MAINTAINING THE GEOSTRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

by

COLONEL JOHN G. PAPPAGEORGE
US ARMY

There is, I believe, an underlying theoretical construct that has conditioned our military strategy since World War II, without our being explicitly aware of it. This is an attempt to identify that concept, in the conviction that there is nothing more useful or practical than a good theory or philosophy. Witness the field of geometry. Its basis is the completely abstract notion of a point, a line, and a plane—none of which can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched. Yet no architect or builder would deny the practicality of the Pythagorean theorem when it comes to squaring a corner. With a nod to Pythagoras, I'm going to try to square the military corner, so to speak.

WHAT DO ARMIES DO?

Some years ago, in response to what was then considered a burning question in Washington, I, as part of a rather large sampling of officers, was asked to answer the question, "Why an Army?" in 100 words or less. I wrote, "We ought to have an Army just in case the strategy continues to call for one in the future." Asking Army officers to answer that kind of question is akin to asking executives of a civilian firm that manufactures armored vehicles to answer the question, "Why a tank?" In both cases the credibility of the answer would be in serious question—not because the question is so bad, but because it is being asked of the wrong people. A better question for the national leadership—or for that matter, the general public—to ask the military is, "*What* do armies do?" so that they might better assess their utility—the *why* of military forces.

The specific purposes that armies have served—political, economic, and the like—are many. They have varied from society to society and from one epoch to another. By contrast, *what* armies do has remained immutable throughout history. To put it bluntly, armies are designed to kill people and break things. All of the other things that armies do are incidental to that central consideration. The fact is that if an army is really proficient—if it is well-led, well-trained,

well-equipped, ready, and large enough—then it is less liable to be tested, because potential opponents will see no gain in doing so. Hence, the basis for deterrence lies in how potential enemies perceive an army's warfighting capability. These perceptions are a major tool of statecraft in achieving foreign policy objectives. Consequently, the utility of military power redounds to the diplomat—not to the general. So, ask the diplomat, "Why an Army?"

Incidentally, unless it is specifically defined more narrowly, the word "armies" is used in this article in its broadest context, which includes those who fight from ships at sea and vehicles in aerospace. That usage entails no prediction of a purple-suited, one-service force in the future; instead, it should fix in everyone's mind that ships and planes are never separate from the land battle. Even when they are used alone, either implicitly or explicitly, the opponent must understand that if the actions of ships or planes are not enough to convince him, then ground forces will complete the job. Whether that involves an armored corps moving across a large land mass, an airborne brigade reinforcing an ally, or a diplomat stepping off a warship with his squad of marine guards, the relationship among air, sea, and land forces remains the same. In short, it is the potential of the totality of the air, land, and sea capabilities of armies which characterizes usable military power in support of national policy. And in the end, it is the effect on the ground—on this man's earth—which governs.

There are any number of euphemisms that might have been chosen to describe what armies do—or, perhaps better still, what armies must be prepared to do. The general literature is replete with them: "surgical strike," "withstand an incursion," "disarm the enemy," and so forth. Nonetheless, the use of more direct language serves as an important reminder that perhaps ought to be voiced from time to time. Armies kill people and break things; therefore, their commitment involves serious questions as to who will be killed, what will be broken, and how long and by whom the effects will be felt.

MILITARY STRATEGY

Given, then, that the purpose of armies is to fight—whether they ever do so or not—it follows that each will seek to engage in combat under those conditions which are most advantageous to its side. That, in essence, has been behind the search by military theorists for a universal set of principles whose judicious application would insure success.

Many military writers and practitioners have contributed through the ages to military thought. I would argue, however, that the writings of two—Karl von Clausewitz and Antoine Henri Jomini—stand out as the precursors of modern military strategy. Both men emerged in the first half of the 19th century, both participated in the Napoleonic Wars, and both agreed on the need for forcing (or enticing) their opponent into a decisive engagement and that, in the end, the battle was the thing. They fully understood the consequences of war and what armies do.

