TRADING-OFF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND VIETNAM: THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS*

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This article examines the strategic implications of a tradeoff of US bases in the Philippines for Soviet bases in Vietnam. How would such a tradeoff affect the security of the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations, the defense of Japan and South Korea, the safety of vital sea lanes and chokepoints, and the ability to project power into the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf? The article concludes that a tradeoff would enhance peace and security for all countries concerned.

In the course of a speech at Vladivostok in July 1986, Soviet General-Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev stated: "In general, I would like to say that if the US were to give up its military presence in the Philippines, let's say, we would not leave this step unanswered" (Gorbachev 1986: 8).

Gorbachev's offer was exceedingly vague and it was put forward in the midst of a speech that was noteworthy on at least three other counts. But the implication of the offer was obvious. Don Oberdorfer reported from Washington that US officials said Gorbachev "made what seemed to be an oblique reference to the Soviet military presence at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam" (1986: A15). William Branigan covered a Bangkok news conference called by Boris Zhilyaev, the charge d'affaires at the Soviet Embassy in Thailand. Zhilyaev, wrote Branigan, repeated Gorbachev's "almost casual hint that the Soviet forces would withdraw from their Cam Ranh Bay base in Vietnam if the United States withdrew from its bases in the Philippines." After quoting from Gorbachev's speech, Branigan continued,

> Zhilyaev said this meant the Soviet Union would "reciprocate," but declined to confirm the widespread interpretation that such a response would involve the Soviet naval and air base at Cam Ranh Bay. In any event, US officials do not consider Cam Ranh Bay a fair tradeoff for the US Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base[1] in the Philippines (1986: A17-A18).

The proposal to trade US bases in the Philippines for Soviet bases in Vietnam has received very little attention, except for some perfunctary efforts to dismiss it as a calculated Soviet ploy or an obviously unbalanced offer. What is striking, however, is that attempts to justify continued US access to Subic and Clark advanced by officials in Washington or by their supporters have centered precisely on the Soviet presence at Cam Ranh Bay.

Thus, Admiral S. R. Foley, Jr., the Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet:

> If bases in the Philippines were not available to us, even if we had substitutes elsewhere, our ability to support our strategy in the Southwestern Pacific and Southeast Asia and to preclude the Soviets from operating their huge installation at Cam Ranh Bay would be sorely limited (Foley 1985: 36).

In a paper published by the Air Force-funded Rand corporation in 1983, Guy Pauker wrote:

> Before the intrusion of the Soviet Union into the region, which the Vietnamese government has made possible, the neutralization of Southeast Asia was a goal that could perhaps have been achieved at the time of the expiration of the Philippine-American Military Bases Agreement of 1947 [i.e., in 1991]. This is no longer a realistic expectation (Pauker 1983: 7).

A. James Gregor, writing for the conservative Heritage Foundation:

> The only realistic US response to the inevitable Soviet military build-up in Indochina is a corresponding replenishment of its own forces in secure bases in the region . . . . Although at one time it could have been argued that either ASEAN or the United States could put together a realistic security policy for Southeast Asia without basing US forces in the Philippines, such a position no longer is tenable (Gregor 1984: 8).

In 1986, the US Information Service (USIS) published a glossy 68-page booklet entitled "Background on the Bases" for distribution in the Philippines. The publication provided a detailed (and exaggerated[2]) description of the Soviet facilities in Cam Ranh Bay, pictures of a Soviet jet fighter, a submarine, and an aircraft carrier, and maps showing the reach of Soviet naval and air units operating from Vietnam. It was in this context that the security role of the Philippine bases was defined:

> US naval and air forces stationed in the Philippines can effectively protect regional air and sea lanes, maintain a balance to Soviet forces based in Vietnam, and provide a security shield behind which the countries of Southeast Asia can pursue peaceful economic development (USIS 1986: 8-11).

According to the commander of the US Pacific fleet, the Soviet presence at Cam Ranh Bay has been "the second most dramatic change to the strategic equation" in Asia, second only to the invasion of Afghanistan. The growing Soviet threat in the Pacific "brings into sharp focus the tremendous importance the role that our facilities in the Philippines play with regard to regional stability" (US Navy

1987, sect. 2: 2; sect. 4: 1-2).

With Cam Ranh Bay of such apparent military consequence, one would think that US officials would be eager to pursue Gorbachev's Vladivostok proposal. Though Gorbachev's offer was vague, the formulation in his Vladivostok speech has been repeated, and in some minor respects expanded upon, by Soviet diplomats, suggesting that it was no passing fancy.[3] A U.S. embassy official told me (interview, 6 June 1988, Manila), half-facetiously, that Gorbachev's statement that a US withdrawal from the Philippines would not go unanswered could mean that the Soviet Union would invade. Asked whether there had been any U.S. effort to seek Soviet clarification in this regard, he replied "No, because we're not interested."

Anyone seriously concerned with promoting peace, security, and justice would ask some obvious questions in response to the Gorbachev offer. First, what are the current prospects for achieving these goals in the Asian-Pacific region, given the presence of US and Soviet military bases in the Philippines and Vietnam, respectively? And, second, what would the prospects be in the absence of these bases? Naturally, one would not ask whether the same functions that are now served by the Philippine bases could be accomplished elsewhere without considering the prior questions: would the current functions of the Philippine bases be necessary in the absence of Soviet access to Cam Ranh Bay? and, indeed, are these functions necessary in any event?

