained conventional forces are essential to assist allies and other friends should conditions so dictate, and should our assistance be needed.[171]

On December 14 Brown announced that as a first step towards creating a "rapid deployment force" for use in the Middle East and other parts of the world, a Joint Task Force headquarters of "all elements of the U.S. military" services would be established "within the next few months". The Joint Task Force HQ would be located at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida and would do the detailed operational planning for "any and all contingencies ... which might require rapid

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[169] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, pp. 114, 115. Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, pp. 92-93, 100-101, asserts that by the latter half of 1979, America's regional "contingency planning had shifted to concentrate almost exclusively on operations against the Soviets in Iran", although "some planning for smaller contingencies was done on a more secretive basis...." The "focus on a Soviet contingency was meant to stimulate a more substantive response" from the military bureaucracy, thus giving sufficient momentum to the process of modifying America's security policy and strategic policy for South-West Asia.

[170] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 115.

[171] Ibid., p. 116.

deployment of forces.[172] It would train, exercise and prepare units of the "rdf" for deployment and employment and it would be subordinate to Readiness Command in peacetime, Brown remarked on December 27, 1979. But in the event of a crisis the "commander of the Joint Task Force would become the deployed forces (sic) operational commander if a deployment is mounted" and "he would report either to the unified and specified commander in the area [of operations] or else he could report under certain circumstances directly to headquarters in Washington."[173] The decision by Brown to place JTF HQ under the aegis of Readiness Command but to give it a significant amount of autonomy - it had direct access to the JCS via a liason office in Washington - had been taken for a "political" and a practical purpose: to minimize contention within the military bureaucracy about command arrangements which would delay establishing a body to take on responsibility for preparing the "rdf". Readiness Command had asserted that its proposed command of rapid deployment operations came from what was already its responsibility but the Navy and the Marines and other actors, in the Department of Defence and the NSC, pointed to the need for an independent, unified command for the Persian Gulf region which would include all the armed services.[174]

The importance of speed of movement was a constant theme in Brown's discussion of the "rapid deployment force". It had, he remarked in December 1979,

> to be able to move very, very quickly in some cases. In my judgment, there will be times in which what counts is

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[172] U.S. To Establish 'Rapid Deployment Force' International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, Tuesday, December 19th, 1979.

[173] Establishing America's New Rapid Deployment Force, p. 2.

[174] On the compromise arrangement for the US command structure for South-West Asia, see Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, pp. 86, 90, 108; Johnson, Military Instrument, pp. 62-63.

> whether [the US] can very quickly be in an area with a modest capability because that is ... likely to prevent a conflict. I believe as between the super powers particularly, the deterrent effect of having ... forces there, even in a rather modest size, will be very great.[175]

Brown's view that "getting there first with the right kind of capability may be even more important than getting there second with the most"[176] was shared by Brzezinski. In asserting that "the outcome of any Soviet-American military confrontation in the Persian Gulf could be determined by the speed with which the two sides could send forces to the area", he espoused the idea of a "quick-action force ... used not only to react to a military crisis but also to strike first to prevent one...."[177] (Italics added.) As he stated on December 18, 1979

> 'The Rapid Deployment Forces of the United States, which are currently being developed, will give ... the capability to respond quickly, effectively and perhaps even preemptively in those parts of the world where [US] vital interests might be engaged and where there are no permanently stationed American forces.'[178] (Italics added.)

Although he did not indicate "whether seizure of Middle East oil fields by forces hostile to the United States would automatically precipitate use of the RDF", Brzezinski was "'talking about [hostile invasion] of countries, [blocking] access to resources, [and threats to] certain strategic areas'.... 'It is up to the president to decide, when circumstances dictate it, what action to take.'"[179] (Brackets in text.)

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[175] U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 53.

[176] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 117.

[177] Washington Post, December 20, 1979.

[178] Idem.

[179] Idem.

Even with "its full complement of programs" enabling it to be ready to fight, to move rapidly and to sustain itself in combat, the "RDF" was acknowledged by Brown

> not [to] be a panacea for all crises. It must function within a broader economic and diplomatic policy, one that has relevance and support in an area. Then our RDF can be a highly effective instrument of US policy which can be used especially in crises in which friends look to us for a rapid and substantial US force commitment. It will not solve all our international problems, but it will allow us to better protect our security interests and our friends around the world.
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> ...
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> In all cases, even those in which the RDF has little direct utility, there is an immeasurable deterrent value in having the RDF capability. The knowledge that the US has such a capability, and is willing to use it, will have a substantial effect on the thinking of any would-be aggressor.[180]

The "little direct utility" of the "RDF" was pointed up by Brown in "theoretical assessments of what could have been done" with it in several "situations".[181] The "RDF would not have been useful in controlling the social and religious forces which brought down the Shah." There was "little that the RDF could have done directly to obtain the release of the [US] hostages [in Tehran]" but "with an RDF already in place the Iranians could not assume that we would resort only to the UN or moral suasion. They would have been faced, from the beginning, with a harder choice." Afghanistan's remoteness

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[180] U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 72. As Brown would observe in U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, pp. 28, 62, military power could support diplomacy, "discourage overt outside intervention in a particular dispute", encourage steadfastness by friends and even, "at a heavy price", defend America's interests and restore the conditions of its security. But military power "is never a sovereign remedy for our problems. And there are many occasions when its use would be counterproductive, or other instrumentalities could be profitably substituted for it."

[181] All quotations in the rest of this paragraph are from U.S. Senate, Preview Budget, p. 72.

from the US and its proximity to the USSR made it "doubtful that the RDF would have been a viable military response to the massive Soviet invasion" beginning in late December 1979. However, knowledge of America's rapid deployment capability "could have deterred the Soviet Union from acting as it did, and, in an area where vital US interests are involved, like certain Gulf states, it could be used actively to oppose external aggression." Had South Yemen's attack upon North Yemen in winter 1979 been larger and directly supported by Cuban forces, it could "have required a rapid and substantial US commitment. The RDF ... would be ideally suited for such a requirement, whether in a back-up role or mobilized in the area to prevent a wider war."

Besides preparing a "rapid deployment force" and seeking access to facilities in South-West Asia, the Carter administration had to decide how best to manage with too few ships for the Navy to meet standing American security commitments and its new Indian Ocean duties at the same time. The two aircraft carrier task groups deployed in the Arabian Sea as of December 1979 on what soon became a continuous basis were drawn one each from the usual pair of aircraft carrier task groups in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific. Pending the addition of more ships to the Navy, Brown observed in testimony to the Senate in December 1979, "reallocation" was "one of the few operational courses" available over the next few years for alleviating the strain on it.[182] The Department of Defence was also "looking at home porting additional ships in [the western Pacific] so as to shorten transit times, transferring some of the [US Navy's] missions to allied navies and locating [American] ships from [the western Pacific] to the Indian Ocean...."[183] The Administration deliberated too about asking its allies in Western Europe and Japan to take more responsibility for

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[182] Ibid., p. 42.

[183] Idem.

defence of their home waters and help to compensate for the shortage of US naval ships. In its view the American naval presence in the Indian Ocean contributed to protecting their interests just as much as if the US aircraft carrier task groups were back in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific.

## Major Modification of Policy, 1979

By the end of 1979 America had changed the basic emphasis in its strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area from display at sea to preparation for combat on land. It had made deterrence against the USSR and also Iraq more direct and active and it had taken up intervention as a policy option. The US was beginning to prepare a "rapid deployment force" with which to strengthen deterrence and to intervene, if necessary. It had increased its naval display in the Arabian Sea and was starting to introduce an "approximate" land force presence in South-West Asia as part of enhancing deterrence and display.

The United States modified its strategic policy even though it recognised that the threats to its interests were more political than military and came more from within the Persian Gulf than from the USSR; that America's armed forces were inappropriate for dealing with unrest within states; that the need for direct US military involvement at the regional level was not urgent; and that direct Soviet aggression was improbable. It was clear too, Brown acknowledged, that the "rapid deployment force" was "not ... a panacea for all crises" and in some cases had "little direct utility". Nonetheless America had to play a greater strategic role, according to Brzezinski's predominant view in the Administration's policy revision: threats to America's "vital" interest in access to oil, whether from "turbulence" within (friendly) states, Iraqi aggression or a Soviet Union "tempted" by opportunity in a weak Iran, were sufficiently more possible and the consequences of loss of that access dire enough to be taken seriously. And if an enemy did attack, his

strike might be very quick and present a fait accompli. Less able after the Iranian revolution to provide for their military security, friendly states might, it was assumed, accommodate to the USSR and to Iraq in ways harmful to US interests. Also, only the United States could balance the Soviet Union's political use of its armed forces.

Initial preparations for potential operations in the Persian Gulf region concentrated on improving the speed of movement from the US by land-based forces in order to prevent a quick enemy success. But for the near- and medium-term the incipient "rapid deployment force" was too small, slow and unprepared to meet major attacks. The military basis of deterrence was weak and the risk of failure was high. In order to "avert" it in a large conflict with the USSR, quite possibly America would have had to resort to tactical nuclear weapons. The US Navy's role in combat would be secondary but it remained important for display and for assuring security at sea: the Saudis had asked the Americans to increase their patrolling of the shipping lanes.

While US combat power available for Gulf contingencies was small, the likelihood of actual aggression against direct US interests was low. Most of the time the American armed forces had primarily political objectives to fulfil: to impress regional states and the USSR by preparation and display that the US had major interests in the Persian Gulf and that it had capability and a renewed resolve to protect them, thereby fortifying deterrence; to restore a balance of "will-power" with the USSR and better balance the Soviet armed forces and to reassure friendly states about America's seriousness and reliability as a security actor. For America to restore its declined strategic reputation was just as important as adequate available power for contributing to its objectives.

In principle land and air forces emplaced at bases in the

Persian Gulf would best help to achieve the above objectives because they would demonstrate with most substance and immediacy, thus credibility, the United States' readiness to secure its interests. But friendly inner Gulf states were unwilling to cooperate with it and refused to grant access to their facilities. They were anxious that a conspicuous American military presence would aggravate internal and regional politics, which were their primary sources of security - as well as insecurity - and more important than the Soviet political or military threat. They feared too the danger of America's reviving interventionist tendency. From the United States' point of view, by compelling it to keep its presence at a distance safe to them, inner Gulf states' denial of use of their bases weakened politically its display and deterrence and further weakened the military basis of deterrence. Although strategic nuclear weapons and the home-based "rapid deployment force" helped to meet friends' preference that the US deter Soviet aggression from the "global" level without endangering them, the former was too abstract and extreme and the latter was too far away for impressive display in the region. And although important, an enlarged naval presence alone was inadequate for signalling America's greater concern with security on land. Thus the best, most acceptable and feasible, way for the US to display from "over the horizon" combined an enhanced naval presence with a planned "approximate" land presence of intermittent visits by land, air and Marine detachments for demonstrations, training and exercises, expanding Diego Garcia and prepositioning on it equipment for use in emergencies by the "rapid deployment force" and making use of acquired access to facilities in Oman, Somalia and Kenya.

The general framework of a modified US strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area had been developed by the end of 1979. The next chapter will analyze that policy, whose elaboration in 1980 was accelerated by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

# CHAPTER SIX

## ELABORATION OF POLICY, 1980

In response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, America accelerated in 1980 the elaboration of its modified strategic policy for South-West Asia of increased display, more direct and active deterrence and greater preparedness for intervention. Deterrence of the USSR would be enhanced by a "cooperative security framework" of states which would organize informally for collective defence as well as for political opposition to it. The US proposed to deter an unlikely "worst case" Soviet attack into Iran by the speedy movement of a small "trip-wire" force for precluding, if not pre-empting Soviet contingents from occupying critical positions. Also it would threaten "horizontal escalation" - widening the scope of a conflict to regions beyond South-West Asia - or "vertical escalation" - raising the level of intensity of a conflict perhaps to the use of tactical nuclear weapons. The Carter administration intended to prepare a capability for sustained conventional regional defence in order to enhance the credibility of deterrence. At the regional level, should a friendly Gulf state be attacked, the US would intervene, if necessary and requested but preferably indirectly, without combat forces. Intervention within a friendly state subject to major unrest in order to "rescue" a regime or to "protect" access to oil was not ruled out in private but the suitability, practicability and success of military action was much in doubt. The US continued to emphasize the important political role of the armed forces for influencing the perceptions and expectations in peacetime of South-West Asian states and the USSR and it went ahead with initiatives for preparing the Rapid Deployment Force and acquiring access to military facilities as part of establishing an "approximate" regional land presence.

This chapter outlines the "Carter Doctrine" and

"cooperative security framework" for containing further Soviet "expansionism" and reviews America's regional security objectives in light of its interests in South-West Asia and the assessed threats to them. Then it analyzes the United States' strategic policy, its purposes, concepts, assumptions and contradictions and the debate within the Department of Defence about the appropriate policy to adopt. America's military presence in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area is detailed and the purpose, organization, weaknesses and planned improvements for the "Rapid Deployment Force" are discussed. The Chapter concludes with a survey of America's negotiations for access to regional military facilities in accordance with the "network concept" of logistic support.

## The "Carter Doctrine"

The "Carter Doctrine" provided the general justification for America's security policy and strategic policy for South-West Asia. Its sources were Carter himself and Brzezinski, whose views (see Chapter Five and below) influenced him strongly. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan changed Carter's perception of the USSR's intentions abroad and led him to take a globalist view of them. The Soviet Union was a military predator more determined to expand its influence than to reach an accommodation with the United States. Soviet regional involvements formed a dangerous global pattern of geopolitical expansion; they were not discrete and local in character, with little cumulative general consequence. America now had to confront, compete with more vigorously and contain the USSR and Carter was more willing to use the armed forces in order to deter or meet Soviet military "challenges" in South-West Asia and elsewhere. This approach informed the "Carter Doctrine's" main strategic principle:

> An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary,

including military force.[1]

Although America could not know fully the Soviets' motives for intervening in Afghanistan or their objectives for South-West Asia, it had to be prepared for a potential Soviet attack intended to seize Persian Gulf oilfields and the best preparation was to prevent its occurrence.[2]

Carter viewed the Soviet intervention in the context of

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[1] All quotations in this section are, unless noted, from President Carter's "State of the Union" address (January 23, 1980) in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, pp. 468-471.

[2] Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, p. 960, is scathing about the Administration's "over-reaction" to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and its failure to assess why the USSR intervened.

> The punitive, confrontational-containment approach adopted by the U.S. government, which did not even attempt to weigh the Soviet motivation, led directly if unwittingly to a response keyed to the least likely Soviet motivation - pursuit of a relentless expansionist design.
>
> The administration's cop-out (sic) on the question of Soviet motivations was underlined by the careful references to the inability to know with "certainty" the "precise" Soviet motives, a defensive formulation. It became increasingly evident at least to those close to the situation that the Soviet motivation had been predominantly the shoring up of a slipping existing Soviet hegemony in Afghanistan, rather than control over anyone's oil or vital sea lanes.

The Carter administration's excessive response to the Soviet intervention probably was caused by a confluence of factors. An approaching election, a deteriorating economy, a growing conservative mood in the US, increasing dissatisfaction with detente with the Soviets and a strong revived distrust of them, frustration with the unresolved hostage crisis and a general crisis atmosphere all put Carter under much pressure. Unpopular, identified with America's perceived weakness, inconsistency, ineffectiveness and decline in international affairs and having "confessed" his naivety about the USSR's political intentions, he now had to show that he was "tough on the Soviets" and that he was "doing something" not just to penalize and discipline the Soviet Union but also to reassert America's will and power.

"three basic developments": the steady growth of Soviet power beyond that required for the USSR's legitimate security needs and the increasing capability of Soviet forces to operate outside the Soviet Union; the "overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East" and America's "excessive dependence on foreign oil [which] is a clear and present danger" to US security; and the "press of social and religious and economic and political change in the many nations of the developing world - exemplified by the revolution in Iran." The USSR's intervention showed its readiness to use force against a Third World neighbour and, more concretely, by eliminating the Afghan buffer between itself and Pakistan, the Soviet Union's armed forces had come to

> within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits (sic) of Hormuz - a waterway through which much of the world's oil must flow. The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position ... that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan posed a new threat to Pakistan and Iran, which were "now far more vulnerable to Soviet political intimidation."[3] Were that pressure effective or if the Soviets used Afghanistan as a stepping-stone for further military expansion, they would extend their control to "adjacent countries", command the oil resources of the Persian Gulf and also reach the "warm water ports" of the Indian Ocean.[4]

In order to warn the USSR and prevent further

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[3] United States, President, Jimmy Carter 1980-81 Public Papers Of The President Of The United States Book 1 - January 1 To May 23, 1980 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 165. For Brzezinski's analysis of the implications of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, see Wall Street Journal, January 15, 1980.

[4] U.S. President, Jimmy Carter 1980-81, pp. 22, 40.

"expansionism" by it President Carter gave the authority of his office to establishing America's vital interest in the Persian Gulf and its commitment and resolve to protect its interests there with "military force" against an (Soviet) "assault". The United States' immediate, more specific response to the Soviet intervention consisted of censuring and penalizing it. The US secured a vote at the United Nations by a large majority condemning the intervention and calling for the USSR to withdraw its forces. It imposed economic sanctions such as reducing grain sales and denying the Soviets permission to fish in its waters and access to its high technology. Attempting to reassure Pakistan about potential Soviet aggression against it was a further immediate measure. The Americans reconfirmed their security agreement of 1959 with it under which they would consult with it in the event of (a)n (Soviet) attack and take the appropriate mutually agreed action, including resort to force, necessary to protect it. Buttressing the Pakistanis' defensive military capability was "a matter of the most urgent concern" and the US made an offer, spurned by them, of arms assistance (see Chapter Seven). It sought as well to arrange an international consortium for extending economic aid to Pakistan.

Reassurance and aid for Pakistan was also seen by the Carter administration as one element of a longer-term response based on "collective efforts" for containing and deterring the Soviet threat to South-West Asia. Demanding resolute action for many years to come, that response required the participation of "all those who rely upon oil from the Middle East" and "consultation and close cooperation with countries in the area which might be threatened." The United States "was prepared to work with other countries in the region to share a cooperative security framework" and it would further strengthen political and military ties with them. Cooperation on request with regional states for enhancing their defensive capability and coordination of efforts to assure regional security between the US and states (US allies) outside South-

West Asia were critical for complementing America's regional military presence and home-based rapid deployment forces. That was because America did not possess "the ability unilaterally to defeat any threat to [the Persian Gulf] with ease."[5]

The perceived immense importance of the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan and the Administration's sustained high-level response to it galvanized the previously sluggish Defence Department and State Department into elaborating and beginning to implement a strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area and a security policy for guiding it.

## The "Cooperative Security Framework"

America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area derived from its interests there, the perceived threats to them and its security objectives, and that policy was part of the proposed "cooperative security framework" for the broader multilateral protection of US and friendly regional states' interests. According to Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and responsible for the detailed articulation of US security policy for South-West Asia, "[m]ore significant American interests come together [there and in the Middle East] than in any other area of the developing world today."[6]

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[5] Ibid., p. 241.

[6] From U.S. Policy Toward The Persian Gulf, Southwest Asia, And Indian Ocean Area -- A Cooperative Security Framework, "Prepared Statement Of Hon. Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary Of State For Near Eastern And South Asian Affairs" in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 9. For discussions of American interests in South-West Asia, the threats to them and US regional objectives, see Richard P. Cronin, "US Interests, Objectives, And Policy Options in Southwest Asia", in U.S. Strategic Interests In Southwest Asia, ed. Shirin Tahir-Kheli (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), pp. 39-67; Shahram Chubin, "US Security Interests in the Persian Gulf in the 1980s", Daedelus 109 (Fall 1980), 31-65; Dennis Ross, "Considering Soviet Threats to the Persian Gulf", International Security 6 (Fall 1981), 159-180. For more recent discussions, consult J.E. Peterson, Defending

Those interests had "changed little in nature, but ha[d] grown in importance"[7] since the early 1970s. They took "cognizance" of

> -- the area's strategic location and its significance to maintaining a global strategic balance;
>
> -- the significance [the United States] place on the sovereignty and independence of these countries as part of a more stable world. (sic)
>
> -- the world's vital need for the region's oil; and
>
> -- the importance of these states in international finance and development and as markets for [US] goods and technology.[8]

The US valued the region's freedom from the USSR's interference or predominant influence: now more urgent after the Soviet "move" into Afghanistan, a "prime interest" of America had "long been to prevent the establishment of an adversary position which could affect [US] access, undermine the region's security and lead to confrontation."[9] America was interested in Israel's security and in the resolution of regional disputes, above all in a "comprehensive peace" between Israel and the Arab states which would resolve the Palestinian issue. Stability was an important US interest and it meant "orderly" political, economic and social development, channelling change in "constructive directions", the continuity of political orientation of states friendly to the

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Arabia (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 118-138; Thomas L. McNaugher, Arms And Oil U.S. Military Strategy and the Persian Gulf (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), pp. 1-18, 23-46, 91-126.

[7] From The U.S. Relationship with the Arab Peninsula States on the Persian Gulf, "Prepared Statement of Hon. Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary Of State For Near Eastern And South Asian Affairs" in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 338.

[8] Idem.

[9] Ibid., p. 10.

West and their continuance as responsible "moderate" actors in the international political and economic system. The United States had an interest too in human rights and nuclear non-proliferation in South-West Asia.

The possible threats to America's regional interests were discussed by Saunders and by Brown, who viewed those threats primarily with reference to the West's access to Persian Gulf oil. According to Saunders

> [i]n the light of historic Russian objectives and expansionism into Central Asia, the Gulf states have good reason to be apprehensive about the possibility of direct Soviet military intervention. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan gives a tangible quality to this longstanding concern.[10]

"People" in South-West Asia had "long expressed concern that the Soviet objective is to achieve a path to warm waters through Baluchistan or to move to the Gulf with the additional objective of controlling the West's sources of oil."[11] If the Soviets remained in Afghanistan, they would have "a base of operations closer to not only the Strait of Hormuz, but to the ocean. They [would] have a basis from which to encourage subversion in various tribal areas of Pakistan and Iran, and thereby open a corridor to the sea...."[12] As for whether the "invasion" of Afghanistan was an "initial Soviet step to seek access to warm water ports",

> the basic point ... is that the threat is there and prudence requires that [the US] deal with it as if [the USSR were seeking access.] But we are not predicting that that is going to happen. We are not even saying that the Soviets necessarily went into Afghanistan for that larger purpose. But the fact that they are there

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[10] Ibid., p. 345.

[11] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[12] Ibid., p. 51.

creates the possibility and the capability to go on.[13]

The "turbulence in revolutionary Iran" offered a "further immediate possibility for the Soviets which could give them a direct opening into the Persian Gulf and its oil and a further lever with which to upset domestic stability in the Gulf region."[14] There was also worry that the absence of

> strong central authority in Iran could lead to repetition of Soviet occupation of portions of that country at the end of World War II. The growing strength of the Communist Tudeh party in Iran could contribute to a situation which the USSR could exploit.[15]

When asked whether America's "chief concern" about the Soviet Union was a "direct military threat or an indirect political subversion threat", Saunders thought that "maybe the subversion is the more likely first step than another overt military move."[16]

There was further the "Soviet-backed military threat or the political pressure such threat can bring to bear"[17] on Saudi Arabia and the other conservative Gulf Arab states.

> Over the years Gulf governments have been concerned about Soviet military support for and political influence in radical neighboring states with aggressive policies. In the last decade the Marxist regime in South Yemen, strongly backed and heavily armed by the Soviets, fought border actions against Saudi Arabia, supported the insurgency in Oman's Dhofar province, and last year invaded North Yemen. The Soviet position in Ethiopia, combined with a prominent Soviet role in South Yemen, increases the vulnerability of the Bab-al-Mandab/Red Sea

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[13] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

[14] Ibid., p. 345.

[15] Ibid., p. 11.

[16] Ibid., p. 52.

[17] Ibid., p. 349.

> access and intensifies the concern of the Gulf countries.[18]

The USSR had also provided "significant support to other governments and liberation movements".[19] Of concern was "not whether the Soviets control those governments or organizations" but "whether the Soviets have positioned themselves to take advantage for their own purposes of situations in which the interests of both parties coincide."[20] The security of the conservative Gulf Arab states was "influenced by rivalries, tensions and violence in the wider region - in the Arab/Israel dispute, in Lebanon, in parts of Africa, and ... in the current tension between Iraq and Iran...."[21] Within the Gulf itself, according to Saunders, there was "not a great threat of aggression of one nation against another..., with the possible exception of Iraq, and potentially of Iran once Iran pulls itself together."[22] The primary worry in the Gulf states was internal subversion and the "external component of internal instability."[23] They faced other domestic "challenges": the modernization process, the large influx of foreign workers, large numbers of well educated youth with high expectations, developing modern and flexible political and social institutions and possible opposition to Sunni governments from Shia minorities urged on by the Shia regime in Iran.

In the view of Brown and the Department of Defence

U.S. policy with respect to the Persian Gulf faces two

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[18] Ibid., 348.

[19] Ibid., p.11.

[20] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[21] Ibid., p. 350.

[22] Ibid., p. 52.

[23] Idem.