Clausewitz is the better known of the two today, no doubt because his frame of reference was broader. He wrote not only about the internal dynamics of war itself, but of the external aspects as well—of war as an instrument of national policy. He ventured into the political-military, the psychological, and even the metaphysical facets of war. His dictum that war is an extension of politics by other means is the classic expression of the relationship between war and diplomacy. That expression has been the fountainhead for statements throughout the years—from Clemenceau's rather cynical remark that "War is too important to leave to the generals" to the accepted democratic precept that the military must remain subordinate to civil authority.

With regard to military strategy, Clausewitz's key to achieving decisive results lay in the understanding of the proper relationship between the defense and the attack and the commander's ability to sense when and where the "culminating point" had been reached. His ideal strategy was based on using the superiority of the defensive to facilitate the wearing away of an opponent's

manpower, material, and moral resources, and then, at the exact moment when the force of an enemy's attack had crested (the culminating point), to counterattack. The consequent shock of further losses plus the loss of the initiative would then have a multiplier effect on the morale of the enemy and the will of its commander, thereby hastening their defeat and destruction.

While Jomini was not unaware of political, moral, and even economic considerations, he concentrated almost exclusively on what might be called pure military strategy. Furthermore, since Jomini lived a very long and active life, his writings in later years had the benefit of critiques of his earlier works, thereby increasing the clarity and soundness of his logic. Clausewitz, whose life was cut short by cholera, left behind drafts for the most part, that were subsequently published by his widow. Hence, not only did Clausewitz not have the opportunity to clarify his own writings, but the synthesis that might have evolved if both men had been able to critique each other's work never took place.

Jomini's focus was, as already noted, on the military campaign itself and on the search for a set of universal principles which would guide commanders in all military encounters. He was the first to articulate the relationship—on a grand scale—between what armies of men and machines did and the terrain on which they did it. His primary conclusion was that success came by massing a preponderance of force at the decisive point. Hence, the art of generalship lay in recognizing the decisive point in time and space and then through skillful maneuvers overwhelming the enemy at that point with a superior force. Crucial to achieving that condition was the concept of arranging to operate on interior lines. Figure 1 depicts the advantage of interior lines. Obviously the interior commander in Jomini's day could move his uncommitted unit to point "A" sooner than his opponent.

Jomini wrote at great length, over a long and full military career, on the virtues of the interior position in his analyses of the battles and campaigns of Frederick the Great, Napoleon, and others. Even today the

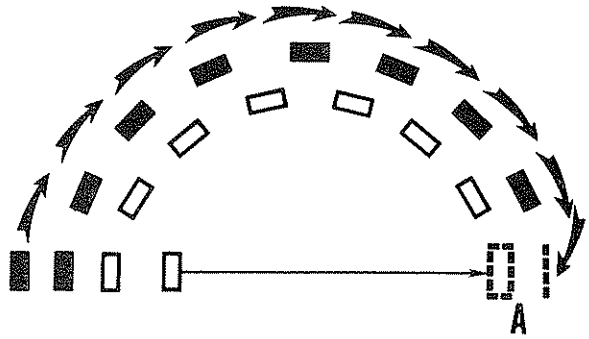

Figure 1

mention of the term "interior lines" to most military men brings to their minds an instant image of the favored position wherein they achieve success through their ability to shift forces rapidly to the decisive point.

The logic of Jomini's case is irrefutable from the geometric point of view: obviously the shortest distance between two points on the circumference of a circle is the chord which connects them. However, the advantage of the interior position only holds true if the mobility of both forces is roughly the same, as was the case in Jomini's day. If the mobility of the force which is operating on exterior lines is two or three times the mobility of its opponent, then the outer force has the advantage as far as being able to concentrate superior forces at the point of decision.

By and large the mobility and firepower potentials of modern armies have remained roughly equivalent over time, although there are exceptions. The *levée en masse* of the French Revolution, for example, initially created such large numbers of troops that the French tended to be strongest everywhere. Some mechanical advances, such as the introduction of the stirrup and the leverage it provided to a man on horseback, also come to mind wherein exploitation of a new technology brought a major advantage to one side or the other. Nevertheless, once one side exposed a new way to use men, material, or terrain, the others adopted and adapted it to their purposes.