Strikingly, most of the studies of the Philippine bases avoid these questions, and, on the contrary, take for granted that the bases are necessary, that their functions are necessary, and that the Soviet presence in Cam Ranh Bay is inevitable.

One congressional study in 1977 affirmed the importance of Subic, but dared to challenge the prevailing assumptions by concluding that the future value of Clark Air Base was "questionable unless the United States intends to maintain a capability to mount and support major military operations on the Southeast Asian mainland" (US Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance 1977: 12). The air force promptly responded that Clark was essential as a back door to resupply Israel in the event European bases were denied during another Mideast war (Weintraub 1977: 14). (That the Philippines, with its restive Muslim population, was more likely than NATO to allow its territory to be used in such a circumstance is a measure of Manila's subservience to Washington.) In any event, however, this congressional study was apparently an aberration caused by the anti-interventionist sentiment that held sway briefly after the Vietnam war. Even that same year a study of basing alternatives found nothing comparable to the Philippine facilities. For the purposes of the study, "currently defined missions" were "taken as givens" (Gannon 1977: 1).

With the development of Cam Ranh Bay as a Soviet facility the assumptions became even narrower. Alva M. Bowen of the Library of Congress framed his analysis in terms of two cases: (1) "where the Soviet Union retains access to bases in Vietnam but does not gain access to bases in the Philippines"; and (2) where the Soviet Union gains access to bases in the Philippines and retains

access to bases in Vietnam" (Bowen 1986: 2-3).[4] These were apparently the only assumptions worth considering.

Writing in 1985, Richard J. Kessler of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded that the Philippine bases were "irreplaceable" and "vital" given present US strategy, but that strategies can change. But Kessler's new strategies were in the service of the same policies:

> No defense dictum states that there must be one large air base and one large naval base sitting astride Southeast Asian sea lanes. US strategy could be adapted to fit a different set of support facilities conditioned on retaining the quality of US force projection capability and on covering salients, ensuring strategic denial to opposing forces (1985: 28).

Few analysts have asked the fundamental questions. Former US Ambassador to Malaysia, Francis T. Underhill, has recently written:

> The question has been, "How can we do elsewhere what we are now doing at our Philippine bases?" We should instead be asking ourselves, "Could we be doing it at greatly reduced levels?" and "Do we need to be doing it at all?" (Underhill 1987: 575).

When Underhill asked such questions while in the Foreign Service, his views were characterized by his superiors in Washington as "nutty" and "stupid" (Bonner 1987: 213-14, based on an interview with Richard Holbrooke). He was not given another ambassadorial post after Malaysia.

I will try to deal with Underhill's questions. That is, first I will look at the various missions with which the Philippine bases are expected to deal. Some of these missions may be conducive to world peace and social justice and some may not. This will require an examination of the interests not just of the United States, but of all the countries -- or, more accurately, the people of all the countries -- in the region. Then I will inquire which of the worthwhile missions would be furthered by maintaining US bases in the Philippines *and* Soviet bases in Vietnam and which would be better served by the removal of *both* sets of military facilities. This will permit an evaluation of the merits of pursuing the Gorbachev tradeoff proposal.

The missions of the Philippine bases have been frequently enumerated in the testimony of US government officials.[5] They are: (1) to help protect the Philippines from external attack, (2) to help protect other nations in Southeast Asia from external attack, (3) to lend support to US forces defending Japan and South Korea, (4) to defend vital sea lanes and chokepoints upon which the survival of Japan and our other allies depends, and (5) to project power into the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

Protecting the Philippines

There is general agreement among analysts that the external threats faced by the Philippines are all extremely remote (see Shalom 1985, for documentation and discussion). Moreover, any consideration of the security role of the bases must take account as well of the possibility that the US installations might serve as magnets for attack in the event of a US-Soviet conflict. Soviet SS-20s have been targeted on the Philippines, no doubt aimed at the US military facilities.[6] In May 1987, Gorbachev offered to remove the Asian SS-20s if the US would remove its nuclear weapons from Japan, Korea, and the Philippines and pull its aircraft carriers back beyond some agreed line. (See "Gorbachev Makes . . ." 1987; Vorontsov 1987: A27). The Philippine government, speaking through its Foreign Secretary, Salvador Laurel, backed this proposal (Cevallos 1987: 1, 6). In July, Gorbachev modified his position, offering to eliminate his Asian missiles unilaterally, with only the hope that the US nuclear presence in Asia would not grow (Quinn-Judge and Manning 1987: 10; see also Chanda 1987: 32). Ultimately, Gorbachev and Reagan signed an INF agreement that provided for the elimination of Soviet SS-20s from Asia without any US concession in Asia whatsoever. SS-20s will thus no longer be targeted on the Philippines, but the Philippines will remain a potential target of nuclear attack. The Soviet Union maintains a fleet of ballistic-missile firing submarines in the Pacific, and while the advanced models are presumably reserved for targets in the United States, the older ones are probably assigned to regional targets (as is the case in Europe: see Daniel and Tarleton 1986: 104), of which the Philippines is surely one, given its role in US nuclear war-fighting plans (see Bello 1983: 10-11; Simbulan 1985: 217-30, 327-33).[7]

The argument has been advanced by USIS (1986: 30) that there is always a tradeoff between deterring and attracting an attack, but that history has proven that bases and alliances provide protection from foreign aggression. After all, asserted USIS, nations like Cambodia and Afghanistan -- without such protection -- have been invaded, while in the years since World War II "no country with US bases and a US mutual defense treaty has been attacked."