> nightmares. The first is a cut-off of exports [of oil] as a result of disruption within the region; and the second is that of Soviet political or military control of the resources of the region, which would put Europe and Japan in the role of Soviet vassals. If the Soviets clearly control those exports of the Gulf states, or even just control those exports above the level that the Gulf states need for their current foreign exchange needs, Soviet political influence over Western Europe and Japan would clearly be immense. In fact, it would not have to be made explicit in order to loosen or even destroy the ties of alliance that those countries have with the United States. ... The threat of that particular Soviet sanction would really work and work well.[24]

Taking a "worst case" orientation, he identified a "hierarchy of risks of cutting oil exports" beginning with the most likely cases and ending with the more extreme ones. First were the conflicts, the "tension and turmoil" within and between regional states which were rooted in historical, political, religious, national and social factors. The "indigenous instability, in some cases fomented and fanned by outsiders, poses serious political and military challenges"[25] to the United States. Were there a fundamental change in political complexion within one of the major oil-exporting states arising from internal conflict, such as had happened in Iran, or within a combination of exporting states, it could cause a major reduction in the supply of oil from several million barrels up to ten million barrels a day. "Even more severe could be the result of major wars within the region."[26]

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[24] Harold Brown, "U.S. Security Policy In Southwest Asia: A Case Study In Complexity", The Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute In Washington, School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C. (April 1981), p. "4". This address and also Harold Brown, Thinking About National Security Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous World (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 141-159, are assumed quite probably to draw from PD-63, the last Presidential Directive of the Carter administration. Completed in January 1981 PD-63 was its most advanced thinking about US security policy and strategic policy for South-West Asia. Note Brzezinski, Power And Principle, pp. 468-469.

[25] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 22.

[26] Brown, "Case Study", p. "4".

Regional conflicts "wider-spread" than the Iraq-Iran war, "even without superpower participation but involving a number of major oil-producing states, could cut oil exports by 10 or even 15 million barrels a day, depending on which and how many were involved."[27] It was conceivable too that in response to another Arab-Israeli conflict the oil "weapon" might again be used in an attempt to influence the West. Another danger was the possibility that some states in South-West Asia might acquire a capability to produce nuclear weapons. That would intensify tensions and conflicts and neither regional nor American security interests would be served by a raising of risks to stability. "A third, more severe, scenario involves a gradual or creeping Soviet political dominance over various elements of the region", "more severe because it's less likely to be reversed than the effects of the other developments."[28] "Soviet control" tended to last a long time when it was "of a country or a region contiguous to the Soviet Union. Such a creeping Soviet political dominance would involve increasing, and eventually major, Soviet control over decisions about oil exports and about pricing."[29] The "chain of events" in that process "could involve modest Soviet incursions in border areas in the guise of supporting indigenous ethnic or political movements, accompanied by major arms transfers and by military advisers."[30] The fourth scenario presented "the most formidable military challenge in terms of what would be needed to defeat it. ... This is a massive and direct Soviet military attack aimed at military conquest of the Persian Gulf oil fields, destroying or gaining control of them."[31] Because of the unfavourable military balance between the US and the USSR in South-West Asia, one less stable than in Europe, "at

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[27] Ibid., p."5".

[28] Idem.

[29] Idem.

[30] Idem.

[31] Idem.

least for a time the Soviets could well see less military risk in an adventure [there] than they would in Europe."[32] The prize was an enormous temptation,

> nearly as great as would be offered by a successful military move in Europe because control of Persian Gulf oil would carry the fruits of dominating Europe and Japan. That combination makes Southwest Asia the most dangerous area of the world in terms of the prospects of a superpower confrontation.[33]

Nonetheless a Soviet adventure was "a rather unlikely contingency."[34] The "chances of early Soviet military action ... are ... rather low" because the "risks, though not as high as in Europe, are still considerable."[35] The Soviets would be deterred by knowledge that the West's response to their "mortal threat" to its vital interest in access to Gulf oil would by one means or another lead to thermonuclear war. Moreover the Soviets probably saw "less risky political moves in Southwest Asia which also offer the prospect of very significant advantages to them."[36] The Soviet Union's dependence on oil imports from the Persian Gulf was and would remain even less than America's, thus removing the narrow economic motive for an attack. And there was "nothing to stop them from buying oil and ... there should be nothing to stop them from buying oil if they have the foreign exchange."[37] The Carter administration perceived that although in view of its intervention in Afghanistan the USSR seemed more willing to use its armed forces, it was unlikely to take direct military action against the Persian Gulf states or Pakistan.

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[32] Ibid., p. "8".

[33] Idem.

[34] Ibid., p. "5".

[35] Ibid., p. "9".

[36] Idem.

[37] Ibid., p. "13".

From a global and long-term perspective, the Soviet Union was the primary and most formidable military threat but more immediately it was mainly an indirect threat: its strategic challenge to South-West Asia and the West's interests there remained pre-eminently political in nature. The Soviet Union's armed forces were intended more for helping to influence regional states' perceptions and policies to its advantage than for active coercion. "Turbulence" within regional states and conflicts between them were likelier threats to the security of South-West Asia.

Following from an assessment of its interests in South-West Asia and the threats to them, America's regional security objectives were to protect access to Persian Gulf oil; to assure the safety of shipping; to check the expansion of Soviet power and influence: to limit interference in regional states by the Soviet Union and to counter the political use of its armed forces, to deter further direct Soviet military intervention and to avoid war with the USSR; to promote the security, territorial integrity and independence of friendly states in the Persian Gulf and of Pakistan and to reassure them about America's resolute commitment to regional security, with particular regard to the USSR; to encourage their stability and orderly development; to advance the Middle East "peace process"; and to discourage nuclear proliferation.

The Carter administration's assessment of the security threats to South-West Asia reflected the outlook of Brzezinski, who generated specific propositions underpinning the proposed "cooperative security framework". The United States, he asserted, was "prepared to use force, if necessary, to protect its vital interests"[38] in South-West Asia. At bottom its commitment to regional security rested on a willingness to use its power and there should be no doubt about that resolve. For anyone to contest America's vital

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[38] Wall Street Journal, January 15, 1980.

interest would be "most unwise", even though unlike in Western Europe and the Far East, the US did not possess formal treaty relationships, obligatory security commitments which would be "automatically triggered" (by a Soviet attack) or a "permanent, on-the-ground military presence" which proved the serious and sustained nature of its security commitment against the USSR. That was because political conditions in South-West Asia were "much more nuanced and complex" than anywhere else; the regional states' sensitivity about their independence and suspicion about any foreign presence, ideological differences among them and their values and cultures would not allow the creation of a replica of NATO.[39] Aware of this, the US was "prepared ... to work to create a cooperative security framework for the region in a variety of ways."[40] Something "much looser than a formal alliance was needed to convey [US] recognition of the political sensitivities of the countries in the region and yet at the same time provide a sufficiently explicit assurance of American involvement."[41] Although "physical or formal arrangements of the kind ... associated with ... other areas" were not required "in all cases", nonetheless the trend was "towards increased American military presence in the region, towards greater utilization of available facilities...."[42] Brzezinski attached "very great importance" to the "rapid deployment force", which was "designed to give the United States the versatility which the present situation requires."[43] Developing a credible structure for security in South-West Asia was a "new", "major" and "enduring" US commitment and its importance extended beyond that region. By moving "to contain a possible Soviet push" into South-West

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[39] Idem.

[40] Idem.

[41] Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 444.

[42] Wall Street Journal, January 15, 1980.

[43] Idem.

Asia and to deter Soviet pressure on it, he concluded, the United States was maintaining the global balance of power on which stable deterrence of the USSR and "dialogue" with it was founded.

In view of the "heightened", if still indirect Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf and that region's reduced capability for self-defence, the purpose of the "cooperative security framework" was to enhance protection of regional states' independence and security by organizing stronger political resistance to the USSR and military deterrence against it. A "framework", informal because of regional political sensitivities, would widen the basis of South-West Asian security and consist of friendly states, America and its European allies and Japan collaborating in political, economic and military combinations. Saunders described it as much more complicated than CENTO or the Nixon Doctrine because it was a "collection" of America's and other states' security policies which "built on" and "intensified" those policies.[44] And although the United States had to take the lead in creating the "cooperative security framework" because only it could deter a large Soviet attack, it would make "the maximum effort

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[44] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 46. For two documents, from which this thesis has already drawn, setting out the "conceptual framework" guiding America's pursuit of its security objectives, see U.S. Policy Toward The Persian Gulf, Southwest Asia, And Indian Ocean Area -- A Cooperative Security Framework, presented to the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East on March 24, 1980 and found in Ibid., pp. 8-22; The U.S. Relationship with the Arab Peninsula States on the Persian Gulf, Ibid., pp. 338-360. Presented on September 3, 1980, the latter document was the "centerpiece of a significant policy review". Newsom, "America Engulfed", discusses critically America's revised Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area security policy and its strategic aspects. Although directed at the early policy of the Reagan administration, Christopher Van Hollen, "Don't Engulf the Gulf", Foreign Affairs 59 (Summer 1981), 1064-1078, makes observations pertinent to the Carter government's policies for South-West Asia. Steven L. Speigel, "Does the United States Have Options In The Middle East?", Orbis 24 (Summer 1980), 395-410, suggests of what a US "framework" for regional security ought to consist.

to help nations in the area through military supply programs and other devices to defend themselves. That is ... the first line of defense...."[45] Assisting regional countries to generate as much of their own security as possible was an end in itself as well as a crucial means by which to limit opportunities for Soviet meddling.

Not just Brzezinski recognised the difficulty in establishing a "framework". Saunders and Brown noted the many conflicts and "complex and cross-cutting issues" in South-West Asia which America could neither avoid nor resolve. Also, although the US and friendly regional countries had many mutual interests and common security concerns, their priority of perceived threats and thus of security objectives and policy emphasis differed. The US had to take into account, remarked Saunders, a "view in the [G]ulf of the security threats in that area that does not see the global strategic balance as the only security problem ... nor a strong U.S military position as the only response to the threats they face...."[46]

> Consistently these governments assert that absence of peace in the Middle East is the primary threat to Middle East security, including the stability of the Gulf region. They regard tensions and alienations created by a third of a century of conflict between Arabs and Israelis as the main source of Soviet influence in the region, as a leading contributor to revolution and radical political currents throughout the Middle East, and as the primary obstacle to developing the sort of firm relationships with the US which their national interests otherwise call for.[47]

America's support for Israel and its sponsorship of the "separate peace" between Egypt and Israel made closer political association between the US and the conservative Gulf

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[45] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 26.

[46] Ibid., p. 335.

[47] Ibid., p. 352-353.

states (except Oman) an impossibility which prevented their acceptance of a large, land-based US military presence. The Soviet-American rivalry thwarted the formation of a "cooperative security framework" because while looking to America to contain Soviet military threats, the Gulf states preferred that the US did so "by actions outside the region and in a way that minimizes their involvement. They greatly fear that the area will become an arena of superpower confrontation."[48] That a larger, "too visible" US regional military presence could increase the risk of internal unrest in many Gulf states worried Brown, according to whom in "Southwest Asia more than in the other regions, [the] two major categories [of a "cooperative framework"] - military and non-military - display a degree of conflict with each other in any attempt to build a security structure."[49] Yet the United States' and its allies' vital interests and its precautionary prudence about potential Soviet military action gave the US "no choice" but to try to form a security framework of "loose" and "widespread" arrangements.

The political dimension of the "framework" involved consulting with friendly South-West Asian states and with US allies about short- and longer-term responses to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Saunders repeated Carter's statement in the "State of the Union" address on January 23, 1980 that there were "'no irreconcilable differences between [America] and any Islamic nation'" and that the US was "'ready to cooperate with all Moslem countries,'"[50] among whom Brzezinski mentioned in January 1980 two states unfriendly to America: Iraq and Libya. Islam and the regional states' nationalism were viewed as important "bulwarks" against Soviet interference. The Americans looked forward to the eventual restoration of working relations with Iran once the US

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[48] Ibid., p. 345.

[49] Brown, "Case Study", p. "6".

[50] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 18.

diplomatic hostages were released and they sought to consolidate the rapprochement with Pakistan begun after the Soviet intervention. The United States encouraged cooperation among the conservative Gulf Arab states for security, with Saudi Arabia seen to take the leading role. It supported, for example, initiatives begun in late 1980 to establish the Gulf Cooperation Council. At the heart of its own political contribution to the "cooperative security framework", America resolved to carry on with the Middle East "peace process", which it considered to be the "only practical approach" to an enduring peace between the Arabs and the Israelis and a just settlement of the Palestinian issue.[51] Peace would reduce instability within the Gulf states and the opportunities for the USSR to exploit those tensions or those between conservative and "radical" Arab states. "Not the least of the reasons for strengthening the political structure" in South-West Asia, in Brown's opinion, was that

> the countries that are threatened must be willing and must be seen to be willing to fight in their own defense, as have the people of Afghanistan. The political framework needs to project the perception, and reflect the fact, that the U.S. is not trying to dominate the area itself, only to offset the threat of Soviet domination.[52]

Further, the United States had to obtain sufficient participation in the "framework" by its European allies, despite their "differing estimates" of the priority of security threats to South-West Asia, in order to "satisfy both domestic and international needs for a perception that this is not a unilateral U.S.-Soviet matter but a matter that involves people in the other parts of the world who get the oil."[53] Satisfying US domestic opinion was necessary for maintaining its support for the Administration's commitment to help uphold

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[51] Ibid., p. 353.

[52] Brown, "Case Study", p. "10".

[53] Ibid., p. "13".

security in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area.

In the economic part of the regional security "framework", Brzezinski and Brown identified oil as the "key" factor. America and the other industrialized democracies had to undertake long-term energy and broader economic programmes in order to reduce consumption of oil, stockpile it and thereby lessen dependence on Gulf oil and reduce the danger from a sustained disruption of its flow. The US, its allies such as West Germany and Japan and rich regional states such as Saudi Arabia had to provide economic development assistance for the larger, more populous but poor states of South-West Asia, principally Egypt, Turkey and Pakistan. In order to help those countries to "resist external efforts at political destabilization" America asked the wealthier Gulf states to provide them with funds for military assistance.

As for the military element of the regional security "framework", Brzezinski indicated that a security structure could not be "only or primarily a military structure, although the military component is critical."[54] Informal, complementary military collaboration - or, as Brown put it, "the establishment of a pattern of quiet consultation and parallel pursuit of common security goals"[55] - among America, its allies and friendly regional states was very important for creating a more credible balance of power which would help to deter further Soviet intervention in South-West Asia. "Even in the probable absence of a Soviet military attack", according to Brown, "the likely military prospects in case of such a Soviet invasion will influence peacetime political

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[54] Building A Security Framework In The Persian Gulf An Address by the President's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to the Canadian Club of Montreal, December 5th, 1980, Official Text, International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, December 8th, 1980, p. 2.

[55] Harold Brown, "Protecting U.S. Interests in the Persian Gulf Region", DoSB 80 (May 1980), 65.

attitudes in the region."[56] Thus "the political balance ... will be the more favorable to [America] the more the West is, and is seen to be able, to offset Soviet military capabilities."[57]

> Meeting the objective of deterrence will require a combination of local forces for self-defense, U.S. forces present in the area, and, as appropriate, U.S. and other forces capable of rapid deployment to reinforce threatened areas.
>
> In most cases - indeed, to some degree in all cases - local forces in a country under attack or directly threatened would mobilize for its defense. [The United States] cannot hope, nor ... plan, to defend peoples in the region who will not help defend themselves. By that same token, where we are involved, we do not expect to stand alone. Because aggression against one could spread to threaten all, others in the regions may well - and surely ought to - join in the collective defense. The kinds of assistance they would contribute would vary from case to case, ranging from providing necessary access and support facilities to mobilizing forces alongside our own to deter and engage an enemy.[58]

The inadequacy of South-West Asian states' forces for defending against a Soviet attack meant that "a larger relative force contribution would be required of the United States, and perhaps of other Western countries, [in order] to establish acceptable ratios of forces with ... the Soviet Union"[59] and to reassure regional states that there was a deterrent and counter to Soviet aggression. But it was

> the response of the nations and peoples of the region to a Soviet invasion - in the form of political activity, conventional military action, or guerrilla operations and harassment - [which] would have a major effect - perhaps

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[56] Brown, "Case Study", p. "8".

[57] Ibid., p. "4".

[58] Brown, "Protecting Persian Region", p. 65.

[59] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 148.

the decisive effect - on the outcome.[60]

US security assistance to Saudi Arabia and some of its Gulf neighbours was a "significant factor" in helping them to create a "modern defense capability" necessary "to be secure from Soviet-backed military threat or the political pressure such threat can bring to bear ...,"[61] according to Saunders. That reasoning fitted in with Brown's general view of American security assistance that it was in many cases (not directly involving the USSR) needed for enabling "local forces to be a preferable and effective alternative to direct commitment of U.S. forces to defend shared interests in some parts of the world."[62] Also the United States' military supply relationship with countries such as Egypt, Jordan, North Yemen, Oman, Somalia and Kenya contributed, in Saunders' view, "not only to their own self-defense capabilities, but to their feeling of stability and their willingness to share in the common security effort."[63]

Besides supplying arms and other kinds of military aid to states in South-West Asia, America's European allies and Japan would have to cooperate with it in a "division of labour" for defence of their mutual regional interests. "In some cases", Brown observed, "their contributions can be direct - continuing naval presence, airlift and sealift assets, mobile forces. In others, it can be indirect - providing access and transit rights" for facilitating the movement of a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force "or increasing their share of the defense burden in their own area to compensate for [America's] greater effort in securing access to Persian Gulf oil."[64]

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[60] Ibid., p. 149.

[61] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 349.

[62] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 30.

[63] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 15.

[64] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 33.

Under the new "division of labour" the United States' allies

> must be prepared to meet the gap in NATO defenses that could result from the possible diversion of U.S. forces to meet the security requirements for [South-West Asia]. The European allies must provide more airlift for rapid movement of reinforcements to Europe to replace U.S. airlift needed for operations outside the NATO area. They must also provide additional maritime forces and develop more reserve units to fill the gap created by U.S. reinforcements designated for NATO that could be deployed elsewhere. The U.S. reinforcements require increased host nation support and infrastructure to replace U.S. support needed in Southwest Asia in time of crisis.[65]

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[65] Ibid., p. 79. When the Carter administration left office in January 1981, the US and its NATO allies had only begun to analyze the implications for the Alliance of America's strategic policy for South-West Asia and to deliberate about how to reconcile the two "sides'" differences concerning that policy and about what the allies' contribution to a military "division of labour" ought to be. Limited space prevents more than a brief noting here of NATO Europe's initial resentment about America's hasty over-reaction to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan without consulting it, its disagreement with the US about the nature of the Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf and (the need for) a military response to that threat and its view that America could not reasonably expect its support about an issue which, however momentous, lay outside NATO's area of responsibility. The "rapid deployment force" concept and a strategy for the RDF's potential use had not been thought through and it had little capability for credible, sustained operations. Its use might worsen, not enhance security in the Persian Gulf and US military involvement there against the USSR could pose serious danger to Europe: it could lower the nuclear threshold and weaken deterrence by diverting support forces and later arriving combat reinforcements putatively available for operations in Europe and it could jeopardize detente by "importing" from the Gulf tension, if not a greater possibility of confrontation.

On NATO Europe's relations and potential military cooperation with the US apropos of Persian Gulf security, see Gregory F. Treverton, "America And Europe After Afghanistan", NATO's Fifteen Nations 25 (April-May 1980), 27-31; United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, United States-Western European Relations In 1980, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980; United States, Library Of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Nato After Afghanistan Report Prepared For The Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East Of The Committee On Foreign Affairs, U.S. House Of Representatives By The Foreign Affairs And National Defense Division, Committee

Other "important tasks" for the NATO allies consisted of making real annual increases in defence spending of at least three per cent for many years to come and following through on the Alliance's Long-Term Defence Programme for improving its armed forces. Japan had to increase its responsibility and capability for defence of its territory and the airspace and sea lanes in its vicinity. The involvement of America's allies with it in the military part of the security "framework", even if a French and British naval presence were the only direct contribution, was quite valuable not only to help deter the USSR and to reassure regional states but also to show the West's unity of purpose and cooperation. Otherwise the US Congress would soon refuse "to carry an unfair share of the total burden" for defence in South-West Asia and the American government would be forced to reduce its plans and programmes.[66] In addition the US hoped to develop forms of parallel security cooperation with the People's Republic of China.

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Print, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980; Karl Kaiser and others, Western Security: What has Changed? What should be done? (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1981); Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, pp. 160-209; Shahram Chubin, "Western European Perceptions of Europe's Stake in Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean Security", in The Great Game, ed. Rubinstein, pp. 117-147; North Atlantic Assembly, Political Committee, Interim Report Of The Sub-committee On Out-Of-Area Security Challenges To The Alliance AB 207 PC/OA (84)2, International Secretariat, November 1984; Marc Bentinck, NATO's Out-of-Area Problem Adelphi Paper No. 211 (London: International Institute For Strategic Studies, Autumn 1986); Dov S. Zakheim, "Towards a Western Approach to the Indian Ocean", Survival 22 (January-February 1980), 7-14; ---, "Of Allies and Access", The Washington Quarterly 4 (Winter 1981), 87-96; David M. Ransom, Lawrence J. McDonald, W. Nathaniel Howell, "Atlantic Cooperation For Persian Gulf Security", in Essays on Strategy (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1984), pp. 79-102; Christopher Coker and Heinz Schulte, "A European Option in the Indian Ocean", International Defense Review, no. 1 (1980), pp. 27-34.

[66] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 84.

According to Brown the "inherent gravity" of a Soviet attack into South-West Asia and the "likelihood that it would lead to or be associated with a war ... [elsewhere] make deterrence of such an action a high priority of U.S. policy in the region and the central goal of U.S. military policy there."[67] How America tried to generate that deterrence will be examined farther below. But, as shown, the Carter administration judged a Soviet attack to be the least likely immediate threat to South-West Asia. Saunders, for example, pointed out in September 1980 that although the Soviet military "buildup" in Afghanistan had laid the "foundation" for potential further Soviet action, it was "at this point almost entirely related to events inside Afghanistan."[68] Yet because the Administration was uncertain about the balance over the longer term between offensive and defensive motives for the Soviet intervention, it could not in prudence assume safely that the intervention was primarily defensive. And preparing for the "worst case", however improbable, was part of taking principal responsibility for deterring and countering politically the USSR.

More probable than large-scale Soviet aggression were "modest incursions" into neighbouring states by Soviet forces, their political use, indirect forms of Soviet military intervention and the USSR's employment of political and economic instruments of policy. In Brown's view an American

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[67] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 147. Strategic policy was meant as well to underpin broader US policy: without a firm foundation in military potential, America's political policy would be "barren". See "Prepared Statement Of Hon. Robert Komer, Under Secretary Of Defense For Policy" in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 66.

[68] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 364. At this time, however, the Administration was quite concerned in private about signs of an impending Soviet attack upon Iran. See fn. 124 below.

military presence in South-West Asia, "if only a rotating presence - or even an occasional presence ... to show how quickly [the US] can get in there, would help deter some of the less extreme Soviet possible military actions."[69] But he was not sure by how much. Countering the political uses of the Soviet armed forces and indirect intervention by the USSR required increasing the display of US power and resolve. But as in the case of "Soviet efforts to gain political domination of Southwest Asia by infiltration or other nonmilitary means", Brown understood that the "United States cannot prevent such attempts; it can only seek to reduce their effectiveness and to respond."[70] America's conventional military strength was not the most important element in resisting Soviet "encroachment" but although its role was "limited", it was still necessary and "significant".

> A U.S. military presence, an ability to introduce military forces into the region, arms transfers, and joint military planning and exercises with countries in the region can all be influential in dampening regional conflicts, helping the important states ... to achieve internal stability, and encouraging political resistance to Soviet influence. A U.S. military capability seen as usable ... will also affect Soviet perception of the costs and gains of political penetration.[71]

"As evidence of U.S. commitment and as a deterrent to the Soviets", Brown recognised, "even a small U.S. presence on the ground would be useful."[72] Yet "especially if it is mistimed

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[69] Brown, "Case Study", p. "12". For discussions of the military aspect of the super-powers' political competition in the Persian Gulf and wider Middle East, see Shahram Chubin, "Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Political Dimension", pp. 124-133, and Jonathan Alford, "Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Military Dimension", pp. 134-146, in The Soviet Union In The Middle East, eds. Dawisha and Dawisha.

[70] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 150.

[71] Idem.

[72] Ibid., p. 156.

or if it is perceived to be directed at the countries of the region or at control of rather than access to their [oil]",[73] "[t]oo visible a U.S. presence", and a permanent one much more, "will increase the risk of internal unrest in many nations ..."[74] and of friction between states. Thus

> even if the resources were available for U.S. military actions clearly sufficient to prevent Soviet political domination or military conquest, they would probably have to be scaled down and stretched out to avoid counterproductive political effects that would outweigh the direct and indirect benefits.[75]

If for political reasons American ground forces supporting regional resistance against "creeping" Soviet "encroachment" could not be based in South-West Asia,

> some small number ... would have to be able to be moved in very quickly on request of somebody in the region. For that purpose, [the US] ... would not be talking about three divisions or six divisions. [It] might be talking about a brigade or even a battalion. Being able to move that quickly on request becomes very, very important.[76]

Within the Persian Gulf the objectives of US strategic policy were, as the Administration had established in 1979, to show a more active interest in friendly states' security and a stronger commitment to contribute to it, to reassure those states and to re-establish America's credibility as a dependable security actor. At the regional level the US sought to enhance its friends' deterrence of potential foes by tacitly threatening to intervene and reinforce them, preferably indirectly, if they faced imminent attack and requested its help. At the internal level the Carter administration recognised that the armed forces were not

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[73] Ibid., p. 150.