GEOPOLITICS AND NATIONAL STRATEGY

Alfred Thayer Mahan's book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, published in 1890, drastically enlarged the strategic equation. He took a global view, added the effects of seas as well as lands to the equation, and spoke in terms of an overall national strategy. His major conclusion was that because the seas offered such a greater capability for the movement of men and material for war and for commerce, the force which controlled the seas in effect enjoyed the advantages of interior lines. His thesis at once explained the success of the British Empire and spurred the growth of our own Navy under the impetus of men like Theodore Roosevelt and Elihu Root.

Mahan markedly altered the way in which men looked at strategy. Nonetheless, a parallel remained. Just as the old military strategy was rooted in terrain, the newer global strategy was rooted in geography. A few years later Friedrich Ratzel, the founder of political geography, introduced the notion that the state was analogous to a biological organism and that it should be studied in relation to the space (*Raum*) that it occupied or sought to occupy.

In 1904, almost 15 years after the publication of Mahan's book, Halford J. Mackinder hypothesized in his paper, "The Geographical Pivot of History," that the world had become a closed political system and that the steam engine and other mechanical advances were changing the relative mobility and power relationships between land and sea transport in favor of land mobility. From this he postulated the notion of the pivotal state as the key element of his Heartland Theory. Finally, in 1916, Rudolf Kjellén in his book, *The State as an Organism*, coined the term "geopolitics" as one of five political subdivisions. No longer was the state analogous to an organism, it *was* an organism. The stage was set for Haushofer and the Nazi propagandists to change Ratzel's investigation of *Raum* to *Lebensraum* and the *right* of a growing nation to more living space.

Hitler thus had the geopolitical and philosophical underpinning for his expansionist schemes in the notion of *Lebensraum*. Furthermore, by virtue of commanding a good part of the geography alluded to in Mackinder's Heartland Theory, he seemed to have all of the advantages normally attributed to the military force operating on interior lines. He lost, of course, just as Germany and its allies lost World War I. Moreover, I would argue that they would have lost both times regardless of whether history later tabbed them as the "good guys" rather than the "bad guys," because the particular geographical coalitions of World Wars I and II in themselves ordained a German military defeat.

EXTERIOR VERSUS INTERIOR LINES

If the advantages of interior lines are so important in time of war, then why is it that the nation or coalition of nations that have found themselves on interior lines eventually lost the war? Think about that. It is difficult to cite one good historical example where the reverse has been true. Perhaps there are some, but none come readily to mind. Does this mean that those military strategists who have sought the interior position in seeking to meet the enemy under the most advantageous conditions have been pursuing precisely the wrong strategy? Yes, it does, if they were

Colonel John G. Pappageorge is presently serving as Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff, SHAPE, Belgium. He is a graduate of both the US Military Academy and the US Army War College, and he holds a master's degree in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland. Colonel Pappageorge has commanded infantry units at the platoon, company, and battalion levels; served as a Ranger instructor; and held a variety of staff positions, including assignments in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Before receiving his present assignment, Colonel Pappageorge was a Research Analyst and Study Group Chairman in the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. He has written a number of articles previously published in *Infantry*, *Military Review*, and other professional journals.

talking about national strategy, but no, it does not, if they were talking about military strategy.

The problem is that many people have failed to note an important distinction between nations and their armies. Armies *maneuver about* the earth's surface. Nations *are* the earth's surface. Geography is not simply terrain on a larger scale. Those principles or positions whose pursuit provides advantages to an army, which moves to accomplish its aim, are not necessarily transferable as advantages to nations, which are instead immovable.

Frederick the Great's campaigns during the Seven Years' War illustrate the point quite well—doubly so because he was not only at the head of his armies but at the head of his nation as well. With only financial aid from England, Frederick initially faced the armies of Austria, Russia, Sweden, Saxony, and France (which was also at war with England during this period) and won. It is instructive to examine the basis for his ultimate victory.