This is a rather disingenuous argument. There are of course other countries that might have been selected as examples of countries without alliances or bases that have been attacked: such as the Dominican Republic in 1965 or Vietnam from 1965 to 1973 or Nicaragua today. Some US allies have been attacked, though not by the Soviet Union: Britain in the Falklands. And as William Sullivan, the former US Ambassador to the Philippines and veteran State Department official, has acknowledged (despite his enthusiasm for the Philippine bases), Japan attacked the Philippines in 1941 because of, not despite, the presence of US bases (Sullivan 1987: 541; see also Shalom, forthcoming). While it is true that US allies in NATO, Japan, and a few other countries have not been attacked since World War II, there are many times more countries that have likewise not been attacked. There is one case of a country with a US base, that was part of a regional defense organization with the United States, that was

invaded--by a force organized by the United States: namely, Cuba during the Bay of Pigs. The US has declared that ANZUS is no longer operative with respect to New Zealand. Is New Zealand thereby in danger of attack (other than by French government agents, that is)?[8] Where is war more likely: on the Korean peninsula, where the US has bases and a mutual defense treaty, or in New Zealand, or neutral Burma.

What all these examples show is that generalizations about alliances that abstract from the specific situation, particularly the specific threats that a country faces, are quite meaningless. What matters for the Philippines is not whether West Germany would be safer without US military bases (though it is perhaps worth noting that neutralized Austria is not considered as likely a site of war as militarized Germany, and that such neutralization of Germany too might have been possible in the early 1950s, but was rejected by Washington [LaFeber 1980: 132]). What matters for the Philippines are the external threats *it* faces, and here opinion is uniform that such threats are negligible (see in addition to the sources cited in Shalom 1985: Fraser 1970: 45; Connell et al. 1977: 6; US Committee on Foreign Relations 1979: 163; Nivera 1983: 127; Center for Defense Information 1986: 4).

What about Vietnam as a potential invader of the Philippines? Vietnam does not have the naval units that could support any such invasion, so it would have to be assisted by the Soviet navy. But this highly marginal possibility would of course be even less likely in the event of a Soviet withdrawal from Vietnam as a result of a tradeoff.

Against improbable outside threats must be weighed the likelihood of the US bases attracting a nuclear attack on the Philippines. (All-out nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union might well cause deadly fallout or climatic changes even in nations not explicitly targeted or hit by nuclear weapons; but nuclear strikes on US bases in the Philippines would cause immediate devastation [Emmanuel 1983].) The odds of nuclear war are certainly low, but not perhaps as low as is sometimes believed. The Deputy Chief of Staff in the Pentagon in 1984 considered that a US-Soviet war was an "almost inevitable probability" (Hayes et al. 1986: 124), and though he believed that such a conflict could be kept localized and non-nuclear, US strategy militates against such a possibility. US officials have planned for horizontal escalation: that is, to attack in the Soviet Far East in the event of a conflict elsewhere, not just to bottle up Soviet forces, but to destroy them, including potential strikes against Soviet ballistic missile carrying submarines (Hayes et al. 1986: 124-25, 129-30; M. Gordon 1986: A1, A14; Stefanick 1986; Arkin and Chappell 1985). And former Navy Secretary John Lehman's view that "Who gets to shoot first will have more to do with who wins than any [other] factor" (Hayes et al. 1986: 124) does not bode well for crisis stability. Nuclear weapons are so fully integrated into US and Soviet naval and air power in the Pacific that it seems certain that a horizontal escalation would lead to vertical escalation (Hayes et al. 1986: 148-49).

One final matter regarding threats to the Philippines must be considered. Some analysts acknowledge that while it is true that, even in the absence of US

bases, a Soviet invasion of the Philippines is highly improbable, yet the threat will come in the form of "Soviet and Vietnamese support for the communist New People's Army with money and weapons" (Kessler 1985: 29).[9] The Philippines no doubt faces a serious problem of internal insurgency, and will continue to face such a problem as long as the living conditions of so much of the population remain so desperate. But the threat envisioned here seems dubious.

First of all, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) still retains elements of its Maoist origins, for example referring to itself as the party of Marxism-Leninism Mao-Tsetung Thought, (e.g., *Ang Bayan*, May 1988, cover), an orientation not very conducive to close Soviet ties. The CPP has tried to steer a neutral course between China and the Soviet Union.[10] Though the NPA now states that it is willing to accept arms from anyone as long as there are no strings attached ("On the Current . . ." 1987: 11), there is no credible evidence of any significant Soviet (or Vietnamese) support for the NPA.[11]

The real point, however, is how the US bases affect potential Soviet support to the NPA. Military bases are hardly efficient means of preventing Soviet money from being smuggled into the Philippines, nor could they do much to avert weapons smuggling into the southern Philippines -- just as they were of no consequence in this regard when Muslim separatists were being supplied from outside. In fact, the US military bases provide the NPA with more weapons through the thriving black market than they keep out of the country, and major areas of guerilla activity continue to include the vicinity of the US bases.[12]

Presumably the argument about the bases' role in deterring Soviet support to the NPA refers not so much to the physical presence of the bases as to their symbolic importance: the bases serve as an announcement that the United States is concerned about the future of the Philippines and would be willing to commit resources, even troops, to keep the NPA from coming to power. But the situation might well operate the other way around. The USSR would have little to gain in destabilizing a neutral Philippines that hosted no foreign military bases, given that an NPA victory would lead to a rather independent regime, something no more attractive to Moscow than to Washington. On the other hand, so long as US bases remain in the Philippines, smuggling funds and arms to guerillas is a relatively low-cost way for the Soviet Union to undermine the usefulness of an important Pentagon asset. When the former commander of the Pacific fleet was asked whether the US would home port a naval battle group at Subic, he replied:

> Certainly if we thought the country had political stability. That has been the shortcoming across the board. We would have gone in there a long time ago except for that (US Committee on Foreign Affairs 1986: 94).