[74] Ibid., p. 156.

[75] Ibid., p. 150.

[76] Brown, "Case Study", p. "12".

acceptable or very suitable for dealing with disturbances. But although difficult and dangerous, an intervention in order to "protect" access to oil implicitly was not ruled out. Political discretion - trying to avoid the adverse consequences of even seeming to threaten regional states - was ample reason why American policy did not mention outright a direct strategic role within the Persian Gulf. The Gulf states' anxiety, Brown noted, about "being intimidated by Western forces make an explicitly declared policy on defense against local threats unwise."[77] And as for the sensitive issue of "whether the United States should plan to protect the oil fields against internal or regional threats", he considered that an "explicit commitment ... is more likely to upset and anger the oil suppliers than to reassure them."[78]

The "most immediate threat to stability in the Indian Ocean area", high ranking defence officials in the Carter administration acknowledged, was "internal instability, coups, subversion",[79] sabotage and terrorist activity. The formal US policy towards the conservative Gulf states set forth by Saunders declared that the US "will not intervene in the internal affairs of any country."[80] America's "ability to

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[77] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 157. Potential uses of the US armed forces within the Persian Gulf are discussed by McNaugher, Arms and Oil, pp. 160-198; Hackett, "Protecting Oil Supplies"; Peterson, Defending Arabia, pp. 172-177; Challenges for U.S. National Security Assessing the Balance: Defense Spending and Conventional Forces A Preliminary Report, Part 2 Prepared by the Staff of the Carnegie Panel on U.S. Security and the Future of Arms Control (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), pp. 177-181; Kemp, "Contingency Planning and Persian Gulf Options", pp. 69-72, 74; Collins and Mark, Use Of Force To Ensure Supplies; United States Congress, Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces: Design And Cost Alternatives For NATO And Non-NATO Contingencies (n.p., 1980), pp. 55-62.

[78] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 157.

[79] U.S. Senate, Defense Authorization Hearings On S. 2294, p. 445.

[80] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 351.

influence internal events in the gulf (sic) states remains limited",[81] and working with Gulf governments in order to channel rapid economic and social change in "constructive directions", so that they would avoid following the path of imperial Iran, was the "only way" to deal with it. Although it intended principally to provide a "global umbrella" for regional stability against the USSR, America had expressed "concern for the [internal] security of the countries of the area, [but] not as [part of] a formal alliance or in any way that commits [the US] to respond to their call."[82] "There can't be a policy", Saunders remarked further, "which one proclaims in advance."[83] Were a monarchical government under serious threat of overthrow, the United States would respond "in the context of the situation - including the social forces present at that time."[84] "As a practical matter" in an internal crisis, "the people inside the country properly deal with the situation. In some cases ..., they will turn to neighbors and try to deal with it in a regional context."[85] But if the crisis "goes beyond that, and there is a request for help from some quarter (sic) that is the issue which would have to be addressed at that time."[86] Queried whether he "contemplated" the use of American military power in order "to prevent the take-over of a country through subversion by pro-Soviet forces", Brown replied that the US "would repel an external attempt to control from outside" but it was not "in the business" of trying "to determine what happens in the

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[81] Ibid., p. 335.

[82] Ibid., p. 372.

[83] Idem.

[84] Idem.

[85] Idem.

[86] Idem.

internal political evolution of various governments."[87] Military force was "not a very effective or an acceptable way ... of doing that."[88] Military strength, he pointed out in January 1980 in the annual US defence report, would "not by itself often be productive in dealing with the basic causes of disorder in this tumultuous world ..." but in "some circumstances, it may be our only recourse."[89] A year later, in his last defence report, he mentioned a "Western need to deter, or cope with, ... indigenous instability"[90] as well as Soviet "adventurism". And were a coup attempt, not necessarily by "pro-Soviet forces", imminent in Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates, a "quick Western intervention before ... a coup succeeded, in response to a request from what was seen as a legitimate authority resisting such a change, might be the only way to save the situation,"[91] in Brown's view. On the other hand, a "Western intervention after a change in a Persian Gulf state could well polarize internal attitudes and forces against the intervening power."[92] Recourse to arms, the Administration recognised as a general proposition, would signify a failure of policy.

According to Brzezinski Carter approved in 1980 his "idea for developing a very small rapid intervention force, capable of very quick reaction, for the purpose of helping a friendly government under a subversive attack."[93] A small force, "even

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[87] Meeting The Soviet Challenge An interview with U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown (Reprinted from "U.S. News and World Report", February 11, 1980, published at Washington, D.C.), Official Text, International Communication Agency, U.S. Embassy, London, February 12th, 1980, p. 4.

[88] Idem.

[89] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1981, p. 62.

[90] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. vii.

[91] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 157.

[92] Idem.

[93] Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 450.

if only of battalion size, could prove politically more valuable than a full-scale division deployed ten days or two weeks later."[94] Further, contingency plans were reported to have been prepared for assisting "a friendly nation to maintain or restore internal order at the request of that nation's Government" and for "[s]eizing the oil fields if saboteurs or terrorists threaten to strangle supplies to the Western industrial nations or Japan."[95] But with regard to intervention in friendly Gulf states for the purpose of restoring access to oil cut off for political reasons, a possibility not precluded by background briefings on US strategic policy, Brown thought that the economic need of the industrial countries could not justify that recourse.[96] He "judged" such an "adventure" to be "unsustainable in practical terms, partly because of the existence of the Soviet Union",[97] which might launch a counter-intervention as the welcomed protector of the Gulf against "Western imperialism". And even if the USSR held back, "Western forces - [including] the larger ones needed to counter the Soviets - are unlikely to be able to keep the oil flowing in the ... circumstances of a legitimate regime's wishing to turn it off."[98] Also, oil facilities were quite vulnerable to sabotage or destruction by the local population. "The determinant of a potential U.S. response" to an internal, or external, threat to a friendly state's oilfields

> should be whether ... a legitimate regime asks for assistance and whether it and its people are themselves prepared to fight.... Such [threats] could arise, so it is appropriate for the United States to prepare plans and maintain the corresponding capabilities. The required capabilities are much less than, and somewhat different

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[94] Idem.

[95] New York Times, September 26, 1980.

[96] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 144.

[97] Brown, "Case Study", p. "6".

[98] Brown, Thinking About Security, p. 157.

from, the capabilities required to counter the threat of a massive Soviet invasion.[99]

At the inter-state level of America's strategic policy for South-West Asia, history and US security policy ruled out a deterrent role and direct military involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the intermittent fighting between Somalia and Ethiopia, in a renewal of war between Pakistan and India or in the war between Iraq and Iran beginning in September 1980. And although in the Persian Gulf America's policy now was more direct and active deterrence, because Iran no longer was the intermediate deterrent between local states and the "ultimate" US deterrent/protector, America's deterrence still had to retain a tacit,[100] cautious and indirect character, from political necessity. It had to be tacit and cautious, with military help available as discreetly as possible in the background, at a politically safe distance, because (as shown in Chapter Five) the conservative Gulf Arab countries viewed the US as a source of political embarassment, if not danger and as a potential military threat. American deterrence could remain indirect in the sense that actual military security in the Gulf had not deteriorated to the extent that friendly states could not (at least claim and appear to) take primary responsibility for their initial defence. Compared to its religious and political challenge, Iran did not pose a serious military threat to them. And Saudi Arabia's and Kuwait's relations with Iraq, long their chief political and military antagonist, had improved as a result of Iran's challenge to them all. Nonetheless the Saudis in particular were very anxious about the potential danger caused by their military weakness relative to their two large neighbours and they were

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[99] Idem.

[100] The tacit character of US deterrence at the regional level was brought out in a major speech by Brown. While concentrating on deterrence against the USSR, he remarked, America "must be able, if need be, to defeat aggression at various levels." (Italics added.) Brown, "Protecting Persian Region", p. 65.

exceedingly defensive in outlook and lacked confidence in their armed forces. Quiet US reassurance of them was very important. Thus American deterrence had to be more active than in the Shah's era in order to display greater preparedness to contribute to friendly states' security, especially in crises when they felt that their armed forces alone might not be able to cope adequately. If requested by a friend immediately threatened or under attack, America would launch a "supportive intervention",* preferably by indirect means (arms supplies, advisers and logistic support, for example) but in a more direct way involving the actual use of US combat forces if needed, in order to reinforce the friend. A US intervention would take place, it was hoped by the Carter administration, as part of a joint military as well as political response by regional and perhaps other external powers.

Indirect intervention or deployment by moderate-sized naval or air forces or both, rather than the threat or use of a large number of American ground troops, were suggested by US policy-makers to suffice to help deter or deal with probable regional threats to friends. Thus Robert Komer, Under Secretary of Defence for Policy in 1980, asserted that the "sizable naval presence in the Indian Ocean" of US aircraft carriers and surface combatants augmented by periodic deployments of fighter-interceptor aircraft from America and small Marine forces "will provide a deterrent to regional instibility (sic)."[101] The United States' "near-term planning" for South-West Asia, Brown pointed out in the annual US defence report in January 1981, "has considered a number of

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* "Supportive intervention" is "the contribution of ... additional capability to redress the military balance. A measure of cooperation by the country being supported is assumed, including the use of facilities on land." Michael MccGwire, "Projection of Force by External Powers", in The Indian Ocean, eds. Dowdy and Trood, p. 401.

[101] U.S. Senate, Defense Authorization Hearings On S. 2294, p. 482.

potential non-Soviet contingencies where a relatively small RDJTF would be adequate."[102] "In small-scale conflicts, the United States may play a low-level role involving advisory teams, Special Forces, and logistics...."[103] Noting that the conservative Gulf Arab countries could generate "a substantial measure of their own security against normal[?] intraregional threats",[104] Saunders stated that America's "peacetime military presence" would be an "additional element in assuring the security of the area"[105] against a "Soviet-backed military threat" to Saudi Arabia and its neighbours from Marxist South Yemen.

Saunders and members of the Department of Defence might have viewed America's ad hoc help to North Yemen against South Yemen's attack upon it in February-March 1979 as an indication of the approximate limit of its involvement in regional conflict indirectly supported by the USSR. The Americans had "collaborated closely with the Saudi government" to whose security the South Yemeni attack was perceived as an indirect threat. The US had "provided military supplies with the cooperation of the Saudi Government to North Yemen. [It had] sent training teams there to help in placing the equipment in the Yemeni forces"[106] and it had also sent an aircraft carrier task group to the area as a demonstration of concern for the security of North Yemen and Saudi Arabia and of resolve to help uphold it. The US had "responded in a forceful way, and ... that response was adequate to the needs of that situation."[107] America's strategic response sufficed also when shortly after the Iraq-Iran war began, Saudi Arabia

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[102] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 191.

[103] Idem.

[104] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 362.

[105] Ibid., p. 349.

[106] Ibid., p. 57.

[107] Idem.

requested its help to deter possible Iranian air attacks upon it and the US sent AWACS aircraft and stationed a cruiser with surface-to-air missiles off the Saudi Gulf coast. The cruiser was part of an American naval force in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea which with British, French and Australian naval contingents deterred Iran from threatening the passage of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. Finally American strategic planners addressed the largest regional contingency with which the Rapid Deployment Force might have to contend: "[R]epelling an incursion from a ... nation, such as Iraq, into the oil-producing nations around the Persian Gulf."[108] Apropos of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, that contingency was, as noted, unlikely. It became even more unlikely after Iraq went to war with Iran (but in the middle 1980s the possibility arose that Iran might break through Iraqi defences and attack Kuwait and Saudi Arabia).

Generating "adequate" deterrence against direct Soviet aggression, however improbable, meant redressing as far as possible the unfavourable balance of super-power forces available for regional operations by improving America's weak capability for defence. But as part of enhancing deterrence more immediately, the US sought to play on the Soviets' fear of a confrontation with America and its consequences; it indicated that it would pre-empt a Soviet attack's movement to critical positions with a "trip-wire" force and it invoked the possibility of escalating a conflict, whether to the use of tactical nuclear weapons or by spreading it to other regions.

> It was true, Brzezinski observed in retrospect, that
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> when the commitment to the security of the Persian Gulf was made the United States was not in a position to meet the Soviet Union on the ground, ... matching man for man or tank for tank. Geography and logistical complexities

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[108] New York Times, September 26, 1980.

made that impossible.[109]

But as a practical matter there was

> no way for the United States to reach the conclusion secretly that the Persian Gulf is in [its] vital interest, then to build up [its] military forces in order to have the capability of responding locally, and only then to announce that the United States is committed to such a defense. In a democracy ..., only a public commitment is capable of generating the necessary budgetary support and the other decisions that are needed to implement a commitment. In the meantime, the very awareness in Moscow and elsewhere of America's engagement serves as the immediate deterrent.[110] (Italics added.)

The purpose of the "Carter Doctrine"

> was to make the Soviet Union aware of the fact that the intrusion of Soviet armed forces into an area of vital importance to the United States would precipitate an engagement with the United States, and that [it] would then be free to choose the manner in which [it] would respond. In fact, in [the Administration's] private contingency preparations, I made the point of instructing the Defense Department to develop options involving both "horizontal and vertical escalation" in the event of a Soviet military move toward the Persian Gulf, by which I meant that [the US] would be free to choose either the terrain or the tactic or the level of ... response.[111]

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[109] Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 445.

[110] Ibid., p. 446.

[111] Ibid., p. 445. The use of American armed forces to deter and deal with Soviet military action in South-West Asia is considered by NcNaugher, Arms And Oil, pp. 47-86, who emphasizes the force planning and operational aspects of US strategy; Albert Wohlstetter, Meeting The Threat In The Persian Gulf European-American Institute for Security Research RS-11-1 (April 1981); Kenneth N. Waltz, "A Strategy for the Rapid Deployment Force", International Security 5 (Spring 1981), 49-73; Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, pp. 109-118; Kemp, "Contingency Planning and Persian Gulf Options", pp. 67-69, 72-76; Geoffrey Kemp, "Military Force And Middle East Oil", in Energy And Security, eds. David A. Deese, Joseph S. Nye (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 365-387; (Carnegie Endowment Staff,) Challenges For U.S. National Security, pp. 172-177; Congressional Budget Office, U.S. Ground Forces, pp. 48-52.

The American government, according to Brown's analysis, had to adjust its strategic policy for South-West Asia in light of nuclear parity between the US and the USSR. The end of America's "overwhelming nuclear predominance" made unfeasible the "pure" "trip-wire" approach of immediate, automatic nuclear retaliation which "was effective in deterring the Soviets in Europe (and perhaps also was working in Southwest Asia)...."[112] The reformulation of America's regional strategic policy had to take into account the argument that the vital importance of Persian Gulf oil would in itself pose a substantial deterrent to a Soviet attack into South-West Asia because attacking a vital interest could lead to thermonuclear war. That was indeed "one element of deterrence of certain extreme Soviet military action. But how it would work would depend very much on circumstances."[113] There was the danger, albeit small, of a "fast" Soviet attack into South-West Asia which would enable the USSR to attain its objectives sufficiently speedily that the US would not have time to present a conventional defence. And because of nuclear parity the Americans might well decide not to escalate the conflict and use nuclear weapons.

> If the U.S. forces could be pushed out very quickly, then [the conflict] might not escalate; and ... it would be the same calculation in Europe that might bring a Soviet attack there: an expectation or a hope to overrun Western Europe so quickly that the nuclear escalation would not take place during that overrun, and after the successful occupation it would not take place either.[114]

Such a military success would alter "what the Soviets call the correlation of forces suddenly and shockingly enough so that the coherence of U.S. alliances might dissolve very quickly.... What steps the U.S. would then be able to take is

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[112] Brown, "Case Study", p. "12".

[113] Ibid., p. "4".

[114] Ibid., p. "12".

not an easy problem."[115]

An effective conventional deterrent against a Soviet attack would involve, in addition to regional and perhaps some allied forces, Brown stated in March 1980,

> both U.S. military presence in a troubled region and U.S. forces which can be quickly moved to it. What is important is the ability rapidly to move forces into the region with the numbers, mobility and firepower to preclude initial adversary forces from reaching vital points. It is not necessary for ... initial [US] units to be able to defeat the whole force an adversary might eventually have in place. It is also not necessary for [the US] to await the firing of the first shot or the prior arrival of hostile forces; many of [the American] forces can be moved upon strategic warning and some upon receipt of even very early and ambiguous indications.[116]

Pre-emption, mentioned by Brzezinski in December 1979, by Brown above in all but name and in June 1980 by General P.X. Kelly, the first commander of the Rapid Deployment Force, was a "critical idea" influencing US planning for military operations in the Persian Gulf region. According to Brown, whoever got there "first with a respectable force has an advantage as between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, because it is the other side that then has to escalate if it wants to attack the area that is occupied by the force that got there first."[117] Putting the burden of initial engagement on the Soviet Union was important "because whoever first attacks the other's forces ... is creating a very, very grave risk."[118] Thus "[h]aving one U.S. division quickly in the area, within a matter of a week, ... or even a brigade in a matter of a few

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[115] Ibid., p. "4".

[116] Brown, "Protecting Persian Region", p. 65.

[117] United States, Congress, House, Committee On Appropriations, Department Of Defense Appropriations For 1981, Hearings Before The Subcommittee On The Department Of Defense, pt. 1, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, p. 588.

[118] Idem.

days - may be much more valuable than having a plan that will get three divisions there in three months...."[119] American forces could undertake one or both of two "possible strategies for the defense of the oil fields of the Gulf": "holding a line on the Zagros Mountains or holding an enclave around the oil fields themselves."[120] Quick movement in order to pre-

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[119] Idem.

[120] Brown, "Case Study", p. "8". US Army doctrine pertaining to how the United States would hold an enclave around the oilfields in Khuzistan is discussed in Desert Operations FM 90-3 (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department Of The Army, 1977), p. 1-2:

> The most likely situation that could involve US forces in desert operations is one in which a country had requested assistance against a mutual enemy operating in or against the country concerned. US Army forces could expect to be initially deployed in a lodgement area that should have an airfield suitable for landing heavy transport aircraft and, ideally, a deep water port. Operations would probably be conducted in four phases, supported as necessary by US naval and air forces:
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> Establishment of the Lodgement Area. It may be necessary to defend the lodgement area against insurgents, saboteurs, terrorists, or others sympathetic to the enemy. In any event, it will be necessary to secure it in order to establish a logistics base. For this reason, combat forces should be deployed early to allow the buildup to begin.
>
> Buildup of the Logistic Base and Combat Forces. During this phase the logistics base is established to support the force. Follow on combat and combat support forces are brought into the theater, and the lodgement area is expanded as necessary.
>
> Defensive Operations To Secure the Initial Area of Operations. It may be necessary to defend outnumbered until such time as sufficient combat power is available in the operational area to conduct offensive operations.
>
> Offensive Operations To Destroy the Enemy. Offensive operations are conducted once sufficient combat, combat support, and combat service support forces have been deployed into the area to sustain such operations. Normally this time will come when US Army forces and their allies are able to establish at least local ground superiority.

empt or exclude Soviet forces from occupying strategically critical positions would be accompanied by the interpositioning of US troops between them and their objective (in the case of oil fields) and interdiction of their lines of communication. And if

> opposing forces could be interposed and interdiction accomplished early - both of those are very big ifs - the same sort of prospect which operates to help deter the Soviets from a military adventure in Europe could be introduced in Southwest Asia: the prospect of extended conflict on the ground with U.S. forces and of escalation of intensity and of geographic spread of the conflict. The longer such a conflict lasts, the more uncertain the Soviets or anybody else can be about what may happen, both at the scene of the conflict itself, and in the Soviet Union itself. Thus, the anticipation of a more protracted conflict operates as a better deterrent.[121]

In the short-term America's deterrence of Soviet military "adventurism" in South-West Asia had to depend "largely upon Soviet concerns that such an action on their part would lead to direct U.S.-Soviet conflict or confrontation, in turn leading to military conflict of unknowable intensity and location."[122]

In the background of the United States' strategic policy were tactical nuclear weapons, the possibility of whose use against attacking Soviet forces was not ruled out in view of America's very weak capability for conventional combat in the Persian Gulf region. Possible recourse to nuclear weapons could not be excluded because by raising the USSR's uncertainty about the nature and extent of America's response to an attack, it increased deterrence. But the nuclear

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> It may be necessary to seize a lodgement area by force by air landing, air assault, or by over the beach operations. When this is the case, the operation is phased in essentially the same manner described above.

[121] Brown, "Case Study", p. "8".

[122] Ibid., p. "9".

"option" posed enormous risk for the US too and because it would be most dangerous politically as well as militarily (see below), it could only be hinted at. Both the Americans and "the Soviets have nuclear weapons", Brown reminded Congress in early February 1980, "and whenever [the two sides] get engaged with each other in combat, which has never happened, then the risks of escalation are great."[123] Asked at a Department of Defence press briefing on the "Persian Gulf crisis" whether the US "had thought about eventual escalation to tactical nuclear warfare, [a] defense official said, 'Yes, we are thinking about theater nuclear options in other areas than NATO,' meaning outside Western Europe."[124] The possible use of nuclear weapons in battle with the USSR was "always implicit" because the US did not preclude in principle the first use of nuclear weapons. But when asked whether America would "contemplate the use of nuclear weapons in the face of a large-scale Soviet attack", Brown replied:

> I don't want to talk about contingencies that go that far. The use of nuclear weapons would be, of course, a very, very grave step. If you ever got to that point, you would be dealing with matters even greater than a threat to the Persian Gulf region - important as that is. So I just don't want to anticipate what form an attack would take or what form defense or a deterrent would take.
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> What we're missing - or rather what we need to improve - is not our nuclear capability in this situation. What we need to improve is our conventional capability, to insure

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[123] U.S. House, Defense Appropriations 1981, p. 588.

[124] Washington Post, February 2, 1980. When in late summer 1980, the USSR seemed to be preparing its forces to attack Iran, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff were reported to have told President Carter that America would have no other recourse than to use tactical nuclear weapons against a Soviet attempt to seize Iran's oil fields. See Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Was the US Ready to Resort to Nuclear Weapons for the Persian Gulf in 1980?", Armed Forces Journal International 124 (September 1986), 92-93, 96, 98, 100-102, 104-105. The United States' potential use of nuclear weapons against the USSR in South-West Asia is discussed in Christopher Paine, "On The Beach: The Rapid Deployment Force and the Nuclear Arms Race", MERIP Reports No. 111 (January 1983), pp. 3-11, 30.

> there's no easy conventional attack that would overrun the region.[125] (Italics added.)

Brown addressed in March 1980 the issue of resort to nuclear weapons, no doubt with the problem in mind of America's dubious strategic credibility: not only its unavoidable heavy near-term dependence on nuclear weapons for deterrence but also having its hinted possible use of them perceived as a mere bluff and perhaps "called" by the Soviet Union. There had been

> press reports of alleged U.S. reliance on a "trip-wire" strategy, in which we would, by preference or necessity, quickly resort to theater nuclear weapons to defend against Soviet attack in the area. ... Any direct conflict between American and Soviet forces carries the risk of intensification and geographical spread of the conflict. We cannot concede to the Soviets full choice of the arena or the actions.
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> But that by no means implies that escalation to the use of nuclear weapons will be the consequence of a U.S.-Soviet clash in southwest (sic) Asia. In part to make such a result less likely, a major portion of our effort in the region is devoted to improving the conventional strength we can bring to bear there. In fact, given U.S. capabilities and those of others whose interests would be threatened by Soviet aggression, given the difficulties inherent in any Soviet military actions beyond its borders in rugged terrain and hostile surroundings, and given our wide range of options both to exploit other Soviet vulnerabilities and to defend against attack, conventional deterrence and defense are feasible goals.[126]

By starting to improve its conventional capability to deter Soviet military action, America sought to ensure that the USSR's large armed forces and operational advantages such as nearby bases would not exert a disproportionately large influence on Soviet policy for South-West Asia. The Soviets might miscalculate and think that even though there was a rough balance of interest in the region between themselves and

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[125] Brown, Meeting the Soviet Challenge, p. 3.

[126] Brown, "Protecting Persian Region", p. 65.

the Americans, they could still launch a successful attack against Iran or Pakistan at an acceptable cost. Enhancing the United States' capacity for regional combat and creating a more credible military balance was intended to minimize the Soviet government's sense of the utility of its armed forces as an instrument of policy. The US wanted to constrict the USSR's freedom of action in a potential "worst case" military adventure, to complicate its planning, operational and logistic problems and thus undermine its confidence of success. Above all the Carter administration meant to raise the risk and uncertainty incurred by a Soviet attack and convince the USSR that it would bear dangers and costs unacceptably greater than expected benefits. America sought to manipulate the Soviet Union's caution and limited propensity for taking risks by exploiting the fact that "unless the Soviets feel there is a very low risk of a U.S response, and therefore the costs seem low, they are most likely to use their forces directly only in those circumstances that they consider to be defensive or extreme."[127] And in such circumstances, which the US estimated to be unlikely to occur soon, the USSR would try to achieve its objectives quickly, presenting America with a fait accompli which offered the "greatest chance of preempting an American response and minimizing the level (or at least the extent) of escalation."[128]

Operationally deterrence against a Soviet attack upon Iran was thought to require a capability for a very prompt response, perhaps for pre-emption, with the size of an initial US force of light ground combat units, tactical air force contingents and air defence units compromised in favour of its

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[127] Ross, "Considering Soviet Threats", p. 174.