In spite of his initial victories at Rossback and Leuthen, Frederick was soon reduced to the strategic defensive against the combined weight of the forces which virtually surrounded him. Although he used his interior position brilliantly through a masterful series of marches and countermarches, his fate would have been sealed. However, Peter III was so impressed by Frederick that when he ascended the Russian throne, he switched sides and joined with Frederick against the others. The others soon sued for peace. Geopolitical factors had presaged a different military outcome. Frederick was now on exterior lines in relation to his opponents by virtue of his alliances with England and Russia. Meanwhile, he had lost none of the military advantages he had enjoyed with regard to being able to outmaneuver his opponents and assemble a superior military force at the point of decision.

In both World Wars the Germans remained encircled. The preponderance of men, money, and resources remained against them, except for those brief periods when the Russians were either neutral (1918) or allied with them (1939). Thus, the global odds were against them, and no military victories, no matter how brilliant, could change the situation unless they led to a realignment of the appropriate geopolitical entities. Again and again, the Germans took advantage of their interior position to mass their forces and achieve brilliant victories. Tannenburg and the Masurian Lakes, in World War I, and the breakthrough in the Ardennes in the West and the double envelopment of Kiev in the East, in World War II, come to mind. But in the end, the Central Powers and the Axis remained surrounded, and they lost.

The basic problem of an aggressor beginning a war from an encircled position is that success only gives him a larger circle to control, even as his own forces are reaching Clausewitz's culminating point. Napoleon's campaigns, particularly after 1812, amply demonstrate this fact. So does the Japanese attempt at a "concentric advance" during World War II.

If, on the other hand, the encircled nation seeks only to defend the status quo, then the theories of Clausewitz do apply to some extent, and the defender's interior position would make an attack more costly for an aggressor. Nevertheless, the defender is still surrounded, and the initiative rests with the other side—including the diplomatic initiative.

I should stress that the term "geopolitical," as used here, means more than just terrain and politics. The term should bring to mind a picture of all of the moral, material, societal, technological, and psychological resources that accrue to the nation which possesses them. However, the term connotes more than just the sum of all those resources. It adds the spatial dimension by giving due consideration, as well, to the physical location of all those elements in relation to those of an opponent. Consequently, the notion of exterior versus interior lines takes on a much broader and richer connotation than the purely military one of Jomini's day.

The Arab-Israeli confrontation illustrates the point quite well. The Israelis, by virtue of their interior lines, have won battle after battle, and the superior quality of their army is not questioned. Nonetheless, their ultimate

survival depends on maintaining a relationship with the United States in order to preserve a strategic position of exterior lines with respect to their Arab neighbors.

The lesson is clear. At the tactical level, outflank your enemy, cut him off, surround him, and his defeat is insured. At the theater level, use the terrain to achieve a position of interior lines (figuratively or literally) with respect to the enemy's army. At the international level, strive to maintain a position on exterior lines. In short, interior lines are desirable for the general, whereas attaining the exterior geography in conjunction with allies is not just desirable but crucial to the statesman. Obviously the correct strategies at every level should contribute to that end—to what I would term the geostrategic goal.

THE GEOSTRATEGIC GOAL AND THE INDIRECT APPROACH

Liddell Hart referred in his writings to the notion that "dislocation" was the aim of strategy. By that he meant that one should "... seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce a decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this." Dislocation would consequently lead to "the enemy's dissolution or his easier disruption in battle." Hence, the secret of success lay in arranging the circumstances of your enemy's physical and psychological defeat before the battle is joined. This could best be accomplished by taking what he championed as the indirect approach. Decisive results come from avoiding the enemy's strength and instead attacking his weaknesses in an unexpected way. The proper course lay in taking the line of least resistance physically, and the line of least expectation psychologically.