So long as the US has bases in the Philippines, Moscow will have a special incentive in promoting instability in the country.

Protecting Southeast Asia

Let us consider now the second mission of the US bases in the Philippines, the protection of Southeast Asia in general. The ASEAN nations -- Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, and the Philippines -- do not see the Soviet threat in the same way Washington does. According to one authority, "Although the USSR is not admired or trusted in the region, its presence in the Pacific is generally judged differently by Asians than by Americans." There is a "widespread view among Asian-Pacific states that Americans exaggerate the Soviet threat to the region" (B. Gordon 1983: 200-201).[13] Another US scholar writes that "the prevailing Southeast Asian point of view seems to be that the United States, particularly under the administration of Ronald Reagan, greatly overemphasizes the Soviet threat" (Horn 1985: 685).

Each of the ASEAN countries has its own particular view of the threats it confronts. Thailand and Singapore are generally the most anti-Soviet in orientation. The Thai elite views the Soviet Union and Vietnam as its major external threats (Viraphol 1985: 69), and of course Thailand borders on Kampuchea where Vietnamese troops are now engaged. One should note, however, Bangkok's concern about Vietnamese activity in Kampuchea is not simply a matter of self-defense; Thailand has historically viewed Cambodia as part of its sphere of influence and resents Hanoi's intrusion (Buszynski 1987: 766). In any event, it seems clear that Bangkok views China and not the United States as its means of keeping Vietnam in check.

Singapore is the one ASEAN nation to publicly support the bases in the Philippines. It has indicated that it looks to the United States to ensure that the Soviet Union and Vietnam do not try to intimidate the nations of the region, but it doesn't want Washington to complicate the situation in the area by trying to bring in China to counter Soviet strength (Pauker 1983: 12). Singapore's assessment of the security environment in Southeast Asia, however, is indicated by the fact that it raised no objection to the withdrawal of the New Zealand defense force that had been stationed on its territory since 1955 (Barber 1987: 15). When Singapore officials are asked if they would be willing to host US bases in the event they have to be moved from the Philippines, they coyly (though accurately) respond that Clark Air Base is larger than their whole country (quoted in Weatherbee 1987: 1236), suggesting a threat perception that is less than overwhelming. In addition, Singapore "feels comfortable enough with the Soviet presence to provide repair services to Soviet naval units passing to and from the Indian Ocean" (Underhill 1987: 569). And "some of the ASEAN countries who led the call to 'isolate' Vietnam economically and diplomatically are now among Hanoi's leading noncommunist trading partners" (Richburg 1987b: A37).

Malaysia and Indonesia are much less concerned about the USSR and Vietnam than are Thailand or Singapore. In their view, a strong Vietnam is beneficial in that it poses a counterweight to China (Simon 1982: 59; Fitzgerald 1985: 52). "Living in Malaysia," wrote a US Fulbright scholar in 1985, "gives the

impression that the USSR is almost a non-factor in the region. There simply seems not to be a great deal of attention paid to it" (Underhill 1987: 566, citing a report by Robert C. Horn). And the head of Malaysia's most important strategic think-tank has written, "We should not be overly concerned about the Soviet threat, firstly because the Soviets do not have the capability, and secondly because they do not have the intent" (Underhill 1987: 566, citing a report by Mohamed Noordin Sopiee).

To Indonesia, China is seen as the serious threat, given its geographical proximity, its historical role in Southeast Asia, and the large overseas Chinese community. Indeed, it views China's behavior as inviting the very Soviet presence in Vietnam that has aroused concern. Indonesia rejects the dire warnings about possible Soviet aggression. Such warnings confuse "Soviet military capabilities with Soviet intentions. In point of fact, for that matter, the US military forces based in the Philippines are no less capable of doing the same job" (Djiwandono 1985: 24-27).[14] An alliance with the United States, in the Indonesian view, would likely "call forth the reaction of the Soviet Union, which almost certainly will perceive it as a threat to its security." Moreover,

> it is hard to understand the clamorous concern about the Soviet "bases" in Vietnam -- which used to be US bases -- the first the Soviet Union has ever had in the Asian Pacific region outside its own territory, when for many years it has been encircled by US bases and Western alliances along its perimeter.
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> One would rightly wonder, therefore, if the Soviet military buildup in the region has not been part of the Soviet attempt to overcome its sense of insecurity in the face of such an environment. And what is said to be the US resolve to restore its power, including its military power, may possibly be no more than an attempt to regain the loss of its supremacy (Djiwandono 1985: 29, 33-34).[15]

As an organization, ASEAN adopted in 1971 the Malaysian proposal to seek to make Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality. The specific terms of ZOPFAN have not yet been defined, but clearly they would be consistent with the elimination of foreign military bases in the Philippines and Vietnam (for discussion of ZOPFAN, see Saravanamuttu 1984). Many analysts point out, however, that despite their public stance in favor of ZOPFAN, ASEAN leaders have privately and not so privately indicated that they favor the continued presence of US military bases in the Philippines. In addition, individuals known to be close to the ASEAN governments, but who can speak unofficially, have expressed similar pro-bases views.