[128] Ibid., p. 175.

speed of movement from America.[129] A small force reaching crucial positions before Soviet forces did was better than a large force arriving later because the prospect of initiating actual fighting with US forces could well be the "ultimate" deterrent against Soviet aggression. This concept, the "trip-wire"*, was the initial immediate basis of the deterrence process.[130] The next facet of deterrence was the ability of the modest-sized US forces to use the very difficult terrain and the 500 miles distance from the USSR to southern Iran in order to prevent a relatively quick and cheap Soviet military success. Those forces had to slow down the advance of Soviet ground troops by destroying bridges and blocking mountain passes and to interdict the Soviets' lines of communication. Simultaneously the initial US forces had to protect against attack by Soviet airborne and long-range air forces the airfields and ports which sustained their operations and which would receive reinforcements for interpositioning between the advancing Soviet forces and the oilfields. Air power was essential for disrupting Soviet air and ground movements, intercepting Soviet air attacks and generating more time for

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* A "trip-wire" force is a relatively small force deployed to show commitment to defend interests. (It was "ultimate" in the sense that) an enemy's engagement with it would risk tactical nuclear retaliation.

[129] Much of the substance of this paragraph draws from Joshua M. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities in Iran and the RDF Deterrent", International Security 6 (Fall 1981), 126-158. (A later version of this article is in Epstein, Strategy And Force Planning, pp. 44-97.) For estimates by the Carter administration of how many troops could be brought to the Persian Gulf when - for example, about 24,000 men in 16 days, see Washington Post, February 2, 1980; New York Times, February 2 and 3, 1980; New York Times, September 26, 1980.

[130] McNaugher, Arms And Oil, pp. 51-52, notes that

> a contained conventional conflict has its own levels of escalation. The initial U.S. confrontation with Soviet forces would be an air interdiction campaign.... The [subsequent] confrontation of each superpower's conventional ground forces would probably be perceived as a new level of conflict and might in itself create the grounds for a cease-fire.

US reinforcements to arrive, organize and deploy. Sufficient warning time[131] and its resolute use were imperative if American air forces were to intercept and prevent immediately available Soviet airborne forces - two 7,000-man divisions - from making a lodgement in southern Iran before the first light US land contingents could arrive. Provided US air forces had already gained access to regional military facilities putting them within tactical range of southern Iran for rapid reaction, the Carter administration assumed, a Soviet airborne attack probably would be deterred. Soviet transport aircraft would be vulnerable to interception because their destination would lie beyond the range of most Soviet fighter escorts from the USSR and those escorts would be outside the range of Soviet ground control. Turkey, lying "athwart Soviet invasion routes", would be a valuable base of operations, if available. At any rate, in Brown's view, "Turkish bases and military strength, as a threat in being, must give the Soviets pause."[132]

The "trip-wire" was the only mode of localized deterrence possible in 1980. But looking ahead, the Carter administration intended to move from the "trip-wire" to conventional defence: it sought to prepare a stronger capability for actual defence, not just confrontation, against a Soviet attack and thereby to enhance the credibility of US deterrence[133] and to reduce its dependence on the threat to use tactical nuclear weapons. A "key" requirement was to ensure the quicker deployment of more forces to a conflict in South-West Asia. A "reasonable near-term, mid-term goal",

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[131] Epstein, "RDF Deterrent in Iran", p. 140, maintains that the warning time for a Soviet attack into Iran would be "in the neighborhood of the usual three months. But ... [he] assume[s] only one month of warning."

[132] Brown, "Case Study", p. "8".

[133] For thoughts on a "middle ground" strategy between "pure" deterrence and "full" defence, see McNaugher, Arms And Oil, pp. 49-50.

Brown indicated, was

> to be able to get two or three divisions there in ... a couple of weeks and sustain them indefinitely. A longer-term goal would be the ability to perhaps double that. Corresponding tactical Air Force capabilities would be ... three or four wings within a few days as a mid-term goal - actually [the US could] do pretty close to that now within a week or 10 days - and, over a longer period of time, perhaps double or triple that amount.[134]

The US government assumed that provided more transportation ships and aircraft came into service, enabling the equivalent of about five nominally available divisions to arrive before Soviet forces reached southern Iran, those divisions would be sufficient to defend successfully against the approximately ten Soviet divisions actually present for combat in Khuzistan.[135] A ratio of attacker to defender of only about 2:1 (compared to the standard ratio at which defence could be successful of 3:1) would provide another element of deterrence. Further, there was the prospect that within a month, according to Brown, a Soviet engagement with American forces would escalate in intensity and widen to other regions.[136] As it became more costly and protracted and harder to manage, the war would also become more unpredictable in course and consequence for the USSR and its termination would become more difficult.

Because of its weak conventional capacity to fight the USSR in South-West Asia, the United States' strategic policy relied heavily on deterrence. However, deterrence in its political and psychological aspect could not compensate for that inadequate capacity. By raising the costs and risks to the USSR of an attack and inducing more Soviet uncertainty about the likelihood of success except perhaps in occupying

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[134] Brown, "Case Study", p. "10".

[135] See Epstein, "RDF Deterrent in Iran", pp. 144-148.

[136] Brown, "Case Study", p. "12".

Iranian Azerbaijan, the US raised the danger of its own failure by at least an equal proportion. Also, closely linked with that danger, there were conflicts between America's strategic policy for South-West Asia and the principles and objectives of its general strategic policy. Just as much as the logistic and other shortcomings discussed further below, those contradictions, especially the weak political basis for cooperation with regional states, reduced the credibility of America's regional strategic policy premised on the timely, rapid movement of forces to readily available bases.

Warning time was critical for enabling the American government to mobilize and move a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force to South-West Asia. But there was a risk that not enough time would be available if the Soviets achieved a degree of surprise or that too much time might be lost in the processes of decision-making, consultation and initial action to enable an opportune response. Some warning time would be lost because of the initial ambiguity, which the USSR would try to maximize, to the US intelligence services of its preparation for an attack. The Executive branch would have to determine how much uncertainty about the probability of an attack it was willing to accept and still begin to mobilize, a process which would be slowed in 1980 by obsolete planning and procedures as well as by the RDF's inadequate organization and readiness. Having established sufficiently clear knowledge of an intended attack and its probable objectives, the Executive would consume further warning time in making crucial decisions. It would have to decide whether, if the oilfields in southern Iran did not seem to be the immediate Soviet objective, US interests in northern Iran were sufficiently "vital" to necessitate a perhaps long and certainly costly commitment to combat by US forces whose limited capability created a high risk of defeat. If it did resolve to fight, the Administration would have to define as precisely as possible the political and military goals which the armed forces had to and could fulfil.

More warning time could well be used up as the Executive branch consulted with and sought the support of Congress, which might doubt that the oil of Iran alone was actually a "vital" interest worth fighting for. Congress might hesitate to give its support because there was no well-defined, formal US security treaty commitment to Iran; the "Carter Doctrine" was only a unilateral declaration and it had not been endorsed by Congressional resolution. Congress might be reluctant for fear that a confrontation with the Soviet Union might lead to the use of nuclear weapons. Nor would its support for the Administration be quickly forthcoming if "friendly" South-West Asian states and America's allies did not appear to be ready to cooperate. If it seriously opposed a military response to an (imminent) attack by the USSR, Congress could try to stop it by invoking the War Powers resolution of 1973 which limits to 60 days the President's use of the armed forces without Congress's declaration of war. Congress might influence the Executive branch to hold back mobilization in order not to prejudice diplomatic attempts to avert a Soviet attack.

America might not use warning time to full advantage because its strategic orientation was defensive, as manifest in the explicit objective to avoid war, above all with the Soviet Union. Its strong preference to wait for aggession and then respond tended to rule out pre-emption as politically unacceptable, quite possibly even if a Soviet attack were clearly impending. Thus the only recourse would be preclusion. But because of the USSR's contiguity to Iran, preclusion by initial US ground and air forces required them, as noted, <u>already</u> to have travelled the long distance from America to regional bases near the area of imminent Soviet attack. Otherwise a preclusive lodgement by Soviet airborne forces would severely complicate, if not deter American military action. Launching a counter-attack against a Soviet emplacement in southern Iran would put the burden of initiating an engagement on the US. American forces would be compelled to fight to establish a foothold, contradicting

planning assumptions of an unopposed landing. All along, the US had to be acutely aware of the risk that it might intensify the super-power crisis and, whether by misperception or "over-reaction", prompt the Soviet military adventure it wished to deter. In order to minimize the USSR's use of the mobilization of an RDJTF for propaganda or threats or as a pretext for a "defensive" attack, it had to act astutely and with appropriate timing.

Contrary to the United States' strategic principles of "forward defence" and cooperation with regional states for defence on a coalition basis, there was no possibility in South-West Asia of a defensive alliance between America and regional states, with US land and air forces permanently present at host country bases, joint planning, doctrine and tactics, uniform operational concepts and an integrated command structure. Even the proposed informal "security framework" was compromised seriously by antagonistic US relations with Iran, unfriendly ones with Iraq and the great caution of the other Gulf Arab states, to whom explicit strategic association with America was politically unacceptable in view of Islam, Arab nationalism, "anti-imperialism", America's collaboration with Egypt and Israel and domestic and regional (Iran and Iraq) opposition to closer security ties with the US. Ad hoc cooperation with the US by "friendly" South-West Asian states as a confrontation with the USSR loomed would be uncertain: their perception of the Soviet threat and how to deal with it in a way best assuring their security probably would differ from the Americans' view. The US could not very well prepare for military operations in Iran against that country's wishes and without its request for help and its cooperation. And if a Soviet attack seemed imminent, the question would arise whether the Gulf Arab states would allow US forces access to their bases for the defence of Iran, which was an unfriendly, non-Arab state. Subject to Soviet reassurence about their safety if they did not assist the US, the regional states understandably would try to avoid

dangerous entanglement in the impending super-power conflict, one in which nuclear weapons might be used on their territory. Because America was militarily the weaker side, accommodation to the Soviet Union would seem to be the immediate course of action least injurious to their security. In the case of Saudi Arabia, there was the danger that if it gave the Americans access to its bases, they might use their armed forces for the more manageable option of staging a "protective" occupation of its oilfields and installations and in effect divide the Persian Gulf into American and Soviet zones of influence. As a result of friendly states' fears for their security - not least from the domestic and local political repercussions of a large number of US forces on their territory - and differences with America about how to cope with a Soviet threat, the US faced the risk that South-West Asian states might not give it access to their bases or that they might hesitate to do so. While the United States consulted with regional states and tried to gain permission for access and also to ward off intense Soviet counter-pressure, there would be delay, perhaps until the time sufficient for positioning US forces to preclude attacking Soviet forces from seizing critical points had been lost. And then access might be denied because an RDJTF would be thought to be unable to reverse a Soviet fait accompli. Probably the United States would encounter some disagreement and delay from its European allies as it tried to obtain permission for overflying and access to transit facilities and as the parties worked out what the allies' direct and other indirect contributions to defence in South-West Asia would be. Wishing to insulate detente in Europe from an extra-regional crisis, the allies would be most cautious in abetting a US military response, particularly were it perceived as too hasty and liable to increase rather than reduce the danger.

Once a conflict had begun, the United States proposed to deny the enemy his objectives, to contain the conflict, limiting its extent, length and intensity, while not

compromising unacceptably its capacity to deter and defend in other regions. But contrary to those objectives of general strategic policy, US policy for South-West Asia threatened to widen the scope of the fighting and to increase its length, intensity or both.[137] Lengthening a conflict was risky because America lacked the capability to sustain protracted combat. And if US "trip-wire" forces faced defeat before reinforcements arrived and America considered "vertical escalation" to the use of tactical nuclear weapons,[138] extremely difficult questions would be raised. Would the USSR be deterred from further action by an American threat to make first use of tactical nuclear weapons in view of the fact that if Soviet forces or territory were hit, it could retaliate with its own tactical nuclear weapons? Would not the threat or use of tactical nuclear weapons gravely damage America's relations with regional states and perhaps create a global political "fall-out" harmful to the US? The dangers of "vertical escalation", not excluding the potential for strategic nuclear exchanges between the US and the USSR, would be of such enormity - "even greater than a threat to the Persian Gulf region", according to Brown - as to make it virtually incredible and unacceptable.

"Horizontal escalation" - deliberately spreading a conflict to other regions instead of containing it - created much risk too. It would make a conflict less manageable, possibly diverting some US resources and attention from South-West Asia itself without necessarily drawing away Soviet forces and relieving the weak American position there.

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[137] Stephen T. Hosmer, Constraints On U.S. Military Strategies In Past Third World Conflicts Rand Note N-2180-AF, July 1984, "identifies and assesses the principal military-political constraints that have limited U.S. military involvements in the Third World since World War II" and that probably would limit US strategic policy in a potential conflict with the USSR in Iran.

[138] For a critique of the "vertical escalation" strategy, see Epstein, Strategy And Force Planning, pp. 11-29.

Depending on the nature of the "secondary" conflict, the US would confront the risk that demands might be made on its armed forces for simultaneous action in different theatres, demands which they could not meet. "Horizontal escalation" might create (further) tension and division between the Americans and their allies, who would scarcely welcome the "import" of a super-power conflict into Europe, particularly if the US were sending to the Persian Gulf some of its home-based forces designated to reinforce NATO.

Finally, ending a conflict in Iran on acceptable terms would be most difficult, if at all possible, whether or not the fighting had been spread to other regions. America's negotiating position would be weak because even if it had been able to protect the oilfields in southern Iran, it certainly could not defeat the Soviet forces, pushing them back to the USSR and restoring the status quo ante. Nor could the US prevent the Soviets from consolidating a position in northern Iran from where they would pose a constant threat to southern Iran and the northern Persian Gulf and exert more influence on the Gulf. Dependent on support from Gulf states and attentive to their views and to those of its allies and of US public and Congressional opinion anxious to minimize further casualties and fighting, the American government would be more susceptible than the USSR to domestic and international pressure to end the conflict. Close by and able to commit more, indeed a decisive amount of forces to combat in Iran if they chose to, the Soviets would possess much superior bargaining leverage for concluding a conflict largely on their terms and according to their timing. In deciding how best to minimize concessions to the USSR and to negotiate its forces out of Iran, the Americans would have to ask whether they were prepared to keep their forces in southern Iran indefinitely. Reaching an answer would require it, and regional states, allies and Congress to decide whether the long-term advantages of sustaining a presence in defence of "vital" interests would still be greater than its costs and risks.

The United States' strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area was conceptually incomplete when the Carter administration left office in January 1981. In the evolution of policy beyond the pre-emptive or preclusive "trip-wire", conventional regional defence was the leading tendency and de facto policy because Brown and Komer advocated it. But it was challenged within the Department of Defence by the Navy, which espoused "horizontal escalation".[139] The Navy sought to maximize its role in (its interpretation of the "correct") American global strategic policy and thereby justify much larger funds from Congress for acquiring new aircraft carriers and other ships. It assumed that Iran could not be defended against a large Soviet attack and that a super-power conflict there would be part of or lead to a wider war. Soviet aggression against Iran could be responded to better by attacking targets of value to the USSR equal to American interests in Iran. Those targets would lie in areas more accessible and vulnerable to US military power and where the Navy in particular gave America a more equal or superior fighting capability.

Brown and Komer thought that although conventional defence in Iran would be very demanding, it was nonetheless practicable. Provided the US used the time available to it because of the low probability of a Soviet attack soon and made adjustments and improvements in mobility, readiness, doctrine, training and weaponry, it could muster from extant force levels a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force adequate to impose unacceptably high punishment upon advancing Soviet forces and generate credible deterrence. "Horizontal escalation", on the other hand, might contribute to declaratory deterrence but it was objectionable in practice

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[139] For examples of the Navy's point of view, see Francis J. West, "NATO II: Common Boundaries for Common Interests", Naval War College Review 34 (January-February 1981), 59-67; John Lehman, Jr. (appointed Secretary of the Navy in 1981), "Rebirth of a U.S. Naval Strategy", Strategic Review 9 (Summer 1981), 9-15.

because it would expand to another region a conflict in the Persian Gulf which would not inevitably spread to a second theatre.[140] And because probably it would not draw Soviet land forces away from Iran, it would not make an efficacious contribution to US defence there. Further, it might not be at all easy to find targets of a value to the USSR "equal" to America's interest in the oil, territorial integrity and independence of Iran. Besides preferring conventional defence over "horizontal escalation", Brown rejected the idea that the US Navy alone could act as a "trip-wire" against a Soviet attack upon Iran. Positioned in the Arabian Sea or the Gulf of Oman, it was too far away from western Iran to serve that purpose. Nor did he consider to be feasible a unilateral naval strategy for defence of the Persian Gulf oilfields: the Gulf was "too confined to make it prudent to bring aircraft carriers into it in the face of the threat from land-based air around its periphery."[141] Protecting Iran's oilfields would also require ground and air forces.

There was debate too among proponents of conventional defence, about how best to respond to a Soviet attack. Ought the US to attempt a forward defence of Iran in the Zagros Mountains or ought it to give primary emphasis to creating a defensive enclave in Khuzistan and acquiesce in the USSR's occupation of north-western Iran? In terms of severity of logistic demands, establishing an enclave was more practicable.

The United States' strategic policy was also incomplete at the "lower", operational level. The US Army, for example,

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[140] Joshua M. Epstein, in "Horizontal Escalation Sour Notes of a Recurrent Theme", International Security 8 (Winter 1983-84), 19-31, or in Strategy And Force Planning, pp. 30-43, criticizes and rejects "horizontal escalation" as America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf. McNaugher, Arms And Oil, pp. 50-51, doubts its efficacy too.

[141] Brown, "Case Study", p. "8".

had only made a start to evolving up-to-date doctrine, tactics and concepts of operations for fighting in mountain and desert and to experimenting with ways to enhance its light forces' firepower and maneuverability in both milieux. And the HQ RDF was only at the early stages of planning for contingencies in South-West Asia, many of which would require combined-arms operations.

## The US military presence in South-West Asia

Besides "local forces for self-defence" and modest-sized British and French forces already in the region and possibly deployed to it in a crisis, deterrence and defence in South-West Asia against the USSR depended primarily, the Carter administration realised, on America's own military capability: its regional naval presence, the Rapid Deployment Force based in the US and logistic support for both, especially access to regional military facilities and, for the RDF, mobility forces - ships and aircraft for carrying men, equipment and supplies - and prepositioning of some kit and supplies in the Indian Ocean area. Many serious problems and deficiencies beset the RDF in particular and the US initiated measures to alleviate them, as discussed below.

Because US ground and air combat forces based in South-West Asia, in principle the best deterrent and signal to the USSR, were politically unacceptable to potential host states, the primary American regional military presence was naval deployments in the Arabian Sea. The now continuous presence since December 1979 of two aircraft carrier battle groups was the most feasible and tangible way for the US to display increased concern about its regional interests and its commitment and resolve to defend them and to reassure friends. The US naval force was superior in fighting ability to its Soviet counterpart and the tactical (nuclear weapons-capable) air power from the aircraft carriers was thought to add to deterrence of Soviet and regional military threats to friendly Gulf states. US naval forces would play an important part in

the operations of a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, for example by protecting shipping against Soviet submarines and Backfire bombers. But because the American navy would not except in extremis send its aircraft carriers into the Persian Gulf for lack of manoeuvre room and warning time against air attack, the range of carrier-based fighter-interceptor and ground attack aircraft was restricted to the lower Gulf. Naval air support for American military operations in a conflict in the northern Gulf would depend on aerial refuelling or access to local airfields. It could not substitute for deployments by the US Air Force.

An average US naval presence in 1980 consisted of the two aircraft carriers with as many as 150 aircraft between them, five cruisers, four destroyers or frigates, several attack submarines, five or six logistic support ships and a repair ship. There were also a Marine Amphibious Unit of 1,800 men on four amphibious ships which began regular deployments from March 1980; the Middle East Force, enlarged from three to five ships in 1979; and patrols by P-3C anti-submarine warfare and reconnaissance aircraft.[142] The American presence was sustained by supplies coming from Subic Bay naval base which reached the ships on station in the northern Arabian Sea by way of Diego Garcia and Omani facilities to which the US had gained access. After the hostage crisis in Iran had ended, it was decided in 1980, only one aircraft carrier task group would deploy continuously, so that the other one taken from the Mediterranean or the western Pacific could spend more time there in contribution to America's formal security commitments. The US Navy continued to consider the possibility of "homeporting" an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean area (at Cockburn Sound) and refitting a retired aircraft carrier in order to reduce the strain on naval

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[142] For details see U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, pp. 411-414. Also note United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Foreign Relations, Perspectives On NATO's Southern Flank Committee Print, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, pp. 1-4.

operations there and globally.

The United States also enlarged its air operations in the Indian Ocean area. The US Air Force sent AWACS intermittently to Egypt, from where they exercised with the American navy in the Arabian Sea, and from October 1980, after the start of the Iran-Iraq war, American AWACS operated continuously in Saudi Arabia. From January 1980 B-52 bomber aircraft from the US base at Guam in the Pacific flew regularly over the Indian Ocean on reconnaissance and surveillance missions which served to demonstrate the great striking range of America's conventional and potentially nuclear "Strategic Projection Force". Tactical fighter aircraft from the US began to visit Egypt periodically for training and for exercises with the Egyptian air force. Besides gaining experience of conditions in the Middle East, their purpose was to accustom the region to the presence of American air power and to "establish land-based US air forces there, including the Persian Gulf."[143] Brown and the Department of Defence wanted "carefully and gradually to build up a presence" of US air, sea and, if at all possible, land forces in the Indian Ocean area because, as noted above,

> [t]he more presence there is consistent with political stability and the more indication there is that a very rapid additional large force could be introduced, the more the deterrent operates against the Soviet military actions and the more effect it has in terms of strengthening the political position.[144]

The closest immediate approximation to a larger American land-based presence was US military exercises in South-West Asia. Those such as "Bright Star", the first of a series of RDJTF exercises, conducted in Egypt in November 1980 by 1,400 soldiers and airmen, provided the link between the continuous US naval presence in the Indian Ocean and the Rapid Deployment

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[143] New York Times, June 13, 1980.

[144] Brown, "Case Study", p. "12".

Force in America. As the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff pointed out early in 1981,

> The Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf exercise program is being developed in conjunction with Presidential direction to enhance US military access, presence, and contingency response capabilities for the region. The program provides a visible display of US commitment and ability to protect its interests, familiarizes US forces with operational and environmental characteristics of the region, exercises the surge development and planning base, and establishes an initial basis for access to facilities for later exercises or operations. Actual deployment exercises to the Persian Gulf will allow evaluation of H[ost] N[ation] S[upport] for US forces; improve combined US/host nation deployment, reception, and redeployment planning; develop better strategic deployment and logistics support requirements; establish and exercise overflight/staging rights with en route nations; and enhance interoperability with regional forces.[145]

The Rapid Deployment Force: purpose, organization, weaknesses and planned improvements

Although the peacetime presence of its maritime forces signalled America's interest in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area, friends and enemies, according to the OJCS, would measure the depth of the United States' security commitment by its capacity to respond in a sustained way with resolve and efficacy against potential threats to its interests. That capacity lay in the Rapid Deployment Force.[146] The RDF

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[145] U.S. OJCS, United States Military Posture FY 1982 Supplement, p. 97.

[146] Except where otherwise noted, this and the next two paragraphs are taken from U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, pp. 189-192. On the RDF consult James Wootten, Rapid Deployment Forces Issue Brief Number IB 80027, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress Date Originated: 03/04/80, Date Updated: 03/23/81; Lt. General P.X. Kelly, "Progress in the RDJTF", Marine Corps Gazette 65 (June 1981), 38-44; Thomas A. Fabyanic, USAF, "Conceptual Planning and the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force", Armed Forces and Society 7 (Spring 1981), 343-365; United States, Congress, Congressional Budget Office, The Marine Corps in the 1980's: Prestocking Proposals, the Rapid Deployment Force, and Other Issues Budget Issue Paper for Fiscal Year 1981 (May 1980); ---, U.S. Ground Forces, pp. 45-52, 55-62, 71, 73, 81-87;

consisted of a four-service reservoir of forces suitable for use in a broad range of non-NATO contingencies. But from August 1980 its exclusive area of concern was South-West Asia, where its primary mission was to deter further Soviet aggression either as a self-contained force or in concert with regional countries and perhaps allied states too. In order to meet the fundamental objective of confronting an aggressor with the risk of gaining little at a high cost for his venture, the RDF had to possess the capability and organization for moving to South-West Asia quickly and with minimal warning.

In a Soviet or regional contingency a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force would be tailored for the mission at hand from forces in the RDF reservoir. In early 1981 the maximum potential size of the RDF was three Army divisions (the 82nd Airborne, the 101st Air Assault and the 24th Mechanized) and two brigades; at least five Air Force fighter wings, two squadrons of B-52s and support squadrons; one Marine Amphibious Force and one Marine Amphibious Brigade; and three aircraft carrier battle groups, one surface action group, five squadrons of P-3Cs, six amphibious ships and seven prepositioning ships at Diego Garcia.[147] A relatively

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United States, Congress, Congressional Record - Senate, 126, pt. 2 (June 27, 1980), S8702-S8705; Jeffrey Record, The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis, February 1981); ---, "The RDF: Is the Pentagon Kidding?", The Washington Quarterly 4 (Summer 1981), 41-51; E. Asa Bates, "The Rapid Deployment Force - Fact or Fiction?", Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies 126 (June 1981), 23-33; Victor H. Krulak, "The Rapid Deployment Force: Criteria and Imperatives", Strategic Review 8 (Spring 1980), 39-44; Johnson, The Military as an Instrument, pp. 66-110. Anthony Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), compares "U.S. and Soviet Power Projection Capabilities in the Gulf", pp. 803-872.