The indirect approach is applicable, as Hart inferred, to more than just the military sphere. Dislocation is possible, I believe, at the geostrategic level. Gaining and maintaining the geostrategic advantages of exterior lines achieves that dislocation. Further, using all military and nonmilitary means to undermine the enemy by attacking—or threatening—his weaknesses rather than his strengths is the way to gain and maintain those advantages. There is, moreover, a corollary that follows from the notion of seeking the geostrategic goal in conjunction with the use of the indirect approach in order to achieve the physical and psychological dislocation of the enemy. The opponent must not be allowed to limit confrontation to a specific region or locale where the odds are with him. Instead, he must be plagued by uncertainty over whether any attempt on his part to initiate a confrontation in one area will cause a reaction in another area where he is weak. In short, he must be so concerned about having to fight a two-, or three-, or even four-front war that he will be deterred from initiating a one-front war in the region where he is strongest. Similarly, he must be made to feel uncertain over the possibilities of escalation if he contemplates a short campaign for a limited objective.

IDEOLOGY AND MILITARY STRATEGY

Ideas compete with one another in the minds of men. The word "compete" was chosen to emphasize that ideas do not fight with one another—with one idea, so to speak, beating another "two falls out of three." Rather, men can hold conflicting ideas in their minds for long periods of time before discarding one and keeping another or synthesizing what they believe to be the best from many competing ideas. Nations, on the other hand, confront or cooperate with other nations in the physical world, and armies kill people and break things (or work very hard at being ready to do so). Furthermore, trying to compare the three is analogous in some ways to the children's game of "paper, scissors, rock." Rocks—armies—break scissors. Scissors—governments—cut and shape papers. Papers—ideas—cover rocks. Nonetheless, I would argue there is nothing more powerful than what people believe to be a good idea whose time has come. Governments and their armies might delay or speed up the process, but they cannot halt it, short of completely destroying every human being. Look at the Christians—they started with only 12! In this

respect governments and their armies are important only insofar as they determine the environment in which ideas compete.

Thus, the main reason for seeking to maintain the geostrategic advantage is to insure that the environment will at least be neutral, if not conducive, to the nurturing of one's own beliefs and ideas. Therein lies the relationship between ideology and geostrategy.

Viewed in this light, our rivalry with the Soviets perhaps takes on a somewhat different perspective inasmuch as the fundamental issue between us is ideological. Simply stated, it revolves around the question of whether the state is to serve the purposes of man or whether man is to serve the purposes of the state. Furthermore, we believe that our side is right and that given the choice men will ultimately choose representative democracy over the other forms of relationships between man and his government. Hence, we will prevail if undue coercion—primarily military—does not force the choice the wrong way. Herein lies the ultimate aim of military strategy. So we come full circle, back to the notion of "strategic dislocation" as a means of precluding the use of military force by an opponent.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

So far this discussion has been largely theoretical and rather nonspecific with regard to what the US strategy ought to be. But before we move to specifics, there is one final point that has to be made. It stems from the fact that we often tend to think in terms of a flat map of the world instead of the reality of a round—or almost round, to be more accurate—earth. A little finger exercise may impress upon you the difference between looking at geostrategic considerations on a flat map as opposed to thinking about them in terms of their location on the surface of a globe. Hold your hand out as shown in figure 2 and label your thumbnail as Korea/Japan, your index fingernail as Canada/US, and your middle fingernail as Western Europe. That is normally the way we look at the relationship between these geographical entities. We talk

