

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

guidance from Moscow. Beijing's new independence means America will have to deal with the Chinese as equals, not as a "card" to be played, but the Chinese will still have every reason to lean to the West.

Come Home, America

"The Case for a Withdrawal of Our Forces" by Earl C. Ravenal, in *The New York Times Magazine* (March 6, 1983), 229 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Budget-minded members of Congress who favor trimming Pentagon outlays are whittling while Rome burns. The only way to control defense spending and shore up the ailing U.S. economy is to abandon the 35-year-old U.S. strategy of "containing" Soviet global expansion.

So argues Ravenal, professor of international relations at Georgetown University. The Reagan administration's proposed 1984 budget provides \$274 billion for the Pentagon. The projected 1984 U.S. budget deficit: \$189 billion.

Even budget cutters who would scrap such big-ticket items as the B-1 bomber and the MX missile would save only a total of \$13.5 billion in 1984. Indeed, strategic nuclear forces are relatively cheap. Costing a total of \$62 billion in 1984 by Ravenal's tally, they account for only 23 percent of the Pentagon's budget. The remainder, \$212 billion, is needed to maintain U.S. conventional forces around the world.

Some defense-policy reformers believe "selective" containment of the Soviet Union would reduce such costs. But the U.S. commitments they would honor—to Western Europe, Japan, and the Persian Gulf—are the most expensive. Ravenal estimates that American naval, air, and ground forces in Europe will consume \$115 billion in 1984; Asian defense will cost \$45 billion; and the bill for Rapid Deployment Forces, chiefly designed for the Persian Gulf, will come to \$52 billion.

Ravenal's "non-interventionist" strategy would require only enough forces for home defense and for responding to overseas attacks "clearly directed against our homeland." A gradual 10-year withdrawal of U.S. troops from their bases abroad would reduce the number of U.S. servicemen from 2,165,000 today to 1,185,000 in 1994. Nuclear deterrence could be maintained by submarine-launched ballistic missiles and nuclear-armed cruise missiles, eliminating the need for costly ICBMs. U.S. defense outlays would drop to \$140 billion (in 1984 dollars).

How Moscow would respond to such a retreat is an open question, Ravenal concedes. But the Soviets, already facing economic difficulties at home, might find the costs of a greatly expanded empire too high. And our NATO allies in Europe have adequate means to defend themselves if they wish: Their combined gross national products are greater than Moscow's. The most obvious Soviet target, the Persian Gulf, supplies less than 2.5 percent of U.S. energy needs.

"Containment without tears," Ravenal believes, is no longer possible. Better to accept some losses overseas, he says, than to "wreck our economy and warp our society."