[147] From statement by General Bernard W. Rogers, USA, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. European Command, in United States, Congress, House, Committee On Armed Services, Military Posture And H.R. 2614 And H.R. 2970 (H.R. 3519), Hearings, pt. 1, 97th Cong.,

small(er) RDJTF was thought to be adequate in a number of potential regional contingencies which near-term US planning had considered. America created no additional combat forces upon establishing the RDF; the forces already existed, as did some limited planning for their use in non-NATO contingencies. The forces in the RDF reservoir were assigned ordinarily to unified, specified or US-based commands. However, as a practical matter, the Department of Defence had assigned a core reservoir of forces the RDF role as one of its primary missions. Plans called for the RDF to "build" continuously for the next several years, adding both Army and Marine divisions with an appropriate complement of air and naval forces. The additional forces would come from those currently oriented towards NATO.

Major structural and organizational changes had been made in order to improve the quality of America's military planning and the effectiveness of its forces, particularly in joint-service operations. The Headquarters (HQ) RDF at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida had become operational on March 1, 1980. Its purposes were to consolidate in one organization the responsibility for developing operational planning for contingencies; to maintain sufficient capabilities and readiness for contingencies; to train and to exercise and improve capabilities; and to advocate change in procedures, capabilities and force structure as needed. During peacetime HQ RDF was subordinate to the Readiness Command and did not control operational forces. But upon deploying abroad, a command element from HQ RDJTF would control operational forces assigned to the RDJTF for the specific conflict. The commander of the RDJTF would take his orders from the European Command or the Pacific Command or report directly to the National Command Authority through the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The choice of the command relationship would depend upon the nature and location of the contingency.

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1st sess., 1981, p. 666; Record, The Rapid Deployment Force, p. 54.

Besides the presence of aircraft carrier battle groups and intermittently a Marine Amphibious Unit in the Indian Ocean and the establishment of a Headquarters, a credible capability to fight in South-West Asia required an intelligence capability for early warning of an attack and a command, control, communications and intelligence capacity for all subsequent phases of RDJTF operations; ships and aircraft for movement to and within the South-West Asian theatre; and secure air and sea lines of communication along which to deploy and supply an RDJTF. Also necessary were overflight rights and access to and improvement of en route staging facilities and ports and airfields in South-West Asia; prepositioning of equipment and supplies at regional facilities and on ships at Diego Garcia; and combat support units and combat service support units for providing fuel and water, medical care and land transport.

Those requirements specified the main material weaknesses of the RDF. The credibility of US strategic policy for South-West Asia and its actual success whether against a Soviet attack or in other circumstances were predicated, as has been pointed out, upon the speedy movement of US forces, their ready access to facilities and sustained logistic support. But, the OJCS noted, "[s]hortfalls and limitations in a number of areas constrain US ability to react swiftly and adequately to Southwest Asia contingencies."[148] The credibility of American strategic policy at the operational level was compromised heavily by the unreadiness in one way or another of many of the units composing the RDF, by too few ships and aircraft to carry more than a very small RDJTF to the Persian Gulf with celerity and, most acutely in early 1980, by the absence of regional facilities available for providing military and logistic support, save for Diego Garcia, which could only support the operations of an aircraft carrier task group for 30 days. The most formidable obstacle to an RDJTF

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[148] U.S. OJCS, United States Military Posture FY 1982 Supplement, p. 56.

was distance. From America, where most of the RDF was based, the Persian Gulf was over 7,000 miles by air, more than 8,000 miles by sea by way of the Suez Canal and 12,000 miles by sea around Africa.

Because regional politics excluded basing US forces in South-West Asia, they would have to be carried to the region by aircraft and ships. Here the Carter administration faced the first major weakness: a very limited capability for moving large amounts of men, kit and supplies over long distances. "US airlift and sealift capabilities are insufficient for the rapid deployment of large forces to remote areas", acknowledged the OJCS; that was a "critical deficiency, for meeting and deterring threats require an ability to emplace forces before a crisis escalates into conflict."[149] (Italics added.) Movement by air was the fastest way to reach the Gulf but the transport aircraft and supporting tanker aircraft for delivering quickly several brigades of light infantry would then be needed for bringing the support units and supplies for sustaining that initial force. Thus the immediate deployment by air of additional fighting forces, much less mechanized or armoured units, was not possible. The introduction of reinforcements would be delayed by "up to four to six weeks" because they would have to come by sea, and that was "too long a delay in several plausible scenarios",[150] Brown thought. Besides insufficient aircraft to reinforce in a timely way its initial forces in the Gulf, the US did not have enough tactical transport aircraft available for use within South-West Asia. As for America's shipping resources, they were not well organized for quick availability; some ships were quite old and there were not enough vessels for "fast" movement to the Persian Gulf.

The next major operational weakness of the RDF was its

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[149] Ibid., pp. 43-46.

[150] U.S. Senate, First Concurrent FY 1981, p. 86.

relative unreadiness. The Marines and the 82nd Airborne division were rated for the most part ready for combat. In contrast "the 101st Airborne and the 24th Infantry (divisions were) rated not combat ready because of deficiencies in manpower, training and logistics."[151] All the RDF-designated divisions lacked suitable doctrine, tactics, training, detailed planning, weapons, equipment and logistic support for combat in mountains or desert against a more heavily armed enemy or for "lower intensity" conflict. The readiness and sustainability of an RDJTF were impaired not only by deficiencies in kit - notably in command, control and communications, all the equipment for which would have to be brought into South-West Asia - and insufficient maintenance, shortages of spare parts and reserves of munitions but above all by shortages in critical categories of skilled and experienced personnel in all the armed services. America's reserve forces, whose role was to give combat support for the active divisions, were thought to be still too small, as well as unprepared, to support satisfactorily a mobilization, even though President Carter had authorized an increase in their number from 50,000 to 100,000 men. A further limit on the readiness of the RDF, one causing friction among the armed services and delay in a cirsis, was that it lacked a unified command. It was beset by rivalry between the Marines (HQ RDF) and the Army (Readiness Command) for its overall control; and in South-West Asia the operations of an RDJTF would be split between the European Command and the Pacific Command. Further, there were difficulties in collaboration among the US armed services because each had its own outlook, requirements and procedures.

The third serious operational problem faced by the RDF pertained to overflight rights, access to transit facilities and the availability within South-West Asia of facilities crucial for meeting its heavy logistic demands in combat and

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[151] New York Times, September 26, 1980.

for sustaining the peacetime presence of the US Navy. America did not possess any formal rights of access in early 1980. Only Diego Garcia was readily available and even in its case, the US had to reach agreement with Britain permitting an expansion of facilities for the support in contingencies of an RDJTF and for more intensive peacetime uses. As noted earlier, cooperation from friendly states, especially those in the Persian Gulf, by way of granting America access to their facilities in a crisis was uncertain. And there was no possibility that with the exception of Oman, they would conclude an agreement with the US giving it access. Nor in early 1980 did America have prepositioned on ships in the Indian Ocean equipment and supplies which could quickly move to an area of conflict and "link up" with the first contingents of an RDJTF. The tactical movement of an RDJTF in South-West Asia would be hindered by inadequate roads, railways, airfields and ports and by extremes of climate and terrain and a dearth of water.

In 1980 the Carter administration undertook studies, sought Congressional funding and initiated measures for improving the capability of the RDF across its entire range of potential operations. Many steps were taken to increase readiness but the "principal goals" were "to improve strategic mobility and to provide adequate prepositioning; and to provide support and resupply to sustain forces in Southwest Asia."[152] Closely tied to those goals was a third one: to gain access to military facilities en route to and in South-West Asia. The United States' long-term mobility objective was to possess transportation ships and aircraft sufficient to support simultaneous full-scale deployments to Europe and the Persian Gulf in response to Soviet attacks in those places. As "rapid response is the key to successful employment of the RDF in most scenarios", Brown and the Department of Defence expected "a two- or even three-fold

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[152] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 192.

reduction in the time required for a ground force build-up, and a correspondingly substantial reduction in closure time for tactical (attack and fighter) aircraft units."[153] By 1986 the Americans wanted to be able to "deploy RDF ground forces to Southwest Asia at a steady rate (with essential support)" and also "several tactical fighter wings and B-52Hs (together with sustaining supplies and follow-on support) within one month, assuming no mobility assets were required for a simultaneous NATO contingency."[154]

The immediate initiatives the US undertook, in fact had begun in the late 1970s, in order to improve its current airlift resources[155] consisted of modifying its long-range C-5 and C-141 cargo aircraft so that in the case of the former, their service life would be extended from 7,000 hours to 30,000 hours and that in the case of the latter, they could carry a 30 per cent larger load and be refuelled aerially. The American government sought to enlarge the stock of civilian aircraft available in reserve for carrying cargo over long distances. The only proposed measure for expanding the inventory and capability of America's inadequate airlift fleet was to build the C-X cargo aircraft. Its purpose would be to transport over intercontinental distances very large and bulky equipment such as tanks, which only the C-5 could carry. Unlike the C-5 it would be able to use small and austere airfields. At least 100 C-Xs had been planned for procurement but by the end of the Carter administration's time in office, the design of that new aircraft had not been decided upon or alternatives to it canvassed. The Department of Defence accelerated its purchase of the KC-10 tanker-cargo aircraft and deliberated about renovating its ageing KC-135 tankers.

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[153] U.S. Senate, First Concurrent FY 1981, p. 88.

[154] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 198.

[155] For details, see Ibid., pp. 200-203; U.S. OJCS, United States Military Posture FY 1982 Supplement, pp. 92-93.

Although airlift was critical for quick deployment of the initial light forces of an RDJTF, shipping would carry a large fraction of the troops and most of the kit and supplies needed for a relatively protracted conflict in the Persian Gulf region.[156] Thus most of America's planned improvements in the availability and speed of response of its strategic mobility forces concentrated on the prepositioning ships and fast sealift ships. The main initiative for fast(er) sealift was the Navy's intended acquisition and conversion for roll-on\roll-off operations of eight high-speed (33 knots an hour) SL-7 container ships. Those ships would quicken the reaction to a conflict by America's heavier, mechanized forces so that the dangerous gap between the arrival of the initial forces and the arrival of their reinforcements would be much reduced. The SL-7 programme would provide "the capability to deliver a mechanized division plus some non-divisional support and initial supplies to the Persian Gulf in 20 to 26 days...."[157] The Carter administration resolved to enhance the readiness and availability of the civilian cargo ships to which it had access.

Prepositioning equipment and supplies on ships in the Indian Ocean, at Diego Garcia, was a most important measure: by putting logistic support within a week's sailing from South-West Asia and thereby cutting out the longer time for its movement by sea from the US, maritime prepositioning would enable air transport to concentrate mainly on carrying more troops for initial operations. Those ships would arrive at a port and the US forces arriving by air would take their equipment from them in the "marrying-up" process. (But, as mentioned above, the American forces depended on ready access to friendly ports and airfields; they could not fight their way in.) The kit and supplies they carried would suffice for

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[156] See U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, pp. 203-206; U.S. OJCS, United States Military Posture FY 1982 Supplement, pp. 93-94.

[157] U.S. Defense, Annual Report FY 1982, p. 203.

support until further materiel could come by sea. In July 1980 seven Near-Term Prepositioning Ships were stationed at Diego Garcia. They provided equipment, supplies, fuel and water for a 12,000-man Marine Amphibious Brigade and some support for several Air Force squadrons and for Army units. As their name indicated, the Near-Term Prepositioning Ships were an interim step. Over a longer time, incrementally by 1987, the Department of Defence planned to place at Diego Garcia aboard about 15 new Maritime Prepositioning Ships equipment and 30 days of supplies for three Marine brigades. In an emergency the Marines and some equipment not suitable for prepositioning would be airlifted to South-West Aisa by ten days or less, depending, as always, upon warning time.[158]

Logistic facilities: the "network concept" and negotiations for access

The United States needed logistic facilities as a foundation for its military operations in South-West Asia, especially for prompt action at the start of a conflict.[159] Gaining access to military facilities on the way to and in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area as expeditiously as possible was essential in order for the US to provide fuller and more efficient logistic support for the bigger demands imposed by its expanded and continuous naval presence, by its forces on exercises, training or intermittent deployments and by the deployment and operation in a contingency of an RDJTF. Wider

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[158] Ibid., p. 206.

[159] The rationale for increasing America's access to military facilities in South-West Asia was expounded by Komer in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, pp. 64-66; David Newsom, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in 1980, in United States, Congress, Senate, Committee On Foreign Relations, U.S. Security Interests And Policies In Southwest Asia, Hearings Before The (Committee and Its) Subcommittee On Near Eastern And South Asian Affairs, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980, pp. 76-78; Matthew Nimetz, Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, "Somalia and the U.S. Security Framework", Statement before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the House Appropriations Committee on September 16, 1980, in DoSB 80 (December 1980), 22-26.

access to facilities would benefit reconnaissance and surveillance missions and logistic supply flights and it would better enable ships to remain on station longer by providing for their refuelling, replenishment, maintenance and limited repair and for the rotation and "liberty" of their crews. Greater access would help the timely introduction of American forces into South-West Asia in an emergency by providing en route transit, overflight, rear area staging and resupply of forces; it would also contribute to sea control operations. By improving America's capacity to respond quickly to a contingency, a "network" of regional logistic support facilities would help to deter Soviet and regional military pressure upon friendly states. Along with economic and security assistance, enhancing regional facilities was part of the United States' general programme within the "cooperative security framework" for helping friendly countries to increase their ability for self-defence.

America did not seek permission to build its "own" large and permanent bases in the Indian Ocean area like Subic Bay in the Philippines because they would create political problems for the "host" state. As noted above, they would (be seen to) aggravate internal and regional tensions, infringe upon the "host's" sovereignty and independence and possibly implicate it in a super-power confrontation. (Indeed for these reasons, such bases were unacceptable in the first place.) Instead the US wanted to gain access to the extant facilities in South-West Asian states and improve the capacity of available ports and airfields to store fuel, supplies and ammunition and to sustain the movement of large numbers of men and amounts of equipment. Improvements would be made, for example, in warehousing, communications and navigational facilities and in the supply of water, electricity and billets for personnel. America sought to come to agreement with prospective "host" states for the freest use of their facilities possible on a routine or contingency basis. In normal conditions, only a small US "caretaker" staff would be stationed at a facility.

"Using other countries' airfields and ports", the US goverment considered, "would be faster and cheaper, require fewer Americans, be less risky politically and be more flexible in military deployment since they could be used occasionally or infrequently, according to need."[160] But there were "drawbacks" to such use: the facilities would be "less under United States control, more subject to local political restrictions and less capable of serving the United States fleet, aircraft and ground forces since the logistic support provided would be much lighter than that of permanent American bases."[161]

The flexibility provided by the sought facilities was regarded to be more important than their drawbacks. America intended to establish a "network" of available facilities in the Indian Ocean area so that it could expand its political, military operational and logistic "flexibility and redundancy". More rather than fewer and bigger facilities would better assure an ability to support a wide range of operations by varying levels of US forces, spread the burden of support over several states and minimize it in any one of them. The political exposure of the "host" state and of the US itself would thereby be reduced. More practically still, a "network" of facilities would enable America to retain a degree of flexibility of action and carry on with its naval presence and other operations if one state denied it access to its ports and airfields or did so in a particular contingency - or if, during a conflict with the USSR, facilities used by the US in one country were attacked and destroyed. In "worst cases" the "bottleneck" created by the movement of a large volume of forces and materiel in a short time would be reduced. Negotiating access to facilities in South-West Asia was important, finally, because if a crisis did occur, there probably would not be sufficient time or opportunity to obtain

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[160] New York Times, January 20, 1980.

[161] Idem. Note also New York Times, January 23, 1980.

them; the US would have to rely on what it had already arranged for.

The "network" concept of (politically available) facilities embraced Oman, Somalia, Egypt, Kenya and Diego Garcia, the "single most important facility for logistics and communications support of the Naval Task Forces now deployed in the Arabian Sea."[162] In January 1980 the Joint Chiefs of Staff

> completed a study examining possible future uses of Diego Garcia. The study recommended that additional capabilities be developed involving the use of the 'entire island' area. In early 1980 the Pentagon stated that facilities on Diego Garcia would be expanded not only 'to support an increased U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean region in both peacetime and in a regional contingency situation', but also 'to increase logistic surge support for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force in a contingency role'.[163]

The logistic facilities planned by the Nixon administration in 1974 for supporting operations for 30 days by one aircraft carrier task group were only just being completed. They were inadequate to sustain the continuous presence of two aircraft carrier task groups and intermittent deployments by a Marine Amphibious Unit as well as movements in an emergency by units of an RDJTF. Now the Department of Defence

> wanted to develop Diego Garcia's 'ability to support large-scale air, ground and sea forces deploying through the Indian Ocean to the Middle East/Persian Gulf region'. In addition, Diego Garcia provided the anchorage for the Near-Term Pre-positional (sic) Ship Force, and plans to deploy the B-52 bombers of the Strategic Projection Force to the Gulf on conventional interdiction missions necessitated regional staging and support facilities at a relatively remote location so that the forward bases could be freed for tactical air operations. ... Also Diego Garcia was seen as a vital link for strategic

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[162] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 413.

[163] Amitav Acharya, U.S. Military Strategy In The Gulf (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 99-101.

> airlift operations into the Gulf from the Pacific side: as an air-refuelling, staging, or transfer point.[164]

Having consulted with Britain, which agreed in principle that it could expand the atoll's facilities, the US began or prepared for projects such as enlarging the anchorage, expanding and reinforcing the airstrip, adding a new pier, increasing the fuel storage capacity, improving communications, repair, ammunition storage and other facilities and constructing more housing.

Because of its small size and distance, 3,000 miles, from the northern Persian Gulf, Diego Garcia could complement but not substitute for other, closer facilities. Going ahead with negotiations initiated in December 1979, the United States signed an agreement with Oman on June 4, 1980 for use of airfields at Seeb, Masirah island, Khasab and Thumrayt and ports at Mutrah and Salalah; with Kenya on June 26, 1980 for use of airfields at Nairobi and Nanyuki and the port of Mombasa; and with Somalia on August 22, 1980 for use of the port and airfield at Berbera and at Mogadishu. Although not made public each agreement stipulated that

> United States to enjoy standard access and status of forces arrangements.
>
> No U.S. security commitments to host country or formal obligation to sell weapons, although security assistance is implied.
>
> United States to be granted discretionary use rights with respect to facilities in question, although United States must 'consult' with host government on major exercises and deployments.
>
> Host government to retain sovereign rights over all facilities and ownership of all real property.
>
> United States to pay for services rendered by host government, plus proportionate share of facility maintenance.

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[164] Ibid., p. 99.

United States to be allowed to upgrade facilities at its own expense.

Agreements to remain in force for ten years.[165]

The most difficult agreement to negotiate, and for which to gain approval from the US Congress, was that with Somalia.[166] America wanted to obtain access to Somali facilities, particularly Berbera, which was near the Bab al-Mandab and helped to offset Soviet facilities in South Yemen and Ethiopia, in order to support sea control and P3-C operations, resupply, refuelling, emergency repairs and transits by the US Air Force. But the US wanted equally to avoid entanglement in Somalia's attempts to achieve its primary foreign policy goal: to "recover" territory inhabited by ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, eastern Kenya and Djibouti. In the negotiations the Somalis initially sought $1,000 million in economic aid and a further $1,000 million in military aid, US diplomatic support for their claim to Ogaden and an explicit US guarantee to come to their help in the event of a Soviet-supported Ethiopian attack against Somalia. The United States rejected Somalia's irridentist claims and opposed the presence of Somali troops in Ogaden. It agreed to give Somalia $40 million in military sales credits over two years and about $60 million in economic aid over two years. But it would do so only after the Somalis gave assurance that they would remove their troops from

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[165] Record, The Rapid Deployment Force, pp. 58-60.

[166] Background is provided by Raymond W. Copson, Brenda M. Branaman, The Horn Of Africa And The United States Issue Brief Number IB 78019, Congressional Research Service, The Library Of Congress Date Originated: 03/10/78, Date Updated: 04/10/81; United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, Reprogramming Of Military Aid To Somalia, Hearing Before The Subcommittee On Africa, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 1980; Nimetz, "Somalia Framework"; United States, Congress, House, Committee On Foreign Affairs, U.S. Security Interests In The Persian Gulf, Report Of A Staff Study Mission To The Persian Gulf, Middle East, And The Horn Of Africa, October 21-November 13, 1980, Committee Print, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 1981, pp. 49-53.

Ethiopian territory and keep them out and that they would use "defensive" weapons obtained from the US only for protection of Somalia's internationally recognised frontiers. Otherwise further US aid would not be forthcoming. In the view of the Executive branch, the negotiations had secured access to Berbera and Mogadishu while minimizing the chance of further conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia or Kenya and of unwanted American entanglement in that conflict. Somalia accepted the terms of the negotiations because it wanted to establish as conspicuous an association with America as possible in order to balance Ethiopia and its Soviet patron and because, although the initial amount of promised American aid was small, probably it would be able to obtain more later.

The American-Somali agreement was opposed in Congress by the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It had approved the US agreements with Kenya and Oman but it did not consider the contribution of the Somali facilities to be "essential to the achievement of United States military objectives."[167] American aid to Somalia might encourage new aggression by it, exacerbate the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia - indeed there was fighting in the Ogaden as the US-Somali agreement was signed - and it could increase the danger of a more direct American involvement. Important African states and the Organization of African Unity, which opposed the alteration of international boundaries by force, would be antagonized. The US would set back its relations with Ethiopia even further and its agreement with Somalia might cause the USSR to expand its military presence in Ethiopia, adding to the danger of an escalation of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict to the super-power level.[168] Congress approved the agreement with Somalia only

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[167] This was the view of Stephen Solarz, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee On Africa, expressed in New York Times, July 6, 1980.

[168] See International Herald Tribune, August 29, 1980; New York Times, August 29, 1980.

after the Carter administration gave verified assurance in January 1981 that all Somali soldiers had left Ogaden.

Under its agreement with the US by which it would receive $50 million in economic aid and $27 million in military assistance over two years, Kenya confirmed access to its air and port facilities which US forces - aircraft carrier battle groups and P-3Cs - had long been using.[169] Those facilities were valuable for providing refuelling and resupply, limited repair and maintenance and sea control in a conflict. Mombasa was a "liberty" port for American sailors and Nairobi airport was a staging point for logistic supply flights to Diego Garcia. The major improvement to facilities intended by America was the dredging of Mombasa harbour so that US aircraft carriers could enter it.

The Kenyan government signed the agreement with two reservations. First, the US was improving relations with the Somali enemy and intended to give it arms which it might use to attack Kenya. The political opposition in Kenya could exploit that possibility and weaken the government's authority. The Kenyan army might claim that it was too small now to defend the country and put dangerous pressure on the government if it did not obtain more arms and equipment. Second, although its relations with America were friendly, the Kenyan government led by Daniel Arap Moi wanted to preserve its non-aligned status, keep the great powers out of east Africa and maintain domestic stability and itself in power. Thus US military activities had to be kept limited; there could be no permanent, conspicuous or large American presence. Indicative of Nairobi's caution and intention to avoid too close and visible an association with the US was its refusal in summer 1980 to allow the Marine Amphibious Unit in the Indian Ocean to stage a landing exercise on the Kenyan coast.

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[169] For background and details, see U.S. House, U.S. Security Interests in Gulf, pp. 4, 43-46.

Oman's friendly relations with the US, its international outlook and view of the USSR similar to America's, its proximity to the Persian Gulf and a small strip of its territory, Ras Musandum, forming the southern side of the Strait of Hormuz made it a valuable state from which to gain access to facilities. Omani facilities helped to resupply aircraft carrier task groups in the Arabian Sea and in a major conflict they would provide forward staging and prepositioned war materiel for RDJTF ground and air forces and tactical operational support for the US Air Force; they would enable the US to keep the Strait of Hormuz open against mining or attack. Oman could serve as a place for RDF exercises in peacetime. The US-Omani agreement of June 4, 1980 provided for

> United States access to Omani military bases in circumstances where both countries would benefit from this use. The United States clearly could use Omani bases to respond to a Soviet attack on the region. It is not certain, however, whether the United States would be able to use Omani facilities to intervene in an intra-Arab conflict were American interests threatened.[170]

Oman's history, geography and political outlook enabled it to act with some independence from other Arab states and permit American access to its facilities as well as support the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. But because hostile opinion within and outside Oman towards the US role in the "peace process" was still an important consideration, the size of an American military presence had to be kept small and its visibility low. Oman perceived the advantage of the agreement with America to be that it was

> tantamount to a U.S. commitment to its security. ... Oman is prepared to defend itself with U.S. military assistance should it be attacked by a state in the region such as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. However, in the event of a Soviet attack on Oman or clear Soviet involvement in a People's Democratic Republic of

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[170] Ibid., p. 16.

> Yemen attack, Oman would expect direct United States military intervention and assistance.[171]

The provision to Oman of $50 million of military sales credits over two years and the prospect of more later on would help it to cope with the potential military threat from the PDRY and also to deal with a possible renewal of insurgency in Dhofar province. The creation of an American-Omani economic commission provided for by the agreement was meant to help "fund and promote economic development in Oman". Generally Sultan Qaboos, the ruler of Oman, believed that the more America had an interest in his country, specifically in the form of available military facilities, the more likely it would be to give him the protection needed in a crisis. Discreetly providing the US with facilities and thereby strengthening its regional presence would help to deter South Yemen and check the expansion of Soviet influence in South-West Asia. As long as it was kept in the background, the United States would be a source of support and reassurance and the benefits of association with it would outweigh the liabilities of consorting with a super-power and the abettor of Israel.