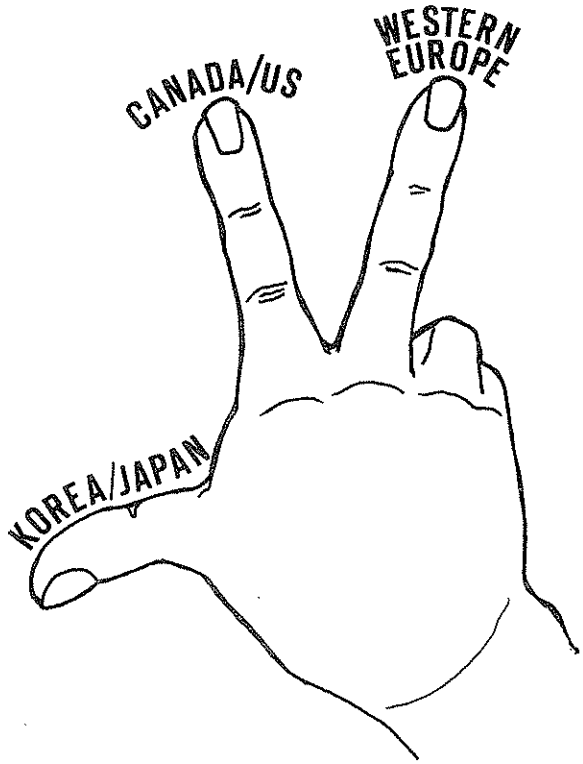

Figure 2

about a policy for Europe and another for Japan as if they are only tenuously connected to each other.

Now move the fingers of your hand to the position they would assume if they were gripping a baseball, as in figure 3.

Note the changed relationship between the three entities with which we started. The image of eastern versus western seems less applicable. Instead we see the Warsaw Pact surrounded, and we recognize immediately the effect of our rapprochement with the PRC and its conclusion that the USSR is its principal antagonist. Note also that the idea of a western bloc which includes Japan is not unreasonable. There is really no need to say, "the West—to include Japan."

For the rest of this paper, think in terms of that last figure—of maintaining a grip on that baseball. Lift the two-dimensional graphics from the map and in your mind's eye rearrange them in their proper relationship on the earth's surface. Truly recognize that

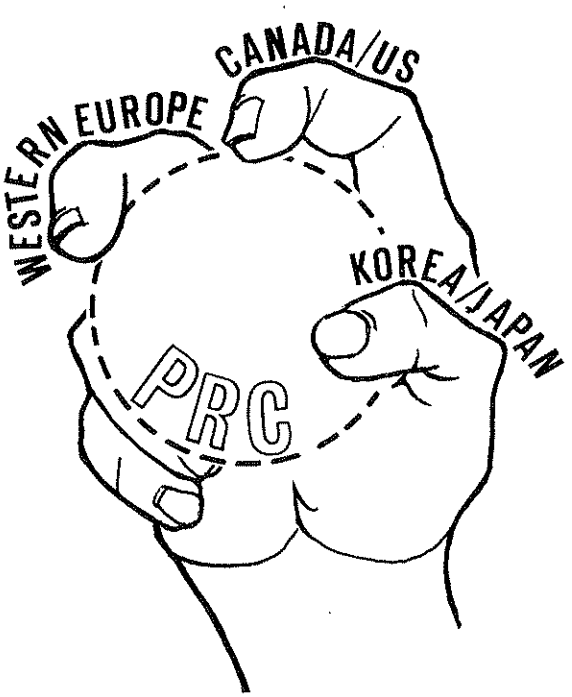

Figure 3

oceans, for example, are not things that are normally found on the edges of a map, but are instead connecting waterways which make up some 70 percent of the earth's surface and which connect the earth's land masses into an integrated geographical whole.

GEOSTRATEGY FOR THE WEST

Earlier I made the point that ideas compete while armies fight and that the ultimate purpose is to create at least a not-unfriendly environment in which our own ideology will win out simply because, we believe, it is superior and can successfully compete politically, economically, and culturally with that of our principal ideological antagonists, the Soviets. For the military strategist that poses two challenges. The first is to preclude a strategic nuclear exchange, because it would destroy everybody. The second is to achieve the strategic dislocation of the enemy by attaining a geostrategic position on exterior lines so that eventual military victory is assured in a conventional war.

The threat of a nuclear holocaust is, of course, the most potentially dangerous of the two challenges to the ultimate survival of man. Nevertheless, from the military point of view, it is in many ways easier to manage. For one thing, it can currently be handled bilaterally without much reference to allies. While that may not be politically palatable to the rest of the world, it is, nonetheless, a military reality. Furthermore, the very destructiveness of nuclear weapons is the basis of their deterrent capability—so much so that parity, rather than superiority, is good enough to prevent their use by either side. Thus, the major consideration becomes one of arriving at a mutually acceptable definition, through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, of what constitutes quantitative and qualitative nuclear parity.