It is always difficult to know how much weight to attach to views that are advanced in private, where the speaker is unwilling to say the same thing in public. Former Ambassador Underhill notes that telling visiting US officials what they want to hear in private is a relatively inexpensive way to humor a

major nation, one that is as well an important trading partner and source of capital. On his visit to Southeast Asia after leaving the US Foreign Service, Underhill found ASEAN government officials dodging questions on the role the Philippine bases played in their own security, insisting that the question was a bilateral matter between the United States and the Philippines; at the strategic institutes, there were no locally produced studies defending or supporting the prevailing US strategic doctrine regarding the bases or the US military role in the region (Underhill 1987: 568-69).

But there is another, more significant reason not to put too much stock in the privately expressed ASEAN support for the Philippine bases. If one examines the private or unofficial statements carefully, they are actually not inconsistent with the publicly espoused ASEAN position. The latter holds that Southeast Asia should be a region free of great power contention. . And the private statements support the presence of US bases *so long as the Soviet Union maintains its military presence in the area.*

Thus, a fellow at the well-connected Malaysian think-tank ISIS, writes:

> . . . the relocation of US bases [from the Philippines] could have adverse consequences for the other ASEAN states. Termination of US bases, in the absence of a termination of Soviet base facilities in Vietnam and Cambodia, would tilt the balance in favour of the Soviet Union and Vietnam (Alagappa 1987: 23).

Influential Indonesian experts have called the US bases in the Philippines "an absolute necessity for the US presence in Southeast Asia," but they say this after describing the increased Soviet presence "because of the facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang" which needs counterbalancing by the United States and Japan (Wanandi and Hadisoesastro 1983: 96).[16] And the *Bangkok Post* editorialized that this was no time for the United States to be shown the door, given that the Soviet Union was becoming well-entrenched in Vietnam ("No Time . . ." 1987: 45).

A *Washington Post* reporter in Manila wrote in 1987:

> While next year's negotiations will be between Washington and Manila, the Philippines' Southeast Asian noncommunist neighbors as well as Japan have made it clear that they see the American presence in the Pacific as vital for regional security, in the face of a growing Soviet presence at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam (Richburg 1987a: A24).

And a US scholar with wide experience in Southeast Asia has written that any pullback of US forces from the ASEAN area "would be opposed by ASEAN members so long as the Soviet- Vietnamese alliance continues and Soviet ships and planes are based in Indochina" (Simon 1985: 386-87; see also Crossette 1987a: A12; and 1987b: A13). But the clearest statement of the ASEAN position on the relation of the Philippine bases to the Soviet presence came in a November 1987

interview with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir:

> . . . we understand the need for the region to have something to balance out what the Russians have in Cam Ranh Bay and Danang. If the Russians get out of there, I think ASEAN would ask the Americans to leave this region . . . . I support the presence of the Americans in this area in order to balance the presence of these Russians (Mahathir 1987: 28).

Another US scholar who has travelled extensively in the region has stated that the ASEAN nations are likely to react with extreme caution to any Soviet peace proposals for the Asian-Pacific area (including Gorbachev's bases tradeoff proposal) until there is some settlement of the Kampuchean problem (Weatherbee 1987: 1237). And certainly it would be a little incongruous to be promoting a zone of peace within which war rages. It seems likely, however, that an Indochina settlement will soon be reached, no thanks to the United States.[17] This should make a bases trade-off more realizable. Hanoi will be less dependent on Moscow, and have less need to offer base facilities. And being less tied to the USSR, Vietnam will be less threatening to China, which in turn will reduce Hanoi's need for Soviet military protection from Beijing. Even before a Kampuchean settlement, Vietnam has called for the elimination of all military bases in Southeast Asia, and the establishment of a nuclear-free zone and a zone of peace, friendship, and neutrality.[18]

Two other issues have to be taken into account in considering the response in Southeast Asian to the elimination of US and Soviet bases from the region. First, the withdrawal of US and Soviet forces might allow other powers -- specifically China or Japan -- to dominate the area. Second, even if Chinese or Japanese domination could be prevented, the absence of US (and/or Soviet) bases might permit local bullies to intimidate their neighbors.

China is the one major power physically present in Southeast Asia, not by virtue of overseas bases, but by its own territory. There is thus no way to keep China out of the region in the same way that other powers might be excluded.[19] Nevertheless, there are sound reasons for concluding that the departure of the United States and the Soviet Union need not lead to Chinese domination of Southeast Asia.

First, China has been the great power most supportive of the ASEAN call for ZOPFAN (see Chang 1979-80; Guoxing 1986: 985-86).[20] Thus, if the withdrawal of US and Soviet bases from the region were followed by the proclamation of such a zone, prohibiting military shows of force, China would find it extremely difficult from a political point of view to flex its military muscle. Beijing has also supported the Malaysian-Indonesian assertion that the Strait of Malacca is a national water; its motive was to place diplomatic obstacles in the way of the USSR in moving its naval vessels from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, but such a stance also makes it more difficult for China to readily move its navy through these waters (Simon 1982: 60; Buszynski 1987: 773).