Egypt offered America access to military facilities on an informal basis within the general context of the two sides' close collaboration in concluding the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, their similar views about the USSR's involvement in the Middle East, America's interest in Egypt as a source of regional moderation and stability and Egypt's interest in America as a source of sizable economic and military aid.[172] Egypt's stability was of strategic importance particularly for ensuring uninterrupted use of the Suez Canal, even more beneficial to the American navy from early 1981. Then the newly deepened waterway could accommodate transits by aircraft

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[171] Ibid., p. 17.

[172] Ibid., pp. 63-70.

carriers, allowing them to avoid the long journey around Africa to the Indian Ocean. The US viewed Egypt's cooperation as valuable for overflying rights, for providing a place for American forces to train and exercise in Middle Eastern conditions and for permitting access to facilities at Cairo West air base, Qena airfield in southern Egypt and at Ras Banas. The latter was a small and isolated facility on the southern part of Egypt's Red Sea coast. The Carter administration envisioned a much improved Ras Banas as a rear staging facility for B-52s on long-range missions and for an RDJTF, for which it would provide prepositioned war materiel. The Egyptians wanted to help the US to "project" better its military power in order that it could defend on request an Arab or Muslim country against Soviet or Iranian attack and also redress the imbalance of regional power favouring the USSR. But because of their colonial past and recent experience with the Soviet Union, they were willing to give America access to their facilities only on a temporary basis and in a way not seen to infringe upon their independence. Occasional exercises by US forces such as "Bright Star" were acceptable. In expectation of dangerous political consequences at home and worsening further its relations with the Arab world, Egypt would not make facilities on the Sinai peninsula available to America on any basis. It required that a US presence be small and inconspicuous as well as temporary. All arrangements for US access to facilities had to be informal. This last stipulation clashed with the US Congress's requirement that Egypt had to sign a formal agreement giving America virtual guaranteed access to selected facilities before a substantial amount of money could be authorized for their development. This impasse was not resolved before the Carter administration left office.

As the United States' arrangements with Egypt showed, its access to friendly states' facilities was subject to serious political restriction. The "host" countries retained full sovereignty over their facilities and depending on internal

and regional politics, all of them except Somalia would make their facilities available to America only on a discretionary, case-by-case basis. Because the US did not enjoy guaranteed access, it had to risk spending much of a thousand million dollars on improving facilities which might be denied it when needed. Operationally the utility of the South-West Asian facilities was limited by their distance from the Persian Gulf. Except for Oman they were too far away to give tactical support and even Oman was appropriate mainly for operations in the "lower" Gulf. Although serving important purposes in peacetime, the facilities in Oman, Egypt, Somalia and Kenya would be valuable to America in a contingency primarily in combination with facilities within the Persian Gulf.

Facilities within the Persian Gulf were, if and when available, the centre of the US logistic "network": they were essential to provide sustained support in front-line military operations against a Soviet or regional attack. But despite the US government's anxiety that it might not be able to arrange access to Gulf facilities as a crisis loomed, political considerations - America's support for Israel, its character as a large, external "imperial" power which might resort to unilateral intervention in order to "protect" access to oil, its rivalry with the USSR and also regional opposition to foreign bases in the Gulf and the danger of provoking more internal unrest - prevented friendly Gulf states from granting peacetime access to their facilities, except for the Middle East Force at Manama. Among the facilities in which the US was interested were King Khalid Military City, Dhahran air base and Jubayl naval port in Saudi Arabia and Jabal Ali port in Dubai. The Saudi bases were being built to a high standard (by US Army engineers) and with a much larger capacity than Saudi forces alone required. They were abundantly stocked with US weapons, equipment and related necessities such as spare parts. Large numbers of Americans were in Saudi Arabia in order to help support Saudi military activities and US AWACS were deployed there from October 1980. But although the

Saudis and the Americans probably had started to discuss privately the potential emergency role of the bases, the Saudis' permission for US access would depend on the nature and circumstances of a crisis and, above all, their judgement about the balance of risk and advantage in cooperating with America. In the meantime Saudi Arabia and perhaps other

> Gulf states which do not want a U.S. military presence or facility access agreement may be willing ... to consider participation in quiet forms of U.S. military cooperation such as strategic dialog (sic), pre-positioning of U.S. military equipment, familiarization of the United States with local assets and capabilities, and communications, navigational and air defense systems helpful ... in a time of conflict.[173]

The most important Persian Gulf bases to which the US would want access in a "worst case" contingency were in Iran. Their availability if the USSR attacked Iran depended on whether Iran decided to use the American "devil" to fight the Soviet one or to resist by itself. Turkish bases quite valuable for interdicting Soviet movements in Iran would be available to the US only in a response by NATO to an attack upon Turkey. Some American officials saw advantages in gaining access to facilities in Pakistan, for example at Karachi. But the possibility of American access there soon was precluded by many political factors such as Pakistan's difficult relations with its neighbours and the USSR, its Islamic identity, the likely internal opposition to a US military presence and the inconclusive nature of its discussions with America after the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan about US security and economic assitance to it (see Chapter Seven). Djibouti, near the Bab al-Mandab, was visited by ships of the Middle East Force and by P-3Cs but, because of that small state's position between Ethiopia and Somalia and because of French influence, it was off limits to additional American military activity in peacetime. Djibouti would be useful in a conflict for helping to prevent the USSR

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[173] Ibid., p. 4.

from "choking" the flow of shipping through the Bab al-Mandab if the Djiboutans made it available and if the French employed their own force presence. In some circumstances France might allow the US to use its naval facilities at Reunion island. Simonstown naval base in South Africa was completing an expansion and modernization programme which would enable it to give a wide range of support to US ships deploying to the Indian Ocean or operating there but the US Navy had not visited it since 1967 because of South Africa's apartheid policy. America's resort to Simonstown in a conflict would incur strong disapproval throughout the Third World yet that might be considered an acceptable short-term "collateral" cost. In order to alleviate the strain put on naval task groups by protracted deployment in the Arabian Sea, the Americans thought about "homeporting" an aircraft carrier task group at Cockburn Sound naval facility south of Perth in Western Australia. During 1980 the US negotiated with Australia for landing rights for unarmed B-52s in order to ease their arduous reconnaissance flights over the Indian Ocean.

While it negotiated for access to military facilities in South-West Asia, the American government sought overflying and landing rights for US forces moving to it. The Carter administration approached for overflight rights Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Israelis, who offered use of their bases to the US,[174] and it wanted to obtain those rights from Spain and Portugal. Lajes airfield in the Portuguese Azores was a vital refuelling stop for American aircraft en route to South-West Asia. The US intended to improve the facilities at Lajes in order that they could service a larger volume of American deployments in the event of a conflict. Obtaining extra support in contingencies for aerial movements by an RDJTF was

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[174] The United States did not seek access to Israeli bases as part of its "network" concept but it assumed that they would be available in emergencies. See Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West, pp. 134-137.

why the Americans wanted access to air facilities in Liberia. Potential US use of the bases of Portugal, Spain, other Western European states and Morocco depended on those countries' assessment of the implications for them of the crisis to which America would be responding. The very restricted access afforded to US supply flights to Israel during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war was a reminder. Some American movements to South-West Asia would come from across the Pacific by way of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Guam, the Philippines, Thailand and perhaps Singapore. Permission for overflying, transit or both would be required because authorization was not covered by the terms of their respective security treaty or other ties with America. As in Europe, authorization depended on each state's interest and judgement.

## Elaboration of Policy, 1980

In elaborating its strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area America recognised that the regional states themselves were the principal source of their security; they remained the first and most important line of political and military resistance against the USSR, however precarious and inadequate they would be in extreme circumstances. The US had to accept the political and physical distance imposed on its force presence in South-West Asia by friends whose security policies gave priority to regional politics over strengthening the military balance against the Soviet Union.

Deterring a Soviet attack against Iran was the foremost objective of US policy because "containing" the USSR had become the overriding policy imperative after its intervention in Afghanistan. Deterrence was more important than preparing to deal with dangers from within the Persian Gulf, even though a Soviet attack was an improbable "worst case". Maximizing deterrence in light of weak regional political support and available American forces' inability to defend against major Soviet aggression required the US to depend heavily on the declaratory and psychological aspect of deterrence. It sought

to heighten the Soviets' sense of unacceptably high risk if they attacked Iran by playing on their small propensity to take risks for offensive purposes. The Americans emphasized the vital character of their interests in the Gulf and their resolve to defend them with the armed forces: if necessary they would resort to rapid pre-emptive movement to critical positions by a small ground force which might be a "trip-wire" to use of tactical nuclear weapons or to spreading a conflict to other regions.

At least until a stronger conventional capability was acquired, the United States' strategic policy seemed to impose more risk on itself than on the Soviets, even though that might be justified by its interests and defensive posture. The greatest risk was the dubious credibility of US policy. If Brown's observation was correct that America's vital interest in the Persian Gulf was not worth resort to tactical nuclear weapons, then US deterrence would be undermined. Pre-emption would present much risk too, because the pressure to cover quickly the long distance from the US might force America into rash and possibly destabilizing unilateral action and discourage cooperation by regional friends and by allies critical for coalition defence. Spreading a conflict to other regions would add formidable complexity to its management and by no means assure its successful resolution. At bottom US deterrence in 1980 rested on a Soviet attack being more unikely than the American strategic policy was incredible. The United States' weak capacity for combat in South-West Asia tended to vitiate its regional military presence's political balancing of the Soviet armed forces.

America's strategic policy concluded that intervention within a friendly state when US interests were endangered would be politically unacceptable and counter-productive and militarily inefficacious. And if a threatened regime did need and ask for help, discreet indirect assistance from outside, not necessarily from the US, would be most appropriate. The

Americans resolved to be better prepared in case their intervention might be requested. At the regional level the US sought to provide tacit, reassuring back-up deterrence from the background on behalf of friends. It hoped that its security assistance would enable their forces to be the "preferred effective alternative to direct commitment of US forces". But if in a crisis America's help were sought, it would respond with indirect means or, if required, with combat forces, preferably as part of a multilateral political and military response. The United States' forces available for reinforcing friends in a likelier, relatively moderate contingency could not in 1980 meet the extreme case of a large Iraqi attack. But the risk of failure was acceptably low because that attack was improbable.

Display, deterrence and intervention were the principal elements of the United States' policy which at its fullest potential extent could involve tactical nuclear warfare against the USSR in Iranian mountains, conventional defence against its attacking forces in Khuzistan or expanding a conflict to other regions; or armoured warfare against Iraq in the desert or intervention in friendly states. That policy was incomplete in many ways when the Carter administration left office in January 1981. It remained for the Reagan government to decide on specific strategic policy, to carry on with operational planning and devising concepts of operations and to prepare in all respects the Rapid Deployment Force.

This chapter has emphasized the important political aspect of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area. The efficacy of that policy depended at bottom on the response to it by the Soviet Union and the littoral states and it is that response which is the subject of the next chapter.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## RESPONSES TO POLICY

The efficacy of the contribution in 1979-1980 of America's strategic policy to its security policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area depended to a quite important extent upon the responses of the principal states subject to those policies.* This chapter seeks to assess those responses in the context of the littoral states' - Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan - security outlook and their relations with the US and to explore the Soviet Union's perception of America's policies and its reactions to them. The Soviet response is analyzed first because the USSR was the chief subject of US strategic policy, being considered to be the most serious potential military threat to American regional interests. The response by India is discussed too, because it was an important state contiguous to South-West Asia which was very concerned about the possible consequences of US strategic policy for its security.

This chapter identifies ambivalence and opposition as the responses to the United States' strategic policy, and its analysis contributes importantly to the next chapter, which presents findings and conclusions about the utility of America's strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area from 1970 to 1980.

### The Soviet Union: Counter the Intensified Threat of US Aggression

The Soviets considered America's revised strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area to be dangerously aggressive.[1] The US was using the USSR's defensive action in

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* US strategic policy involved in varying degrees states from Japan and Australia to NATO Europe but limited space prevents an examination of their response to that policy.

[1] A thorough Soviet interpretation of America's strategic

Afghanistan as an excuse to "protect", in fact to control by armed intervention if necessary, the Gulf states, their oil and the sea routes and also to pose an increasing threat to Soviet security in the south. America's strategic policy, revised before the USSR sent its forces into Afghanistan, was part of its unilateral renewal of the Cold War in quest of global dominance by military superiority. The Soviets countered the enlarged US naval presence in the Arabian Sea with additional naval forces and tried to curb America's greater regional strategic role and presence by reaffirming their support for an Indian Ocean "Zone of Peace". In addition they put forward in December 1980 a proposal for security in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area which, if realized, would have minimized the United States' capability to conduct military operations there.

The USSR's response to America's modified policy consisted of, first, denying a threatening offensive purpose to its intervention in Afghanistan, in order to try to undermine the United States' use of it as a policy rationalization. The Soviet intervention was defensive only, intended to help the Marxist regime in Kabul to repel "aggression from outside" by the US, China and Pakistan.

> Unceasing armed intervention and a well-developed conspiracy by external reactionary forces created a real threat that Afghanistan would lose its independence and be transformed into a military staging ground for the imperialists on [the USSR's] southern border. In other words, the time came when we could no longer fail to respond to the request of the friendly government of Afghanistan. To act otherwise would have been to look on passively while a hotbed of serious danger to the security of the Soviet state was created....[2]

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policy is provided by Andrei Krutskikh, US Policies in the Indian Ocean (Moscow: Progress Publishers [English translation], 1986).

[2] From an interview with L.I. Brezhnev in Pravda, January 13, 1980 in CDSP 32 (February 13, 1980), 2.

Soviet forces would be withdrawn from Afghanistan when external aggression against it had ceased. Second, the Soviets disavowed "expansionist plans" to attack Pakistan or Iran, seize the oil of the Persian Gulf and force their way to the Indian Ocean.[3] Unlike the US the USSR

> has never laid claim to other people's oil wealth, nor has it said that places where such wealth is located are spheres of its 'vitally important interests.' The Soviet Union saw to the development of its own energy sources ahead of time and, as far as oil is concerned, it supplies all its own requirements. No Soviet representative has stated, or could state, that the USSR intends to establish control over other people's oil or that it intends to dictate to other countries the terms on which they are to supply oil to the world market.[4]

Nor did the Soviet Union intend to threaten the sea lanes from the Persian Gulf. Noting that "the national interests or security of the United States of America or of other states are not in the least affected by the events in Afghanistan",[5] the Soviets claimed that the US was using their intervention as a pretext in order to subordinate the countries of the Middle East and Africa "to its hegemony, to pump out their natural resources without obstruction, and, ... to use their territory in its strategic plans against the world of socialism and the people's-liberation (sic) forces. This is the crux of the matter".[6]

From the Soviet vantage point the United States' militarist policies for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area could be understood correctly only if their real basis was identified, and that was the dangerous shift in America's

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[3] See article in Pravda, February 2, 1980 in CDSP 32 (March 5, 1980), 1.

[4] Idem.

[5] Brezhnev interview in CDSP, February 13, 1980, p. 3.

[6] From a speech by Brezhnev in Pravda, February 23, 1980 in CDSP 32 (March 26, 1980), 4.

foreign policy from detente towards confrontation and a new Cold War before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.[7] That change had occurred because at bottom, influential forces in America, above all the "right-wing quarters" and military-industrial complex which carried on the legacy of US global hegemonism and the Cold War, had refused to accept the realistic policies of the detente of the early 1970s. They emphasized falsely the "growing Soviet military threat" to Western security and played on the sense in America of its increasing dependence on oil and other natural resources from abroad and of US vulnerability to their possible disruption. America's rapprochement with China had made detente with the USSR seem less necessary, because together those two powers could "contain" and encircle it around Eurasia. The growing influence in the Carter administration of Zbigniew Brzezinski, long an advocate of Cold War, anger and hysteria in the US caused by the Iranian hostage crisis and the need to show "firmness" and reverse his unpopularity as the 1980 elections approached - those factors had pushed a vacillating Carter to abandon detente, at least for a time. By suspending various bilateral talks with the USSR, refusing to observe agreements with it and turning away from concern with arms limitations and disarmament after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the US was "over-reacting", out of proportion to the (significance of the) intervention and to its limited interests there, and tearing the fabric of detente. It was not behaving responsibly as a major power; it was exercising

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[7] A Soviet interpretation of America's return to a policy of confrontation against the USSR is given by G. Arbatov in Pravda, March 3, 1980 in CDSP 32 (April 2, 1980), 1-4, 11. For Western analyses of the movement in super-power relations towards the second "Cold War", consult Adam B. Ulam, Dangerous Relations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Fred Halliday, The Making of the Second Cold War (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1983); and Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, pp. 591-1089.

a destabilizing influence on international relations.[8]

A prominent and alarming theme of the US course of action hostile to detente was the "necessity" to gain military superiority over the USSR and thereby effectively confront, if not dominate it from a "position of strength". The militarization of US policy began when NATO decided in May 1978 to approve automatic increases in its members' defence budgets for the rest of the century. In December 1979 America had imposed on its European allies a decision to deploy new intermediate-range nuclear missiles on their territory. Most importantly America had refused to ratify the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, signed by the super-powers in June 1979. The US was also launching huge new spending programmes for its armed forces and making plans for waging "limited" nuclear war, for which new weapons were being developed and US strategic nuclear doctrine was being modified. Furthermore it had become much more ready to

> resort to military force in the third world to block or roll back progressive revolutionary movement. The Carter Doctrine was seen as ... the first step in an intensification of American reliance on military means to secure what it termed 'vital interests' but that seemed to extend to any area, even where U.S. interests had been minimal. It was a repudiation of the Nixon Doctrine, and reflected an end to the 'Vietnam syndrome' and self-imposed restraint in the use of military means in the geopolitical competition.[9]

The consequences of these trends would be an upward spiral of the arms race, more tension and insecurity and a greater chance of nuclear proliferation and war.

The USSR perceived the militarization of America's foreign policy to be readily apparent in the Persian Gulf-

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[8] Note the remarks by Brezhnev in CDSP, February 13, 1980, p. 4. Also see Ilya Kremer, "Policy of Missed Opportunities", New Times, no. 7 (February 1980), pp. 5-7.

[9] Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, p. 1020.

Indian Ocean area.[10] That process had begun in 1979 "with American imperialism's crushing defeat in Iran, which genuinely frightened the US administration",[11] and with the victory of US oil monopolies in keeping (the energy policy of) America dependent on imports of oil from the Persian Gulf, the main source of their profits. Finding no new regional "policeman" to secure its interests in the Gulf, the United States took on that role itself. It refused in July 1979 to resume with the USSR the Indian Ocean arms control talks and it planned and began to organize a Rapid Deployment Force for intervention in the Gulf. It decided to expand the Diego Garcia naval facility, used the hostage crisis in Iran as an excuse to deploy a large naval force in the Arabian Sea and sought access to regional military facilities. These measures were all taken before the Soviet Union's requested, defensive intervention in Afghanistan. Then, in putting forward the doctrine named after him, President Carter invoked the Soviet intervention and "threat" to the Gulf states and their oil in order impudently to proclaim the Persian Gulf as a zone of its "vital interests".[12] That pretext was intended to justify the "end pursued by the United States today" which apparently was

> to consolidate its military, political and economic penetration in this region and to establish a kind of guardianship - or, more precisely, military-economic domination - over the states in the region and their natural resources. It will be easier to do this, Washington assumes, if more people believe that the US is

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[10] See, for example, N. Mishkin, "Towards An Indian Ocean Zone Of Peace", International Affairs (Moscow), no. 6 (June 1979), pp. 87-91; Mikhail Goryanov, Two Ways Of Looking At The Indian Ocean, trans. Valentin Kochetkov (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1981); I. Redko, N. Shaskolsky, The Indian Ocean: A Sphere Of Tensions Or A Zone Of Peace? (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1983), pp. 10-14, 23-35; Alexander I. Chicherov, "South Asia And The Indian Ocean In The 1980s", Asian Survey 24 (November 1984), 1117-1130.

[11] An observation by Ye. M. Primakov in Literaturnaya gazeta (sic), March 12, 1980 in CDSP 32 (April 9, 1980), 5.

[12] The "Carter Doctrine" is discussed in Boris Pyadyshev, "Ill-Starred Doctrines", New Times, no. 12 (March 1980), pp. 5-7.

saving somebody from something there.[13]

In "protecting" its now more "vulnerable" "vital interests", America asserted a proprietorial right to interfere and prevent objectionable social changes in the Middle East,[14] ones arbitrarily defined by it to jeopardize its access to oil. It was America's general purpose in the Indian Ocean area to oppose, intimidate and dictate its will to all progressive forces and states, to complicate their relations with the USSR and to split and weaken the supporters of peace and detente. That those were America's actual objectives was clear to the Soviets not just because there was no real threat to Persian Gulf oil, which was flowing without obstruction, but, according to one Soviet analysis, because the US did not possess a vital interest in the region's oil resources. Gulf oil was simply more convenient to extract and cheaper than America's own oil, which it wished to conserve.[15]

In order to subordinate the Persian Gulf states to its rule and to assure its control over their oil, the US was "knocking together" a new regional security bloc involving Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Oman, Somalia and Kenya. On their territory and Diego Garcia was being established a network of military bases from which to stage "defensive" interventions. The Americans were trying to lessen the expense to themselves of military operations in the Gulf and Indian Ocean and to subordinate their European allies more closely to their plans by seeking to extend the defence function and boundary of NATO

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[13] CDSP, March 5, 1980, p. 1. Note too Soviet News (London), March 25, 1980.

[14] Pravda, February 14, 1980 in CDSP 32 (March 19, 1980), 18.

[15] These propositions are made in Ruben Andreasyan, "The 'Vital Interests' of Oil Imperialism", New Times, no. 14 (April 1980), pp. 21-22; Pravda, November 11, 1980 in CDSP 32 (December 10, 1980), 24.

to the Persian Gulf.[16] They were intensifying security relations with China but their collusion with the PRC in support of the Afghan "rebels" was only serving to keep the USSR's "limited military contingent" in Afghanistan. The US sought also to create unrest among Muslims along the borders of the Soviet Union's Muslim republics.[17] At the military level, besides acquiring access to regional facilities, expanding Diego Garcia, where kit and supplies were being stockpiled, putting its enlarged naval presence in the Arabian Sea on a continuous basis and organizing the RDF, the US was deploying Marine forces in the Indian Ocean and flying B-52 long-range bombers over Soviet naval formations.

The Soviet Union declared its respect for the need of America and the West for secure access to oil supplies and the safety of the Gulf and Indian Ocean shipping routes. But the Soviets thought that America's growing tendency to use its armed forces in support of policy, as shown by its blatant military pressure on Iran and its irresponsible and adventurist raid there to free the US hostages, was leading it to threaten its own interests as well as the security and independence of regional states. As L.I. Brezhnev commented several times, it was absurd to think that the West's interest in assured oil supplies and secure sea lanes could be "protected" by turning the Indian Ocean area into a "powder keg".[18] His view was supported by Soviet commentators, one of whom remarked, "Problems which exist in the Near East and in the Persian Gulf are not amenable to a military solution;"[19] there was no doubt that some things could

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[16] Pyadyshev, "Doctrines", pp. 6-7; L.I. Brezhnev, "Report Of The CPSU Central Committee And The Current Tasks Of The Party In Home And Foreign Policy" 26th Congress of the CPSU, February 23, 1980 in New Times, no. 9 (February 1981), p. 25.

[17] CDSP, April 9, 1980, p. 5.

[18] CDSP, March 26, 1980, p. 4; "26th Congress Report", New Times, no. 9 (February 1981), p. 25.

[19] Soviet News (London), March 25, 1980.

> be done by military force - oil fields and pipelines can be bombed, set on fire and destroyed. But will this produce oil? No, the task of ensuring uninterrupted deliveries of oil from the Middle East and the Persian Gulf countries cannot be accomplished militarily.[20]

In making that appreciation the Soviet Union was keenly aware of the larger potential American threat to its own declared security interests in the Indian Ocean area: the prevention of a strategic threat to Soviet territory from the south, the safety of the all-season sea route from the European USSR to the East Asian USSR and friendly relations with the littoral states. The most serious danger from the south came from US nuclear weapons, whether aboard aircraft carriers, B-52s flying over the Indian Ocean or submarines. It was noted that

> Memorandum No. 51, issued by President Carter, envisages a "limited use" of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and is another element of the strategic plans of the White House, (sic) concerning this region. ... Official spokesmen note that the use of nuclear weapons will be considered, if conventional means of containment bring no results.[21]

Concern for their southern security had led the Soviets to warn the United States in November 1978 not to intervene in Iran and to warn it in November 1979 not to attack Iran in response to the taking hostage of the US embassy staff in Tehran. The Soviets' concern about a possible American "invasion of Iran in the late summer or early fall of 1980 led to military preparations for a possible counterintervention to secure northern Iran and prevent a U.S. military presence on the Soviet southern border."[22]

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[20] CDSP, April 2, 1980, p. 11.

[21] A. Alexiev, A. Fialkovsky, "For A Peaceful Indian Ocean", International Affairs (Moscow), no. 2 (February 1981), p. 89.

[22] Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, fn. 106, p. 1003.