The second challenge of securing the strategic dislocation of the Soviets is not as easily resolved. It cannot be accomplished without our allies and without great commitments by all in terms of men, money, and resources.

Ironically enough, the United States and its allies have enjoyed the geostrategic advantages of exterior lines for so long that they have been taken for granted. However, two conditions have been evolving since the end of World War II which give reason to pay explicit attention to the geostrategic position of the United States in the world. The first condition is the growing military power of the USSR and its attempt to achieve the ability to project its conventional military power outside the continental land mass of Eurasia. The second condition is the growing realization that the world has figuratively been shrinking due to scientific, technological, political, and economic advances. Taken together, these conditions mean that only one of the superpowers (and its allies) will be able to enjoy the advantages of exterior lines in the future. The world has truly become a closed political system. There are no actors that can arrive on the scene to change the situation, as the United States did in both World Wars. Every geopolitical entity is accounted for. Mackinder may have been wrong with regard to his idea of a pivotal

state, but he was absolutely right in his global outlook and his conclusion that the world was becoming a closed political system. Consequently, every local or regional conflict is of interest to the superpowers. Unless the United States and the USSR agree to keep it localized, it becomes instead an extension of the overall drive by both to either maintain or improve their geostrategic position.

Maintaining the geostrategic advantage is not to be confused with the containment policies of the 1940's and 50's, even though there is a similarity in the sense that both imply surrounding the Soviets. Containment meant holding the line everywhere. It inferred that alien ideas could be stopped by military might and that Communism was a monolithic entity so unchangeable that neither trade, nor talk, nor reason could move it. Events have proven otherwise. The fact is, the Soviet Union can be expected to continue to grow up politically, economically, and societally. Furthermore, I would argue that in that growth are contained the seeds of the destruction of the idea that man is meant to serve the state rather than the reverse. Consequently, our problem is not one of containing the Soviets as much as it is one of "managing the emergence of the USSR as a superpower," to borrow a phrase from Dr. Kissinger.

The Soviet Union today is a military giant, an economic adolescent, and a political midget. It is strongest in Tank Armies and weakest (by current design) in protecting civil liberties. The same political system that is so effective in allowing it to concentrate on guaranteeing its borders precludes guaranteeing the human rights of its citizens within those same borders. In the long run, that paradox must prove fatal to its present political system. Thus, it makes perfectly good sense—and not only from the moral point of view—to attack the Soviet stand on human rights. It is one of the nonmilitary ways of applying the indirect approach toward achieving some of the psychological effects of their geostrategic dislocation. Another much more subtle effect, for example, stems from the economic fact that all members of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (including most nations of the world) must, in their international transactions, deal with nonmembers (Warsaw Pact nations) as if they were members. Thus, the Communists must behave in their international economic dealings like capitalists. Many more examples could be cited.

As important as those aspects are, the principal element in the short run which must be subjected to strategic dislocation is Soviet military power.

In my view, that is not as great a military problem as some might think, although its solution calls for great effort and expense. As noted earlier, parity tends to negate the utility of nuclear weapons except as a deterrent against the use of nuclear weapons by the other side. That leaves so-called conventional military power. The fact is, in spite of the formidable power that Soviet Tank Armies represent in Eastern Europe, the USSR is still only a continental, rather than a global, military power with regard to conventional forces. Lacking aircraft carriers, Russia can project its military power against a serious opponent only out to the range of its land-based tactical aircraft.

The ability to project military power throughout the world against serious opposition is not easily or cheaply acquired. The forces involved in a given case may not have to be particularly large. However, it takes an extremely sophisticated military system to support such a capability. The requirements include a worldwide communications system; a complicated logistical and administrative support system; and highly trained air, naval, and land forces that are accustomed to operating on a global scale. The only country that approaches that capability today is the United States. The Soviets do not yet have it, but they are working on it.