Second, the Chinese leadership seems distinctly committed to economic development, a goal not readily pursued simultaneously with military adventurism. China has a very full internal agenda, including for example, the issue of Tibet, that will likely take priority over foreign policy matters -- except those deemed essential to national security. Indicative of China's inward focus is the fact that in the same period that the Reagan administration has vastly expanded US military spending in alleged response to the Soviet threat, Beijing has been cutting back its defense budget (B. Gordon 1983: 201).

Third, China's military power vis-a-vis its neighbors is not as overwhelming as is sometimes thought. Recall that China was unable to decisively "punish" Vietnam in 1979. Vietnam, of course, will also be in any Southeast Asia from which the two superpowers have withdrawn. China's ability to conquer the offshore states of Southeast Asia is extremely dubious.

There has just recently been a minor clash between China and Vietnam in the Spratly island chain in the South China Sea. In fact, five nations have conflicting claims to the Spratlys, but all parties are committed to a peaceful settlement of the claims, except Beijing with respect to Hanoi. Vietnam has asked for talks, but Beijing has rejected any negotiations so long as Vietnamese troops remain in Kampuchea. China even warned of serious consequences if Hanoi did not give up its claims (Crossette 1988: A6; "Chinese, Viet . . ." 1988: 2).

It should be clear, however, that US bases in the Philippines do little to discourage Beijing's belligerent attitude, just as they did little to prevent China's limited invasion of Vietnam in 1979, nor the continual incidents since then on Vietnam's northern border. "[I]ndependent analysts believe there are limits to how seriously the [China-Vietnam] conflict can escalate" in the Spratlys (Eng 1988: 5; see also Tyson 1988: 11), but these limits have nothing to do with the Philippine bases. The Soviet bases, on the other hand, might well deter Chinese adventurism against Vietnam in the South China Sea. But the establishment of ZOPFAN and a declaration by the nations of Southeast Asia that they would unambiguously oppose any use of armed force in the region would likely serve as an equal deterrent. And in some respects a bases tradeoff might reduce the likelihood of Beijing-Hanoi conflict, since China would probably want to compete for influence in a Vietnam without Soviet bases and would be wary of alienating a Hanoi not firmly committed to the Soviet camp.

Japan is another nation whose military potential causes concern in Southeast Asia. Memories of Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere during World War II linger in the region, and few would welcome Japanese hegemony were the US and the USSR to withdraw. Tokyo's economic power, its preeminent trade and investment position, already leads many to refer to "the second Japanese invasion" (Constantino 1979; Vertzberger 1982: 12). Japan's postwar constitution restricts its military to self-defense forces only, but Japan has recently announced that its defense perimeter extends 1,000 miles from Tokyo. As with China, however, there are strong grounds for believing that a tradeoff of US and Soviet bases would not leave Southeast Asia vulnerable to domination by Japan.

First, Japan's more active defense role has been encouraged by the increased pace of the US-Soviet military buildup in the Pacific. A decrease in US-Soviet military activity in the region should make it politically more difficult to justify further defense spending to the Japanese people.

Second, the declaration of ZOPFAN in Southeast Asia would make Japanese naval vessels unwelcome patrolling the region's waters. Of course, Japan has great leverage on many nations of the area because of its economic clout, but the leverage does not only operate one way. Japan needs markets for its capital and goods and resources for its factories, and the good-will of Southeast Asia is thus important to Tokyo.

> Many, probably a majority, in Japan's conservative ranks are thoroughly familiar with the economic advantages Japan has gained by maintaining minimal armed forces. Not only has Tokyo been able to divert such resources to economic goals. Japan's low profile on the security front has also served it well by minimizing apprehensions on the part of Japan's worldwide trading partners, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. A clear majority of Japanese--conservative and liberal--are still averse to doing anything that might jeopardize Japan's economic security. Adding to this is the prevalent inclination among Japanese to view the problems of "security" in extremely broad terms. Nearly all Japanese reject a narrowly military view of security in favor of a perspective which places priority on economic considerations, with military, political, and ideological factors well behind trade and investment (Olsen 1981: 272-73).

This does not mean that Japan would refrain from aggressively pursuing its economic interests. But it does this now, and it is difficult to see how a neutralized Southeast Asia would make things any worse. It hardly seems credible that in the present international environment Tokyo would resort to outright conquest to further its economic agenda. Japan might try to subvert a government that threatened foreign investment, but US military bases do not prevent this, and indeed if the US were present it would likely join in the subversion.

A similar response applies to the question of local bullies. If the US, the USSR, China, and Japan all kept out of Southeast Asia, what would prevent one country in the region from pushing around another? But such bullying goes on now, as when Indonesia invaded East Timor, with the tacit consent of Washington (see Chomsky and Herman 1979: 129-204; Chomsky 1982: 320-370).[21] There would be two advantages to a neutralized Southeast Asia. First, where there is little great power contention, the United Nations might be able to take steps to deal with armed attack by one state against another. Where the great powers compete, the UN is impotent. Moscow has recently urged an increased role for the United Nations, including in the area of peacekeeping (P. Lewis 1987a: A8; 1987b: A13; 1987c: 18).[22] Second, the exclusion of the major nations would make it easier to establish a nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia which in turn

would make it much less likely that any regional power would acquire its own nuclear weapons. Some Indonesians, for example, reject their government's proposal for a nuclear-free zone because "they feel the nuclear option for Jakarta should not be closed" (Awanohara 1987a: 19). The consequences for all the countries in the area of an Indonesian bomb need no elaboration. The sooner a nuclear-free zone can be established, the less likely this outcome will be.