However unsuitable and futile America's policies for South-West Asia were, the Soviets could not "remain indifferent when the threat to our security is increasing", especially when those policies were part of the United States' "general policy aimed at creation for itself of a situation of military superiority on a global scale."[23] The USSR could defend itself and, if forced to, it would take the appropriate steps.[24] Its response to the American strategic "threat" essentially was to continue to pursue its perennial primary security objective for the Indian Ocean area: the removal or minimization of America's military presence and the facilities for supporting it and potentially forces deploying from the US. The Soviets reinforced their 18-20 ship naval squadron with 10-11 vessels whose purpose was to mark the US aircraft carrier battle groups in the Arabian Sea. (By 1981 there was an average of 25 Soviet naval vessels there.) Also they called for the resumption of the US-USSR arms control talks for the Indian Ocean area.

Politically the Soviet Union sought to discourage security and military cooperation with the US in South-West Asia by its NATO allies by appealing to their strong interest in maintaining detente in Europe. Besides reassuring them that it had no designs on Persian Gulf oil, the USSR proposed in February 1980 a European conference for the consideration of energy issues, which conference might serve indirectly to distance Europe from America. The Soviets approved a provision in the Afghan government's programme of May 1980 for a political settlement with Iran and Pakistan which stated that in reaching a settlement, "notice should be taken of military-political activity in the region of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf on the part of the states from outside

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[23] United Nations, General Assembly, Ad Hoc Committee On The Indian Ocean A/AC.159/L.24, p. 8.

[24] Idem. This point was made just as forcefully by Brezhnev in CDSP, March 26, 1980, pp. 3,4.

that region."[25] The US naval presence in the Arabian Sea was one element of "outside interference" in the affairs of Afghanistan that would have to be removed before the USSR could withdraw.* The Soviet Union continued to support the creation of a "Zone of Peace" in the Indian Ocean because that would help in the struggle to maintain detente as well as lead to the virtual complete removal of the US military presence there.[26] A "Zone of Peace", the Soviet calculation went, would curb American nuclear strategic and conventional military operations much more to the advantage of Soviet security than Soviet armed forces would be curbed to US advantage. Finally, in December 1980 Brezhnev made a proposal for the security of the Persian Gulf region which called for observance of

> the following mutual commitments:
>
> - not to create foreign military bases in the Persian Gulf or on adjacent islands; not to deploy nuclear weapons of mass destruction there;
>
> - not to use force or threaten the use of force against Persian Gulf countries, and not to interfere in their internal affairs;
>
> - to respect the nonaligned status chosen by the Persian Gulf states; not to draw them into military groupings to which nuclear powers are party;
>
> - to respect the sovereign right of the states of this region to their natural resources; and
>
> - not to create any obstacles or threats to normal trade and the use of the sea lanes linking the states of this

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* By 1981 the Soviets no longer insisted on a linkage of Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean security with a settlement of the "situation around Afghanistan".

[25] Pravda, May 15, 1980 in CDSP 32 (June 20, 1980), 6.

[26] For typical Soviet views on the "Zone of Peace", see Sergei Vladimirov, "The Struggle For A Peace Zone", New Times, no. 8 (February 1981), pp. 13-15; D. Nikolayev, "For Peace and Security In The Indian Ocean", International Affairs (Moscow), no. 9 (September 1982), pp. 57-64.

region with other countries of the world.[27]

The main purposes of America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area in 1980 vis-a-vis the Soviet Union were to deter potential further military "adventures" by it and to counter political uses of the Soviet armed forces. But the USSR's reaction to the "Carter Doctrine" and initiatives such as the RDF and acquiring access to regional military facilities differed from what America intended. The Soviets respected the American and Western interest in Persian Gulf oil and did not plan to attack Iran or Pakistan. Their orientation was defensive, as manifest in their specific responses to US strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area, and they were not actively trying to use their armed forces politically in order to influence South-West Asian states. Because, they deduced, America's attempt to increase deterrence against them was unnecessary, that attempt reflected a dangerous major change in US policy: apparently the Americans had abandoned detente and were questing for global domination. Rather than being "disciplined" by American deterrence, the USSR feared greater international tension and instability because of US aggressiveness and militarism.

## Saudi Arabia: Ambivalence about a Dangerous Friend

Saudi Arabia was ambivalent about the US strategic contribution to its security. It appreciated the "over the horizon" American naval presence for showing US interest and commitment to its security, protecting shipping and, along with the Rapid Deployment Force, giving more assurance that with their availability America could help it to cope better with regional military threats more likely than Soviet aggression. On the other hand the RDF seemed to be an unnecessary and inadequate deterrent against the USSR, unable confidently to defeat a major Iraqi attack and unsuitable to

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[27] Pravda, Dec. 11 1980 in CDSP 32 (January 15, 1981), 6.

deal with internal dangers. The US was also a potential military threat because it might intervene with the RDF in "defence" of access to Saudi oil. Most of the time the American strategic connection was more politically dangerous than militarily useful and Saudi Arabia sought to keep it at a distance and to minimize its visible dependence upon it.[28]

The Saudis viewed America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area from a perspective in which Israel, internal unrest, other Arab states such as Syria, South Yemen and Iraq and revolutionary Iran were more important threats to their security than the Soviet Union.[29] Even after the Soviets intervened in Afghanistan, the Saudis did not fear a Soviet attack upon Iran or the Gulf Arab states as much as the indirect, political threat from the USSR. Its "encirclement" of them by way of its political and military presence in South Yemen, Ethiopia and Afghanistan did increase their sense of insecurity and they were aware of the Soviet Union's expected growing need for oil imports by the latter 1980s. But in the meantime, rather than employ its armed forces directly in order to achieve its interests, the USSR would patiently take advantage of opportunities caused by America's support for Israel and increase its influence in the Middle East.

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[28] For discussions of Saudi security relations with the US, see David E. Long, The United States and Saudi Arabia: Ambivalent Allies MERI Special Studies Number 3 (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985); United States, Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Saudi Arabia And The United States The New Context in an Evolving "Special Relationship", Report Prepared For the Subcommittee On Europe And The Middle East Of The Committee On Foreign Affairs, U.S. House Of Representatives, Committee Print, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 1981; Abdul Kasim Mansur (pseud.), "The American Threat to Saudi Arabia", Survival 23 (January-February 1981), 36-41.

[29] On Saudi security policy consult Adeed Dawisha, Saudi Arabia's Search for Security Adelphi Paper No. 158 (London: The International Institute For Strategic Studies, Winter 1979-1980); William B. Quandt, Saudi Arabia in the 1980s Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1981); Safran, Saudi Quest.

Disagreeing with the US about the principal security threat to the Gulf, Saudi Arabia refused to join America's proposed "cooperative security framework" and to provide it with access to its bases. The best way for it to counter the USSR and to ensure Saudi Arabia's more immediate security was to influence Israel to accept a genuine, comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But because America supported Israel and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty and because it also confronted Iran, keeping a protective political distance from the US was a Saudi security objective of higher priority than conspicuous association with it for dealing with the lesser Soviet threat. Overt strategic cooperation with America, even if it did not support Israel, would still provoke criticism within Saudi Arabia, antagonize most of the Arab world and evoke fear of Western imperialism. Besides flouting Arab nationalism and the Gulf states' preference in principle for their region to be free from all super-power military presence, providing America with access to its bases would show that Saudi Arabia was too weak and incompetent to look after itself and that it had subordinated itself to US "protection", in fact domination. Seen to give up their independence, the Saudis would lose face and legitimacy at home and abroad. Cooperation with the US would also prompt the Soviets to try to enlarge further their presence in and around the Gulf, thereby increasing the unwanted super-power competition.

The Saudis' fear of the dire political consequences of collaborating with the US was complemented by growing doubts about America's credibility as a security asset - about its will and capability to contribute to their security and the reliability and usefulness of its strategic contribution. After all it had failed to save the Shah, deal with the revolutionary regime in Tehran or rescue the diplomatic hostages; nor had the US countered the USSR's involvement in South Yemen or its intervention in the war in the Horn of Africa in 1977-78 on behalf of Ethiopia or its intervention in

Afghanistan.

The Saudi government was quite sceptical too about the pertinence of US conventional forces for helping it to deal with internal disturbances. Unless deftly and discreetly used, they would only worsen a crisis and embarrass, if not endanger the government. To the extent that the US might be relevant for coping with forms of domestic unrest, it was hampered by inadequate intelligence and special operations capabilities.[30] The publicity given the Rapid Deployment Force and their memory of America's veiled threats in 1973-75 and 1979 of unilateral intervention suggested to some Saudis that the chief US security objective in Saudi Arabia was to preserve access to oil, not to contribute to the safety of the state. Thus the United States might use the RDF in order to

> seize control of the Saudi oil fields. Even otherwise pro-American Saudi officers worried that the RDF, combined with the U.S. advisory teams in Saudi Arabia, would allow the U.S. to seize the oil facilities in the northeast provinces and that the U.S. planned to do this in the event of another oil embargo. While senior Saudi officials discounted this possibility - and knew that the U.S. was well aware that the long-range result of any such U.S. action would be to alienate the entire Arab and developing world - many middle-echelon officials took it more seriously. Even some senior Saudi officials were uneasy about the true purpose of the RDF....[31]

Because of the potential danger posed by America, its military involvement in domestic Saudi security was best confined to an indirect role such as training and providing specialized equipment for the Saudi Arabian National Guard, one of whose responsibilities was protecting the oilfields. If special forces or advice were needed, they would be available from Western European states, for example France at the time of the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in late 1979.

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[30] Cordesman, Gulf Search, p. 258.

[31] Ibid., p. 259.

At the regional level of security the Saudis found the deployment by two US aircraft carrier task groups in the Arabian Sea to be "acceptable and reassuring".[32] It was perceived to show America's interest in friendly states' security and its commitment and determination to help uphold it. The US naval presence was nearby yet inconspicuous, available but discreet - "on tap but not on top" - and it did not possess a ground intervention capability.* Together with the enlarged Middle East Force and the US Navy's cooperation with the Omani navy in monitoring the movement of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the aircraft carrier task groups helped to reduce Saudi fears about the safety of shipping. While asserting for political purposes that they could manage their security without dependence on external powers, the Saudis hoped that their own forces armed with advanced American weaponry, perhaps other friendly regional forces and all forms of US military presence in and near the Gulf - the "over the horizon" naval presence, training, technical and advisory personnel in the Kingdom itself and US contingency access to facilities in Oman, Somalia, Kenya and informally Egypt for a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force - would be adequate to deter most attacks by regional foes. The permanent presence of one or two US divisions based on Saudi territory was not wanted because, as noted, it was politically unacceptable and it could be used to seize the oil fields; nor was it needed: it would be much more than required for local contingencies.[33] But if there were a direct and immediate "worst case" threat to Saudi Arabia from Iraq and more US forces were needed than were present, they could be asked in from America on a temporary, ad hoc basis. Their reinforcement of Saudi Arabia would be acceptable in a crisis

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* The intermittent presence in the Arabian Sea of a Marine Amphibious Unit did suggest a tacit US threat to intervene in "protection" of access to oil.

[32] Quandt, Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, p. 156.

[33] Ibid., p. 56.

when their military utility would be assumed to outweigh their political danger.

At the start of the Iraq-Iran war in late September 1980, Saudi Arabia sought help from the US in order to deter Iranian air attacks against (Iraqi aircraft and ships at) Saudi airfields and ports and against its oil facilities and also to prevent Iranian naval interference with the movement of shipping through the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.[34] The Americans sent four AWACS to Saudi Arabia and stationed a guided missile cruiser off the Saudi Gulf coast. But even though America's response did help to reassure the Saudis about the value and credibility of its strategic support for them, the Saudis still wanted America's help to be low in "visibility" in order to avoid provoking Iran. Thus Saudi Arabia declined to take part in a Saudi-American naval task group proposed by the US for preventing (Iranian) interference with shipping. Unlike their support for AWACS the Saudis' cooperation for defence of the sea lanes was "not essential[;] they preferred to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the United States so as to minimize the extent to which they openly 'compromised'..."[35] their relations with other Arab states as well as Iran. Also the Saudis "could count on the United States to secure the transit of oil on its own, for its own ..."[36] and wider Western interests.

Saudi Arabia perceived America's regional deterrence policy towards the Soviet Union with ambivalence. The Saudis regarded the USSR as a lower order military threat because it was relatively distant and thus unlikely to launch an attack against them. Nonetheless, according to the US State

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[34] For details, see Safran, Saudi Quest, pp. 364-367, 410-411.

[35] Ibid., p. 411.

[36] Ibid., p. 367. British, French and Australian naval forces were present too in the northern Arabian Sea at the start of the Gulf War.

Department, high Saudi officials

> privately expressed great concern about possible Soviet threats to the region. There is general fear that the unstable situation in Iran would tempt Moscow to move into Iran, and that without some sort of American capability there would be nothing to prevent the Soviets from moving down to the gulf (sic).[37]

Those officials "privately welcomed the demonstration of American determination to resist Soviet aggression in the region, including the development of a U.S. rapid deployment force and an over-the-horizon presence."[38] But their welcome was qualified by uncertainty about the relevance and ability of the RDF to deter a Soviet attack. "Many Saudis" concluded that the US could not react effectively against a Soviet or other "major threat" to the Gulf; US "talk of major military intervention in the Gulf might be a bluff for much of the [1980s]."[39] In the Saudis' view America's actual deterrent against the USSR remained its strategic nuclear forces. They seemed "to believe that the only effective deterrent to direct Soviet military intervention is the global balance of power. If the prospect of nuclear war does not deter the Soviet Union, a few American divisions in the gulf (sic) are unlikely to do so."[40] And if American deterrence were a bluff and if Iran were not a "vital" interest worth fighting for by resort to nuclear weapons, was it inconceivable that in a confrontation with the USSR America might choose to avoid escalation to conflict? Might not the Americans either abandon Saudi Arabia, leaving it and the rest of the Gulf to their fate, or try to arrange with the Soviets to divide the region into spheres of oil access and influence? If so, the RDF would be an occupation force. Should the RDF be used

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[37] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 32.

[38] Idem.

[39] Cordesman, Gulf Search, pp. 257, 258, 259.

[40] Quandt, Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, p. 56.

against a Soviet attack, however, the Saudis identified much danger in

> a 'preemptive strategy' under which the U.S. would deploy its forces as soon as possible to ensure that they would be in place before the Soviets could act. Both the Saudis and many European leaders felt that such a strategy would lead the U.S. to overreact and to try to beat the Soviets to the punch, creating a hair-trigger willingness to commit U.S. forces long before the need for such a commitment was clear. From the Saudi perspective, it meant that the U.S. might suddenly try to massively increase its presence in the Gulf, and demand Saudi support of that action.... This course, the Saudis felt, could tie them to U.S. actions that would be so unpopular in the Arab world that they would isolate Saudi Arabia ... and greatly strengthen internal opposition to the royal family. The end result was that many Saudis became as worried over the possibility that the RDF would be used as over the possibility that it could not be used.[41]

The United States was the Saudis' ultimate source of military security and its strategic value to them lay in the politically safe(r) background and in some crises. From the background America did give some reassurance that it was committed to helping to uphold Saudi security and that it would balance politically and deter the Soviet armed forces. And in a crisis, at the start of the Iraq-Iran war when clear danger caused the Saudis temporarily to invert their security priorities and ask for relatively more conspicuous US military help, America gave an appropriate response. But the American strategic connection remained a political danger and of uncertain reliability. It had to be managed at least as much as relied upon.

## Iran: Antipathy, Strategic Ambivalence

Revolutionary Iran suspected intimidation and probably outright intervention against it as the purposes of US strategic policy for the Persian Gulf, but the American threat was "neutralized" by Iran's strong proclivity towards

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[41] Cordesman, Gulf Search, pp. 259-260.

martyrdom. At the same time the Iranians still depended, however implicitly, on the US to balance politically and to deter the USSR.

Iran's view of America's strategic policy derived from a strong revulsion and antagonism towards the US "Great Satan" because of perceived past humiliation, political domination, economic exploitation and cultural pollution by it in close association with the reviled deposed Shah.[42] The United States was the more immediate and dangerous threat to Iran than the Soviets, despite their intervention in Afghanistan,

> primarily because of cultural contamination and only secondarily as a result of its military power. Iranians held the contradictory view of the US as at one and the same time impotent and omnipotent; the Islamic authorities feared US military power while also ridiculing it.[43]

America was thought not to possess legitimate military interests in the Persian Gulf[44] and, according to Bani Sadr, elected President of Iran in January 1980, it wanted to defend only the region's oil, not its people.[45] The US was using the hostage crisis and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as pretexts to reinforce and make permanent its regional military presence and to acquire logistic support facilities which might be used by the Rapid Deployment Force in attempts to

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[42] For valuable analyses of relations between Iran and America since World War II, see James A. Bill, The Eagle and the Lion The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) and Richard W. Cottam, Iran and the United States A Cold War Study (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).

[43] Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, Iran and Iraq at War (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), p. 205.

[44] U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 32.

[45] British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary Of World Broadcasts, Second Series, The Middle East And North Africa, pt. 4, ME 6333, January 31, 1980, p. A/2. (Referred to below as BBC, SWB, ME.)

undermine the Iranian revolution.[46] That was also why, in Iran's understanding, the Americans "imposed" war on it by way of their Iraqi "agent", Saddam Hussayn.

The focal point of the confrontation between Iran and the United States was the hostage crisis, in which the US attempted with its aircraft carrier task groups in the Arabian Sea, as well as by political and economic means, to exert pressure on the Iranians to release the hostages. America's coercive diplomacy failed[47] because the Iranians expected an attack and rather than being afraid of one, fear being the basic source of US strategic leverage, they welcomed an opportunity for martyrdom. "In the final analysis" the American

> naval presence served no useful role in the resolution of the hostage crisis. For the most part, the military options presented by the presence had military or political liabilities which reduced their political effectiveness. More importantly, even the most attractive option for indirect military action, a maritime quarantine imposed by mining, foundered on the basic point that due to the mindset of martyrdom, Iran would not have yielded to indirect military pressure. Therefore, the only military option which had a real chance of achieving the basic goal of the Carter foreign policy, i.e., the release of the hostages, was a direct rescue attempt. When that failed, there were no viable military options left....[48]

While confronting US "imperialism", Iran also opposed Soviet "atheist communism". The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan had heightened Iran's fears that the USSR might eventually try to seize its provinces of Azerbaijan and

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[46] Reported by the State Department in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 33.

[47] Lieutenant Commander William F. Hickman, US Navy, "Did It Really Matter?", Naval War College Review 36 (March-April 1983), 17-30, explains why the US Navy was not able to help achieve America's policy objectives in the hostage crisis.

[48] Ibid., p. 27.

Baluchistan, from which latter the Soviets would establish a position on the Arabian Sea, dominate the flow of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and control the Middle East and South Asia.[49] The Iranians "certainly plan[ned] to resist Russian expansionism", according to Bani Sadr, "but that does mean that we are going to give the ... Americans an excuse to set foot here once again."[50] Seeking to minimize their dependence on the US, the Iranians rejected an American offer to them in January 1980 to normalize relations and cooperate against the USSR. The US could best help Iran resist the Soviets by ceasing its intervention in Iranian affairs.

Iran's spurning of dealings with both super-powers was part of its "balanced" non-alignment. That derived from the sense that "all the ills of the world - inequality, an unjust international system, exploitation, oppression, the bullying of the weak by the strong - emanated from the 'arrogant' superpowers ..." who "were in collusion and were equally guilty."[51] There was the danger too that the USSR and the US might come to blows on Iranian territory or decide to avoid confrontation by dividing Iran into spheres of influence, as Britain had done with Tsarist Russia in 1907 and with the Soviets in 1941. Iran "strongly opposed ... and condemn[ed] the military presence of non-regional powers - whether American or Soviet or any other power - in its southern waters."[52] The "presence of American naval units and the corresponding reinforcement of Soviet naval units" was a "serious danger to peace and international security" and violated the United Nations' resolution calling for the

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[49] See comments by Bani-Sadr in Guardian, January 8, 1980 and by the then Iranian Foreign Minister, Sadeq Qotbzadeh, in Dawn, January 19, 1980.

[50] BBC, SWB, ME, pt. 4, ME/6333, January 31, 1980, p. A/3.

[51] Chubin and Tripp, Iran And Iraq At War, p. 205.

[52] This quotation and those in the rest of this paragraph come from BBC, SWB, ME, pt. 4, ME/6343, February 12, 1980, pp. A/7-A/8.

creation of a "Zone of Peace" in the Indian Ocean. In order "to ease the current situation, the US and the USSR must

> leave the countries of the area alone and ... remove their forces ... as soon as possible. In this way the independence of the countries of the region and their non-alignment ... [from] East ... [and] West will be confirmed, and their existence will not be sacrificed to the plots and schemes of the superpowers which aim at dividing up the region.

Iran's "balanced" non-alignment still bestowed an implicit strategic role upon America, however. Recognising that the US and the USSR would not soon remove their forces from South-West Asia, its security policy called for each super-power to balance and deter the other in order to maximize Iranian security. Iran, its Minister of Defence made clear in March 1980,

> 'want[s] to have an equilibrium,' [because] 'The Iranian government well understands that, if there was no American pressure, the Russians would attack Iran, and vice versa.'
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> Asked what Iran would do if a Soviet armored column invaded, the minister [said], 'We would fight, and at the same time, the United States naturally would come and face the Soviet power.'[53] (Italics added.)

At the strategic level at least, Iran's antipathy towards America yielded to ambivalence.

## Iraq: Opposition to Interventionist Threat

Iraq maintained that America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area increased the threat to its independence and security, a view conditioned by more than twenty years of conflict between the two states' respective

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[53] International Herald Tribune, March 22, 1980.

political and security outlook and interests.[54] After the republican revolution in 1958, Iraq left the American-sponsored Baghdad Pact and adopted a non-aligned foreign policy[55] and after the Arab-Israeli war in June 1967, it broke diplomatic relations with the US: the Americans were imperialists hostile to the Arab nation and they were trying to dominate it, above all by supporting Israel, and to use the Arabs in their competition with the USSR. From the late 1960s America had encouraged the Shah of Iran to assert hegemony over the Gulf Arabs and until 1975 it, the Shah and Israel had tried to undermine Iraq by supporting the Kurdish rebellion. Iraq's alliance with the Soviet Union from 1972 was a defensive expedient which did not override its policy preference that both super-powers keep out of the Arab Gulf and that the Gulf states take sole responsibility for their security. The Iraqis objected strongly to the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan from late 1979 because further expansion of the Soviet presence and influence around the Gulf would compromise their ambition to exercise regional hegemony after the fall of the Shah.

The main purpose of US strategic policy for the Arab Gulf, according to Iraq, was (to be ready for) intervention, to seize the region's oil. Deterring the USSR was a secondary purpose, perhaps only a pretext for intervention. Saddam Hussayn, the President and ruler of Iraq, accused the Americans of trying "to exploit the Iranian and Afghan situations to 'move its fleet and exert pressure on some regimes ... [and] to blatantly restore its influence and prepare for its occupation of the rich oil fields in the

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[54] Barry Rubin, "United States-Iraq Relations: A Spring Thaw?", in Iraq: The Contemporary State, ed. Tim Niblock (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 109-124, surveys relations between the two countries in a historical context.

[55] On Iraq's non-alignment, consult Steven B. Kashkett, "Iraq And The Pursuit Of Nonalignment", Orbis 26 (Summer 1982), 477-494.

strategic region'."[56] The United States' attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran was an act of aggression showing its greater willingness to use the armed forces. Also its increased military presence in South-West Asia and its quest for access to bases in the Arab Gulf would provoke Soviet counter-action, thereby intensifying the rivalry between the US and the USSR and the potential for a super-power conflict. In response to the perceived increased American threat to its security after the enunciation of the Carter Doctrine, Iraq put forward in February 1980 the "Arab National Charter". Apropos of the US and the USSR, that document said that there must be no dependence on foreign powers* and that the Arab states ought to keep out of international conflict except when their territory was attacked. When there was foreign aggression against one of them, they should join together against it. The Charter rejected all forms of foreign military presence on Arab territory; a regime allowing such a presence would be "resisted".

Judging America to be the principal strategic threat to the Arab Gulf, Iraq saw its alliance with the Soviets, whom it was confident it could manage, as a means by which to deter potential US aggression. Yet the Iraqis did not ignore the possibility of Soviet military action against the region. While proclaiming that they themselves would not allow the USSR to occupy Saudi territory, they nonetheless relied on the US to balance and to deter the Soviets. At a news conference in July 1980, Saddam Hussayn told the Gulf Arabs that if

> the Soviet armies come to occupy your territories ... and the Arab armies are not able to repulse them, then you can, under the Arab National Charter we proposed to you, bring in the US army to face the Soviets. The US army is

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* In this spirit Iraq had rejected a proposal by Oman in September 1979 for Western powers to participate in patrolling the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

[56] Reported by the State Department in U.S. House, U.S. Gulf Interests 1980, p. 32.

not far away. It is present on all of the oceans and seas. All you have to do is wink at it and it will come.[57]

Pakistan: Keep Distance from Unreliable "Friend"

Pakistan declined to join America's proposed "cooperative security framework" in return for confirmation by the US of the two sides' security agreement of 1959 and an offer of economic and military aid. In its view the cost, particularly political, of a close security association with the Americans was much greater than the benefit from their inadequate offer of aid and their insufficient and unreliable security commitment to it.

