

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

U.S.—Soviet behavior in Third World trouble spots virtually ensured that détente would soon deteriorate, writes Legvold, a Sovietologist at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The Soviets, according to Legvold, hoped to regulate “central” bilateral issues (such as the nuclear arms race) and to obtain Western goods and credit while retaining a free hand to boost their influence in the developing world. The United States, however, hoped that the Soviets would reduce their adventurism in return for Western aid.

Not even after each side accused the other of helping spark the 1973 Arab-Israeli war did Washington or Moscow show great interest in a code of conduct for Third World crises. When Cuban troops carried a Soviet-backed faction to victory in Angola’s 1975 civil war, détente’s chief American advocate, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, gave up hope that the two countries would end their “constant jockeying for marginal advantages” in remote regions. But hamstrung by a Democratic Congress unwilling to approve U.S. intervention in Third World conflicts and by divided public opinion, neither he nor Presidents Nixon and Ford found ways to parry Moscow’s Third World thrusts. They bequeathed to President Carter “a Soviet policy in pieces.”

Even before Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan last December, Soviet-Cuban intervention in the Horn of Africa and Vietnam’s Soviet-backed occupation of Cambodia had angered Washington. The Soviets complained about U.S. delays in ratifying SALT II and Congress’s tying of full trade relations to more liberal Soviet emigration policies.

The United States, Legvold contends, must tell the Soviets exactly what kinds of interventions in the Third World are unacceptable. Military thrusts to save crumbling “revolutions” (as in Afghanistan) clearly qualify. Less easy to rule out would be Soviet support for black guerrillas in Zimbabwe or aid that protects national boundaries (such as helping Ethiopia ward off Somali conquest of the Ogaden region).

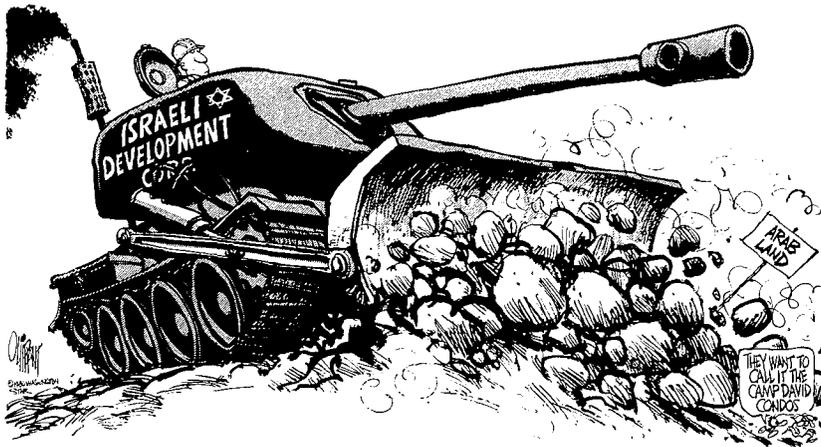
Legvold urges a dual strategy to revive détente and protect U.S. interests in the oil-rich Persian Gulf. He favors military steps such as reviving the draft, building up U.S. forces, openly aiding the Afghan rebels, and improving NATO strength. He also favors ending the grain embargo, forging closer economic ties, and pursuing arms control efforts. Most important, Washington and Moscow should put Third World clashes squarely on détente’s agenda—where they belonged from the start.

The U.S. and Israel

“The United States and Israel: A Strategic Divide?” by Harvey Sicherman, in *Orbis* (Summer 1980), 3508 Market St., Ste. 350, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

American-Israeli relations have long been so close that even petty disputes become front-page news. But since 1973, the United States has viewed a quick Mideast peace as the key to solving its energy problems; Israel, on the other hand, has tried to slow the peace process, hoping that the United States will become self-sufficient in energy. So con-

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Patrick Oliphant's 1980 cartoon reflects growing U.S. criticism of Israeli policies such as permitting Jewish settlements on occupied Arab land.

tends Sicherman, associate director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

The brief Arab oil boycott of 1973–74 convinced the Nixon administration that Israeli security had to be reconciled with legitimate Arab grievances. The solution: “pay” Israel with aid for ceding Arab territory seized during the 1967 Mideast War. The ensuing Egyptian–Israeli disengagement pact sharply reduced the chances of war. But the United States envisioned eventual Israeli withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan River; Israel simply hoped to play for time while the United States undertook to slash its oil imports.

Carter administration officials feared that the “step by step” diplomacy of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was too slow to avert a new Mideast conflict that would endanger the West’s oil supplies. In late 1977, they sought peace talks at Geneva including the Palestinians, the Soviets, and moderate Arab states, in hopes of establishing a Palestinian homeland. But Israel refused to participate.

The United States dropped the “Geneva approach” and resumed close diplomatic cooperation with Israel. Putting more pressure on the Israelis was Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat’s main goal in making his dramatic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. His strategy succeeded. By the time Sadat and Israel’s Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed the Camp David accords (in September 1978), U.S.–Egyptian cooperation had flowered.

The Israelis still scoff at the U.S. notion of a Palestinian entity rendered “safe” by international guarantees. Concludes Sicherman: Israel must persuade the Americans that Mideast tensions can be safely

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“managed” without further Israeli concessions. Or Washington must convince its ally that, given America’s need for Arab oil, public support for an intransigent Israel will eventually fade.

Threat to the Joint Chiefs?

“The Executive and the Joint Chiefs” by Lawrence J. Korb, in *Society* (July-August 1980), Box A, Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

The U.S. military’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) have greater “potential power” than ever before, writes Korb, a professor of management at the Naval War College. But, he argues, the JCS faces increasing threats of White House political manipulation.

The five-man JCS was established by Congress in 1947 to serve as the top source of military advice to the President, the Defense Secretary, and the Congress. Four of its members are the uniformed chiefs of the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Their chairman, also a general or admiral, has no specific service responsibilities; he sits on the White House National Security Council. All five are appointed by the President. All testify before Congress.

The Joint Chiefs have always felt strong White House pressures to “go along” on thorny issues ranging from Truman’s low post-World War II defense budgets to Lyndon Johnson’s “gradualism” policy in Vietnam. Rarely have they dissented in public.

But since Vietnam, writes Korb, the situation has changed. Owing to the loss of national consensus on U.S. foreign policy and the growing complexities of modern strategic planning, the Joint Chiefs’ professional opinions have become much more sought after by Congress. In 1967, their terms of office were upped by Congress from two years to four, giving them greater immunity from White House retaliation should they publicly disagree with the President.

Thus, the civilian leadership must reckon with JCS attitudes. One example: President Carter badly needed the Chiefs’ endorsement of the 1978 Panama Canal treaty; he reluctantly gave in to their demands that the treaty reserve to Washington the right to retake the Canal Zone by force. But the White House has sought ways to keep the JCS in line. In 1978, for example, Carter picked Air Force General David Jones as the new JCS chairman (instead of Army General Bernard Rogers) because of Jones’s willingness to “change his mind publicly” on the B-1 bomber and other key defense issues. In the future, worries Korb, Presidents may appoint only “team players” to the JCS.

A highly “politicized” relationship between the nation’s civilian leadership and the JCS may bar many talented officers from rising to the top or undermine the professionalism of those who do. Moreover, if Congress and the public come to perceive the Joint Chiefs simply as puppets of the White House, they may reject the JCS’s views, even when the advice is sound, given freely, and urgently needed.