Protecting Japan and South Korea

A third general mission assigned to the Philippine bases is the support of US forces in Japan and South Korea for the protection of these two countries.

The definitive study by the Library of Congress of potential alternatives to the US bases in the Philippines readily concedes that for supporting operations in Northeast Asia, the US bases on Guam "are as well located" as the Philippine bases (Bowen 1986: 21).[23] In general, to the extent that the defense of Japan and South Korea requires a rear area, Guam could fulfill this role, and all other defense needs could be relocated to Japan itself. Another US government study points out the following problem:

> The Japanese government, although permitting some basing, has been beset on numerous occasions by anti-military and anti-American antagonists and would not be responsive to additional basing of an unrestricted nature. Sovereignty and host nation limitations on base usage are already serious concerns for existing Japanese bases; to seek additional bases under these conditions would not appear to be beneficial for either nation (Connell et al. 1977: 29).

But if the Japanese people are unwilling to accept additional US military bases, then we must wonder how seriously they take the Soviet threat of which US officials constantly warn them. There are good reasons, however, to discount these US warnings. First, the Reagan view that the "Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on" in the world (quoted in Steel 1981: 15) betrays a certain lack of grounding in reality. Second, despite claims of the gargantuan Soviet military buildup in the Pacific, the United States and its allies still maintain a decisive lead: "There is widespread agreement among policy analysts that the position of the United States in Asia is stronger than at any time since the end of World War II" (Gelb 1985: A1, A8).[24] And third, one must be suspicious when Washington encourages Tokyo to purchase US fighter planes or invest more of its national resources in military spending, given that this helps the US economy relative to its chief international competitor.[25]

Moreover, a compelling case can be made that after a US-Soviet bases tradeoff in Southeast Asia, the defense needs of Japan will be reduced, not increased; the Northeast Asian missions of the US military formerly carried out from Philippine bases would certainly not have to be replaced to an equivalent

extent.

First, a less tense superpower environment in Southeast Asia would likely mean a less tense relationship between Tokyo and Moscow, and thus there would be less need for a Japanese military buildup.

Second, the actual military uses to which Cam Ranh Bay has been put include the support of reconnaissance missions over the Sea of Japan (Bear TU-95s fly from Vladivostok to Cam Ranh Bay whereas before they could only travel half as far from Vladivostok and then had to return). Japanese officials see this increased flight activity as enhancing the threat to Japan (telephone interview with Yoshi Murakamie of *Asahi Shibun*, 3 Mar. 1987; on the Bear, see Polmar 1985). In the absence of Soviet access to Cam Ranh Bay, however, the Soviet threat would be reduced.

Third, the removal of Soviet SS-20s from Asia will reduce somewhat the threat environment that Japan faces. As was noted above with respect to the Philippines, as long as the United States maintains military facilities that play a role in nuclear war-fighting, these facilities and the territories that host them will be targeted by Moscow in one way or another. Nevertheless, the elimination of the SS-20s will diminish the threat to Japan to some extent.

In sum, Northeast Asian missions pose no obstacle to a bases tradeoff involving the Philippines and Vietnam.

Defense of Sea Lanes

In President Reagan's celebrated February 1986 press conference in which he declared that there had been fraud on the part of both Aquino and Marcos supporters, he was also asked which was more important, military bases or democracy in the Philippines. Reagan replied:

> One cannot minimize the importance of those bases, not only to us but to the Western World and certainly to the Philippines themselves. If you look at the basing now of the blue-ocean navy that the Soviet [sic] has built, which is bigger than ours, and how they have placed themselves to be able to intercept the 16 chokepoints in the world. There are 16 passages in the world, sea passages, through which most of the supplies and the raw material and so forth reaches not only ourselves but our allies in the Western World. And obviously, the plan in case of any kind of hostilities calls for intercepting and closing those 16 chokepoints. And we have to have bases that we can send forces to reopen those channels. And I don't know of any that's more important than the bases on the Philippines (Reagan 1986: 218; the president never mentioned democracy in his reply).

This view of the importance of the Philippine bases for controlling strategic chokepoints is held not only by rightwing ideologues. A liberal Democrat, who sits on the Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee of the House, gave a similar

rationale: the Philippine bases allow the United States to protect the straits and sea lanes that are essential to the well-being and very survival of our Japanese ally (interview with Robert Torricelli, 11 June 1987, Hackensack, NJ). Japan depends on the Indian Ocean region for 85 percent of its oil supplies and for much of its iron ore, copper, zinc, coal, and uranium; and the Indian Ocean carries Japanese manufactured goods to Afro-Asian markets (Singh 1987: 174).

To evaluate this argument, it is important to distinguish five different contexts within which the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) might be obstructed: (1) US-Soviet nuclear war; (2) US-Soviet war that does not involve the use of nuclear weapons; (3) war between two non-superpowers; (4) peacetime interference by the USSR; and (5) peacetime interference by other nations.