Pakistan's perception of America since the 1960s as an unreliable source of security arose from the clash between its perception of India and America's view of the USSR (and China, up to 1969-1970) as the main threat to regional security. The United States' supply of arms to India after the Sino-Indian war in 1962, its embargo on arms transfers to India and Pakistan from the time of their war in 1965 and its indifferent support for Pakistan against India in the war in 1971 generated strong feelings in Pakistan that its ties with America bilaterally and through CENTO and SEATO had little value in terms of actual, relevant US support. The drifting apart of Pakistan and America quickened in the 1970s as the US improved its relations with the Soviets and the Chinese and as Pakistan withdrew from SEATO (1972), emphasized its Islamic identity and cultivated relations with Muslim, notably Arab, states and in 1979 withdrew from CENTO and became a member of the non-aligned movement. Pakistan's relations with America under the Carter administration worsened sharply. In the Pakistanis' opinion America had applied its nuclear non-proliferation policy and cut off in 1979 all forms of aid to them in an attempt to thwart their quest for a nuclear weapons capability, while not applying that policy to India. The

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[57] BBC, SWB, ME, pt. 4, ME/6479, July 24, 1980, p. A/13.

United States' global policy from 1977 of trying to restrain the flow of arms to the Third World had prevented a significant renewal of arms aid to Pakistan. The Americans criticized it for its human rights record, and their encouragement of "regional influentials" favoured India. Pakistani-American relations reached a nadir when a mob burnt down the US embassy in Islamabad in November 1979.[58]

When in winter 1980 the terms of America's offer to it to join in the "cooperative security framework" became clear - confirmation by Congress of the security agreement of 1959 and $200 million in economic aid and $200 million in military aid, with more to come later - Pakistan rejected the proposal. The $400 million was derided by General Zia ul-Haq, then President of Pakistan, as "peanuts", inadequate even to begin to meet Pakistan's needs for a credible defence capability against potential Soviet threats. According to a "high Pakistani official", if his country accepted the $400 million it would not be buying "real security".[59] Nor would the Pakistanis gain reassurance from America's reaffirmation of the agreement of 1959. For "real security" Pakistan wanted the US to raise that agreement to a full security treaty ratified by Congress which would oblige America to give it automatic military support against an attack by the USSR or India. Pakistan also wanted thousands of millions of dollars of military aid and

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[58] Thomas Perry Thornton discusses "Between The Stools: U.S. Policy Towards Pakistan During The Carter Administration" in Asian Survey 22 (October 1982), 959-977, from his vantage point as the member of the Carter National Security Council responsible for South Asia.

[59] New York Times, July 16, 1980. The Pakistanis apparently assumed that although the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was primarily defensive and presented no immediate danger, the USSR might engage in cross-border pursuits, probes and punitive attacks. If it did, the proposed US aid package would not provide the sufficient additional means for them to cope. The US might have stipulated other terms making its offer even more disadvantageous and unacceptable to Pakistan: no use of American weapons against India, no further development of its nuclear programme and, perhaps, access to Pakistani military facilities for the US armed forces.

economic aid.

America's lack of interest in a full treaty and its past unreliability as a source of security sustained Pakistan's uncertainty that the US valued it enough to commit its armed forces to the defence of Pakistan in the event of a Soviet attack. Although America might risk war in order to protect its vital interests in the Persian Gulf against Soviet aggression, a less important Pakistan might be expendable.[60] Finally, if Pakistan accepted the US offer, it would put itself symbolically back into the American "camp", provoke domestic, Indian and Soviet hostility, compromise its non-aligned status and impair its relations with the Islamic states, notably Iran. The Zia regime "feared Khomeini's wrath almost as much as Brezhnev's"[61] and well understood that too close an association with the US, whose pressure on Iran to release the American hostages was resented in Pakistan, would worsen its domestic political position.

Because in Pakistan's view, the United States' offer of a revived security relationship was not only inadequate but also might prejudice its broader security policy, Pakistan decided to keep its distance from the US, while quietly discussing its military needs with it, and await the election of an Administration more congenial, perhaps more reliable and certainly more bountiful in its offer of aid.

## India: US Strategic Threat to its Security and Primacy in South Asia

India opposed America's revised security policy and strategic policy for South-West Asia because they complicated and endangered its security and its predominant political position in South Asia. Pakistan was the chief military threat to India and the United States' inclusion of Pakistan

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[60] Thornton, "Between The Stools", p. 970; New York Times, July 16, 1980.

[61] Ibid., p. 972.

in its "cooperative security framework" would, it was feared, involve supplying it with arms which could be used against India. India's views and influence about the security issue most important to it would be "marginalized". America's policies made India feel more vulnerable because they could lead to a regional conflict between the US and the USSR which might entangle it. The United States' enlargement of its naval forces in the Indian Ocean, its creation of the Rapid Deployment Force, its further development of Diego Garcia and its acquisition of access to regional military facilities threatened security and stability throughout the Indian Ocean area by encouraging a Soviet-American arms race and competitive super-power intervention as well as unilateral American intervention there.[62]

India perceived America's response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan from within a context of major differences between it and the US in foreign policy outlook, interests and priorities manifest in the Americans' closer relations with India's foes, Pakistan and China.[63] India's foreign policy was non-aligned and, contrary to the US interpretation of non-alignment, that did not mean keeping equal distance between the super-powers so much as maintaining relations with each which best assured its interests and freedom of action. Non-alignment had been conceived as a way to minimize the intrusion of the Soviet-American rivalry into South Asia but beginning in the 1950s America had brought the

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[62] For these themes, see Republic of India, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Report 1979-80 (Faridabad: Government of India Press, 1980), pp. i-iv; ---, Report 1980-81 (New Delhi: n.p., 1981), pp. i-iv. Onkar Marwah discusses the Indian perception of America's role in the Indian Ocean area as part of an analysis of "India's Strategic Perspectives on the Indian Ocean", in The Indian Ocean Perspectives on a Strategic Arena, eds. Dowdy and Trood, pp. 301-317.

[63] These differences are discussed by Raju G.C. Thomas, "Security Relationships In Southern Asia: Differences In The Indian And American Perspectives", Asian Survey 21 (July 1981), 698-709.

Cold War to the Indian sub-continent by its application of the balance of power concept. Mistakenly over-estimating the Soviet threat to states from Turkey to India, it had drawn India's neighbour, Pakistan, into its anti-Soviet security system. US military aid to Pakistan had led to war between India and Pakistan in 1965 and compromised India's main security interest - preventing a Pakistani attack upon it, a threat much more concrete than that posed by the Soviet Union. In 1971 the beginning of an entente between America and Pakistan's close friend, China, with whom India and the USSR were at odds, and the possibility of US collusion with Pakistan against India in the Bangladesh liberation war had required India to conclude a treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union. Historically, then, the United States had complicated India's security and pushed it closer to the USSR than preferred by the Indians, who also felt that America did not take them seriously as the leading power in South Asia.

In responding to America's modified policies for South-West Asia the government of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who returned to power in January 1980, claimed that the US was over-emphasizing its rivalry with the USSR and the need to "contain" the Soviet "expansionist threat" to the Persian Gulf. Because the Soviet move into Afghanistan was defensive, not offensive, as the US government seemed to think, India did not see the USSR as posing a military threat to the West's access to Persian Gulf oil and the sea lanes.[64] The Soviets were becoming more involved in the Western economy and, recognising the importance of Gulf oil to it, they would not attempt a blatant and provocative coup de main against a vital Western interest. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan had been a response partly to America's naval force increase in the Arabian Sea in 1979, its preparation of intervention forces for the Persian Gulf region important to Soviet

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[64] In June 1980, for example, Mrs. Gandhi said that she did not think the Soviets would "cross" from Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean. The Hindu, June 20, 1980.

security, US and Chinese support for the resistance against the Marxist regime in Afghanistan, perhaps in the hope of obtaining bases there after its downfall, and the more general evolution of security ties between America and China which created in the USSR a stronger sense of "encirclement". The Gandhi government's own response to the Soviets' intervention consisted of trying to encourage their withdrawal by way of "quiet diplomacy".

In India's view the Carter administration was responsible for initiating the new Cold War and shifting its active theatre from Europe to Asia.[65] Based upon the wrong assumption about the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and inappropriately militaristic in reaction to it, the United States' policies could seriously endanger Indian and also wider Indian Ocean security. The biggest danger to India was that by trying once again to use Pakistan to contain the USSR, the US would give the Pakistanis arms, of little use, much less need against the USSR, which might well encourage them to attack India, as in 1965. American arms for Pakistan would create an arms race that would be futile, because India would match Pakistan's acquisitions. The only real consequences would be a loss of funds for economic development and increased tension between New Delhi and Islamabad. India feared too the potential for US intervention on the side of Pakistan in the event of a new Indo-Pakistani war. A war was possible because Pakistan was politically unstable and the Zia ul-Haq regime might try to preserve a degree of unity in the fissiparous Pakistani state by launching a military adventure. Thus the Americans' (expected) supply of arms to Pakistan would generate instability in South Asia, which contradicted their own policy objectives. Further, India continued to worry about Pakistan's possible acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability with US connivance.

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[65] This was implied in India, Ministry of External Affairs, Report 1980-81, p. i.

A crucial element in America's strategic policy for the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area was the quid pro quo presumed by the Indian government whereby the US would gain access to bases in Pakistan in return for giving it arms. Expected US access to bases in Pakistan and perhaps in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh too, actual negotiated US access to military facilities in Oman, Somalia and Kenya and the further development of Diego Garcia were part of America's militarization of the Indian Ocean area on the pretext of responding to the events in Iran and Afghanistan.[66] But a larger, now continuous naval presence supported by a network of facilities was not the best way to defend US interests, because it would only elicit and legitimize Soviet counter-measures and hamper efforts to persuade the USSR to withdraw from Afghanistan. A super-power arms race would raise regional tension because it could lead to competitive American and Soviet intervention in the Indian Ocean area and entangle the littoral states more deeply in the rivalry between the US and the USSR. The Indians concluded that because the Soviet Union was in Afghanistan for defensive reasons, the United States probably was more concerned to "protect" the West's access to Persian Gulf oil. Therefore the Americans were most liable to employ the Rapid Deployment Force in order to intervene in conflicts between or within littoral states. An American intervention in the Persian Gulf, whether or not the Soviets were involved, would severely disrupt the flow of oil, on which India depended in part. Nor could India overlook that the large US naval presence, which could be used to intervene in another Indo-Pakistani war _a la_ the _Enterprise_ in 1971, thwarted its aspiration to exercise naval predominance in the Indian Ocean. Finally, India considered the United States' strategic policy for the Indian Ocean area to possess a clear and dangerous nuclear dimension. America's hinted resort to nuclear weapons in the event of a Soviet attack into the Persian Gulf and its spread of nuclear weapons into the

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[66] India, Ministry of External Affairs, _Report 1980-81_, p. iv.

area by way of its nuclear-armed aircraft carriers added to the littoral states' insecurity.

India objected to America's policies for South-West Asia and the Indian Ocean because a large increase in the US military presence for unnecessary deterrence against the USSR and for potential intervention in the Gulf made even more unattainable its objectives of reducing the super-powers' involvement in South Asia and minimizing the threat from Pakistan. India continued to urge the resumption of the Soviet-American negotiations on Indian Ocean naval arms control and to express strong support for a "Zone of Peace", however unlikely, whereby the super-powers would remove their maritime forces and give up their use of regional facilities. The Indians also accelerated the expansion of their navy,[67] the better to monitor US naval operations and to raise the cost of potential American maritime intervention against them. But the above measures and others such as "quiet diplomacy" concerning Afghanistan could not lessen India's sense of greater risks imposed on it by US strategic policy in the 1980s.

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[67] On India's naval policy, see fn. 4 in the Introduction to this thesis.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has proposed that America's strategic policy contributed efficaciously to achieving its security objectives for the Indian Ocean area from 1970 to 1980, that the display and threat of use of its armed forces helped successfully to uphold the security and stability of friendly, principally Persian Gulf states, to maintain continuous access to their oil, to ensure the safety of shipping and to limit Soviet influence. More generally, this thesis has examined a super-power's policy for the essentially political use of the armed forces in a distant area and assessed the utility of that policy.

This thesis finds that until early 1979 US strategic policy was confined to intermittent naval display. In the Persian Gulf friendly states, above all Iran, took primary responsibility for inter-state security. Except for imperial Iran in 1978-79, they were able to maintain adequate internal stability. There was no military threat to shipping or to access to oil, which was preserved, except in 1973-74, by political, economic and legal means. A direct US military involvement was neither necessary nor wanted and it was ruled out by America's own security policy for the region, which emphasized instead an indirect role, by supplying arms, advisers and logistic help. The threat to the Gulf states from land-based forces in the Soviet Union was quite small and from 1970 to 1980, the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean neither threatened littoral states or shipping nor exerted considerable political influence.

In the early 1970s occasional minor naval display was intended to counter politically the small Soviet squadron and to avoid giving a harmful impression of US indifference to littoral states' security in light of Britain's withdrawal

from the Indian Ocean area and the Soviet navy's entry. But the littoral states' response to America's display then and in the later 1970s was ambivalent: the US presence did provide some reassurance because they wanted America to balance the USSR at sea; on the other hand, they worried, the US presence could be part of a super-power naval arms race which might jeopardize their independence and security and which they wanted to minimize, if they could not avoid. The deployment to the Bay of Bengal by the Enterprise aircraft carrier task group at the end of the Indo-Pakistani war in December 1971 was interpreted by Pakistan and also Iran to show that the US was unreliable for helping them to achieve their security objectives and by India to indicate that the US was liable to threaten and potentially to intervene against it.

From late 1973 more regular naval display underlined America's greater, exaggerated concern to balance the Soviet naval presence and its strong interest in restoring and maintaining access to Persian Gulf oil interrupted by the Arab oil embargo from October 1973 to March 1974. Naval deployments reinforced the United States' indirect threats of armed retaliation against friendly Gulf Arab states if the embargo were not ended soon and, in 1974-75, of intervention should a new embargo be imposed. But America's threats failed; instead of making Gulf Arabs more compliant, it antagonized them: the US considered its "friends" as potential objects of military action. American diplomacy's part in arranging the Arab-Israeli disengagement agreements in 1974, not minatory naval posturing, influenced the Gulf Arab states to lift the oil embargo. Threats to intervene were low in political and military credibility because probably the cost of intervention would exceed the chance and benefit of its success. In late 1973 the American naval presence in the Gulf of Aden and southern Red Sea both helped US diplomacy to sustain the Egypt-Israel cease-fire negotiations and asserted the right of freedom of passage through the Bab al-Mandab, a strait used for international navigation. In early January

1979 the US did not send an aircraft carrier task group to display off Iran lest it worsen the deteriorating political conditions there and the Shah's chance of survival and perhaps provoke more active Soviet interference. Earlier, in 1977-78, America's negotiations with the USSR about naval arms control for the Indian Ocean area had suggested that in stable conditions naval display was relatively unimportant as an instrument of policy.

In 1979-1980 America's modified strategic policy emphasized intensified display and the threat to use force, by more direct and active deterrence against the Soviet Union and Iraq and by preparing for intervention, if necessary, within friendly Gulf Arab states in the event of "turbulence". The latter states' external security and internal stability were more precarious as a result of the Iranian revolution, Iraq's emergence as the paramount regional military power, the USSR's "encirclement" of the Arabian peninsula and intervention in Afghanistan and the Iraq-Iran war. But friendly states did not need a much enlarged US strategic contribution to their security because the threat to them from within the Persian Gulf and secondarily from the Soviets was more political than military in nature. They did not want a large, conspicuous and continuous American land-based force presence on their territory because it would demonstrate their close security association with the US, provoke political opposition internally and from Iraq, other Arab states, Iran and the Soviet Union and worsen, not enhance their security. They continued to prefer indirect forms of US strategic cooperation.

American intervention in the event of acute unrest within friendly Gulf states proved to be unnecessary because threats to their domestic stability remained limited and manageable by them. In most cases, certainly that of the Iranian revolution, the US understood, its intervention would be inappropriate or very risky, dubious in practicability and

liable to reduce the chance of "saving" an endangered regime or of "protecting" access to oil. For most of the time a much more direct and active US deterrent role at the inter-state level was unnecessary too. Politics - improving relations with Iraq and parrying pressure from Iran - were friendly states' best source of security against potential aggression by them and also the best way to deal with the USSR's increasing involvement in South-West Asia. Politics could not prevent the outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq and the cut-off of their oil exports but the US was not committed to protecting either unfriendly state or access to their oil. Nor had it been committed to defending Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. There was no actual military threat to shipping in the Gulf, despite Saudi anxiety, or to access to friendly countries' oil until the start of the Iraq-Iran war.

The efficacy of US strategic policy lay in the extent to which it reassured friendly states that American armed forces could and would contribute reliably to their security, from the politically safer background and as they required in a crisis. The increased US naval presence did assuage the Saudis' anxiety about the safety of shipping. America's "over the horizon" forces - from aircraft carrier task groups in the Arabian Sea to the Rapid Deployment Force in the US - added to Saudi Arabia's confidence that it could deal with the most likely regional attacks against it. They gave some encouragement that the US was now more prepared to resist Soviet aggression and to counter the political use of the Soviet armed forces. At the start of the Iraq-Iran war American air and naval forces helped to deter Iranian threats against Saudi oil installations and military facilities and against shipping in the Persian Gulf. The US force presence was requested by the Saudis, who judged the value of its contribution to their security to exceed temporarily, until the Iranian threat abated, its danger as a political liability.

However, the United States' strategic reassurance of friendly states did not reduce markedly, indeed was weakened by their doubts about its reliability and their ambivalence towards it. Even in the background the US remained a politically dangerous and complicating factor in those states' precarious security. In the most important internal crisis, the revolution in Iran, the Americans had not saved the Shah and in potential domestic crises, the US might intervene only in order to secure access to oil, not to help an endangered regime. Nor had the US shown sufficient willingness to compete with the USSR and check its "encirclement" of the Gulf. And in part as a result of the decline of its strategic reputation in the 1970s, friendly states doubted whether the US would maintain its new resolve to counter the Soviets. Against a major attack by the Soviet Union or Iraq probably the US would not be a reliable protector because it did not possess the ready conventional capability to repulse it. At bottom the Persian Gulf might not be a "vital" US interest worth resort to nuclear weapons, America's credibility as the "ultimate" deterrent would prove to be hollow and from a position of weakness it would do a deal with the USSR at the expense of the region's security and independence. These considerations tended to weaken friendly states' confidence in the United States' peacetime role in upholding the military balance, regional and against the USSR, in the Persian Gulf.

US strategic policy could not, indeed was inappropriate to frustrate the Soviet Union's "encirclement" of Saudi Arabia because that was a political process. The USSR did not conclude an alliance each with Ethiopia, Afghanistan and South Yemen because America failed in early 1978 during the Horn war to engage in a naval show of force, which failure somehow "emboldened" the Soviets to be more "assertive" than otherwise they would have been. Rather, those three Marxist states chose to enter into alliance with the Soviets for the advantages it would bring. More direct and active conventional deterrence against potential Soviet aggression

against Iran was not necessary because the USSR did not intend to attack. The Soviet Union was already well aware of Iran's importance to the US and of the risk if it did launch an offensive. At most America's strategic policy underlined its warning to the Soviets to keep out of Iran and reinforced their extant caution. US policy suggested greater American aggressiveness and heightened the USSR's worry about the potential danger to a region contiguous to it. Unfriendly states - Iraq and Iran - and India opposed America's strategic policy for South-West Asia. The US, they perceived, exacerbated their own and regional security by preparing to seize Gulf oil, abetting their foe - Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan respectively, intensifying its rivalry with the USSR and potentially by clashing or colluding with it. But not even Iraq or Iran ruled out a tacit American strategic role as a counterweight against the Soviets.

This thesis concludes that the efficacy of American strategic policy's contribution to achieving US security objectives for the Indian Ocean area from 1970 to 1980 was minor until 1979 and moderate in 1979-1980. The efficacy of the US strategic contribution pertained only to the display of or threat to use the armed forces because their active use was never required. That efficacy was minor because with the egregious exception of imperial Iran, friendly states' own efforts and America's other, more important policy instruments sufficed to secure US objectives. Intermittent naval deployments were needed only for balancing the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron and their success was minor because the Soviet force and its political significance were minor. That success was qualified by littoral states' anxiety about the danger from a potential super-power naval arms race. America's naval deployment in response to the Indo-Pakistani war in late 1971 failed, only causing India to perceive the US as a possible interventionist threat and confirming Pakistan's and Iran's sense of America's strategic unreliability. Naval display's modest success after the October 1973 Middle East war in

reinforcing America's Arab-Israeli diplomacy and asserting freedom of navigation was overshadowed by its failure as part of the United States' indirect threat of retaliation against friendly Gulf Arab states if they did not end the oil embargo soon. In early January 1979 the US refrained from naval display off Iran which was undergoing revolution because it would only harm US interests there.

In 1979-1980 the success of American strategic policy was moderate, if greater than before, because increased display by mainly US naval forces from a politically safe distance did give friendly Gulf states some reassurance that America would contribute more reliably to their external security and that it was assuring better the safety of shipping and counterbalancing the USSR with more resolve. American forces gave appropriate requested help to Saudi Arabia in a crisis, at the start of the Iraq-Iran war, deterring Iranian attacks against it and shipping in the Gulf. But the efficacy of US strategic policy in reassuring friendly states remained narrow. For most of the time a larger US strategic role was not immediately necessary: friendly countries could still manage their own security, principally by politics. American intervention was both unnecessary and recognised by the US to be inappropriate in most cases for helping friends to restore stability in an internal crisis or for maintaining access to their oil. At the same time, friendly Gulf states were aware of the US as a potential threat to intervene against them if it perceived its interests to be seriously in danger, and that recognition induced their ambivalence towards America's strategic policy. America's strategic reassurance of friends in the Persian Gulf was constricted by the consideration that their closer strategic association with the US would complicate, if not worsen, their relations with Iran and Iraq, who were more important to their immediate security than the US and who opposed it. US strategic policy could only mitigate, not dispel friends' doubts about the credibility of America's commitment and resolve to balance the USSR.

Further, America's weak capability for conventional operations in the Persian Gulf in the event of "worst case" aggression by the Soviet Union or Iraq led friendly countries to doubt its reliability as their ultimate military recourse. US strategic policy was neither appropriate by nature nor able, even as part of a general ensemble of US policy instruments, much less on its own, to check the USSR's improvement of its political and military position in South-West Asia in the late 1970s. Finally, the efficacy or more direct and active deterrence against a potential Soviet attack was marginal at most.

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3. Interviewees*

Amb. J. Akins, January 4, 1983.

Dr. J.D. Anthony, American Educational Trust, Middle East Referral Service, February 24, 1983.

* All interviews were in the Washington, D.C. area unless noted otherwise.

Capt. J. Barber, U.S. Navy, National Defense University, January 19, 1983.

Amb. R. Bartholomew, State Department, February 25, 1983.

Adm. M. Bayne, January 9, 1983, Irvington, Va.

Mr. R. Beers, State Department, February 22, 1983.

Dr. B. Blechman, Woodrow Wilson Center, February 14, 1983.

Mr. A. Bowen, Congressional Research Service, January 13, 1983.

Mr. J. Collins, Congressional Research Service, January 13, 1983.

Mr. R. Cronin, Congressional Research Service, February 23, 1983.

Capt. B. Dietrich, Tracor Corporation, January 31, 1983.

Mr. B. Dismukes, Center for Naval Analysis, January 13, 1983.

Mr. H. Gaffney, Department of Defense, February 25, 1983.

Mr. L. Gelb, New York Times, February 10, 1983.

Mr. D. Gompert, State Department, January 28, 1983.

Mr. W. Gross, Northrop Corporation, February 4, 1983.

Adm. R. Hanks, Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis, January 11, 1983.

Dr. R. Hunter, Center For Strategic And International Studies, February 18, 1983.

Gen. P.X. Kelly, U.S. Marine Corps, Department of Defense, January 18, 1983.

Amb. R. Komer, Rand Corporation, January 21, 1983.

Mr. D. McGiffert, January 10, 1983.

Adm. T. Moorer, Center For Strategic and International Studies, January 5, 1983.

Mr. R. Murray, Department of Defense, February 22, 1983.

Mr. R. Newhouse, Brookings Institution, February 9 1983.

Amb. D. Newsom, Georgetown University, January 11, 1983.

Mr. L. Niksch, Congressional Research Service, February 23, 1983.

Amb. R. Pelletreau, State Department, February 9, 1983.

Dr. R. Pranger, American Enterprise Institute, January 20, 1983.

Mr. R. Preece, Congressional Research Service, January 31 1983.

Dr. J. Record, Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis, January 18, 1983.

Dr. D. Ross, Department of Defense, February 7, 1983.

Mr. G. Sick, Ford Foundation, New York, February 2, 1983.

Mr. S. Sloan, Congressional Research Service, February 7, 1983.

Mr. W. Slocombe, February 10, 1983.

Mr. F. Smith, Department of Defense, February 14, 1983.

Mr. R. Sokolsky, State Department, February 22, 1983.

Dr. W. Stivers, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, January 25, 1983.

Amb. J. Twinam, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, January 27, 1983.

Mr. J. Twombly, January 12, 1983.

Amb. C. Van Hollen, January 7, 1983.

Amb. P. Warnke, February 20, 1983.

Amb. M. Wiley, January 28, 1983.

Dr. D. Zakheim, Department of Defense, December 28, 1983.

Adm. E. Zumwalt, January 25, 1983.

Mr. R. Zwart, Department of Defense, February 8, 1983.