I would argue, however, that the Soviets will not achieve a global capability until they can solve the problem of providing tactical air cover over their naval forces and over any

ground forces they might employ outside the continent. We, of course, have solved that problem through a combination of aircraft carriers and base rights agreements with our allies. The Soviets are making some headway in this regard with the development of their semi-carriers of the *Moskva* and *Kiev* class. But these can only carry a rather small number of helicopters or VSTOL aircraft and cannot match the air power of a US carrier. They are certainly not strong enough to gain and sustain an "air cap" over their ships. Thus, their ships lose a great deal of power when they sail outside the combat radius of their land-based tactical aircraft. So, lacking the aircraft carrier potential of the United States, the Soviets seem to have adopted a policy of building ships, such as missile cruisers, which can sink aircraft carriers. That sounds reasonable, and it has certainly raised some serious questions about the survivability of our aircraft carriers. But the fact remains that those Soviet cruisers cannot fire their missiles accurately very many miles downrange unless they have an airplane overhead which can guide the missile to its target. Hence, we return again to their problem of an air cap. Once their planes are eliminated, their ships are blinded.

The whole pattern of Soviet policy in Africa seems designed to alleviate part of their problem with respect to an air cap for their navy. Diplomatic initiatives open the way for military base rights. Then Soviet military presence in turn tends to increase Soviet political influence in those same countries. The pattern of their treaty arrangements for overflight rights and basing arrangements is, in my view, designed to give them the capability of interdicting the oil routes out of the Persian Gulf through the Suez Canal or around the Cape by way of the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic.

However, their "Achilles' heel" stems from the fact that the Soviets cannot support such a system for very long without either the explicit or implicit permission of Yugoslavia, Greece, or Turkey. Their ships must first move through the Turkish Straits, then through either the Suez or Gibraltar. The Soviets have similar problems in moving out of their other home ports. Any air line of communications must overfly one of the three countries mentioned. That would hardly be a secure line of communications in any serious and sustained confrontation with the West. Thus, the Soviets remain in a disadvantageous position. This helps explain why the declaration of an increased military alert by an American president appeared to be enough to deter the Soviets from attempting to fly a Soviet military force to the Middle East in 1973. The geostrategic advantage was ours.

MAINTAINING THE GEOSTRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

A watershed will have been reached in the relationship between US and Soviet military power if the Soviets can ever establish a naval presence against US forces in an area where the Soviets possess airfields that are connected by secure rail links back to the USSR. Thus, the geostrategic position of the United States is most threatened in the Eastern Mediterranean. In my view, the Mediterranean Basin—consisting of all the riparian states plus the Azores, Portugal, and Jordan—is the geostrategic entity that we must focus on, rather than splitting that part of the world into the NATO southern flank and the Middle East. The reality is that the entire Basin constitutes the southern flank of the Western position in Europe.

Viewed in these geostrategic terms, it becomes imperative to prevent the Soviets from regaining airfields in Yugoslavia or use of the sub pens at Valona in Albania. Consequently, the Yugoslav succession process, after Tito, could precipitate a geostrategic crisis that would not be particularly evident if we isolated the problem and looked only at its local political significance. In short, the larger question lies in the fact that we are committed to the defense of Western Europe. But is Yugoslavia part of Western Europe, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, or none of the above? I hold that Yugoslavia is an integral part of the Mediterranean Basin, which protects the heart of Western Europe, and that the military

advantage rests with the US Sixth Fleet as long as Soviet ships lack the capability to sustain an air cap over their ships in the Eastern Mediterranean. So, we must view the Yugoslav succession problem in geostrategic terms.

I began this paper by promising to outline the theoretical construct which should underlie our military strategy. I conclude with the idea that we must maintain the geostrategic advantage of exterior lines with respect to the Soviets and couple that with the indirect approach to insure the geostrategic dislocation of the USSR. The two concepts used in combination mean that we do not simply hold the line, but instead give way in some areas and advance in others in the nonmilitary as well as the military spheres. In sum, we must employ a policy of "flexible restraint" of the Soviets. Interestingly enough, this means that if we are strong enough to push for human rights throughout the world, we are in fact not only safe, but gaining strength by virtue of operating against a major Soviet weakness.