In the case of US-Soviet nuclear war, control of the chokepoints is of no consequence. Either power could target nuclear strikes on the narrow straits. And a Japan that hosted US bases would be so obliterated by nuclear attack that oil supplies would be the least of its worries. Finally, if the USSR wished to deprive Japan of oil, it would be far easier to destroy the oil at its source, by targeting the Middle Eastern oil fields, than by sea denial.

Conventional US-Soviet conflict is the second case to consider. At the outset it must be pointed out how unlikely such a contingency is. This is because (a) the United States has refused to rule out first use of nuclear weapons, not just a rhetorical refusal, but at the level as well of strategy and force structure; (b) US strategy, as mentioned above, calls for attacks on Soviet ballistic missile submarines in the event of war, a strategy that could well convince Moscow to launch a preemptive strike before its nuclear deterrent was destroyed; and (c) US strategy also calls for encouraging Chinese military initiatives against the USSR (Hayes et al. 1986: 133), a move that could easily provoke nuclear war.

Let us grant, however, that there were a conventional US-Soviet war. What then would be the utility of the Southeast Asian straits? Three points are relevant here.

First, as in the nuclear war scenario, it would be senseless for the USSR to try to starve Japan by controlling the seas when it would be so much easier to attack the oil fields, either by sabotage or direct military attack (MccGwire 1985: 405).[26]

Second, the straits are by no means a life-and-death matter for the survival of Japan. Even if we ignore the possibility that Japan could be supplied westward from the United States, for cargoes from the Middle East the straits are not vital. A redirecting of Persian Gulf oil around the southern end of Australia increases the length of passage by some 80 percent, which raises shipping costs about 75 percent, which raises the costs of Middle Eastern oil about 11 percent (MccGwire 1975: 1069-70; also 1062), hardly a decisive burden in the context of global war. (Recall how inconsequential was the impact of the closure of the Suez Canal, a waterway considered equally vital [MccGwire 1985: 406; Betts 1985: 360].)

Third, we must consider how the Soviet Union would be able to threaten

the chokepoints. At present, Soviet naval and air units based in Vietnam could reach the straits. Cam Ranh "assures Soviet proximity to critical sea lines of communication" (Daniel and Tarleton 1985: 361; for other sources referring to the SLOC threat arising from the Soviet presence in Vietnam, see Nations 1985: 44; da Cunha 1986: 29; USIS 1986: 10; Bowen 1986: 6; Fitzgerald 1986: 51). Now in fact US officials state confidently that Cam Ranh Bay would not last beyond day one of a US-Soviet conflict (McDonald 1987: 34; Awanohara 1987b: 34; see also Gregor 1984: 6; Chanda 1985: 48; Bowen 1986: 8-10; Bowen 1987: 461). But let us grant that Soviet access to Vietnam increases the threat to the SLOCs. If so, the trading-off of US bases in the Philippines for Soviet facilities in Vietnam would remove the source of the Soviet SLOC threat all the way to Vladivostok or to positions within the Indian Ocean. In the event of a US-Soviet war, US naval strategy calls for bottling up, if not destroying, the Soviet fleet in the Sea of Japan around Vladivostok (Chappell 1985: 38; Hayes et al. 1986: 306-08),[27] so any threat to the SLOCs from this direction would require the defeat of the US Navy in Northeast Asia. If this occurred, of course, straits 1000 miles away would be of little consequence, for the USSR would control the waters around Japan. But US naval officials, of course, do not anticipate any such defeat.

As for threatening the Southeast Asian straits from the Indian Ocean side, the US base at Diego Garcia lies between the straits and any Soviet facilities, and, in any event, the Soviet Union is on record as favoring the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean region (see Ustinov 1984: 120-22), a matter to which I return below. Thus, whatever threats do exist to SLOCs are likely to be lessened if there is a tradeoff of Philippine and Vietnamese bases.[28]

Consider now the potential threat to chokepoints and sea lanes in the case of a war between two states other than the superpowers. Despite US assertions that the Soviet Union has no genuine defense interests in Southeast Asia (USIS 1986: 10), in fact Moscow is as highly dependent as other maritime powers upon free passage through the straits bordering Indonesia and Malaysia. Given the vulnerability and limited capacity of the Trans-Siberian railway and the impossibility of using the Arctic route during much of the year, sea transportation via the Indian Ocean is increasingly important to Moscow to supply its Far Eastern region, both in peacetime and in the event of war with China. Additionally, the Soviet Union has one of the world's largest merchant fleets (MccGwire 1985: 406; Leifer 1983: 21-22; Singh 1987: 166; Underhill 1987: 567). Therefore, it stands to reason that in any local conflict that spilled over into international waterways, the Soviet Union would be as eager as the United States to maintain freedom of navigation.

The recent situation in the Persian Gulf illustrates the point well. The Soviet Union had not encouraged any Iranian closing of the gulf, but instead agreed to help protect Kuwaiti shipping; then it proposed that the major powers withdraw their naval forces from the gulf; and then it called for a UN role in assuring freedom of navigation. Washington, which was far more interested in preserving the gulf as an American lake than in protecting shipping, responded by military strutting, intended in part to reassure Arab allies shaken by Reagan's

clandestine dealings with Iran (Shipler 1987: E3; P. Lewis 1987a: A8). The US has leaned heavily on the side of Iraq, which began--and continually resumes--the tanker war. And the result of US policy was that navigation in the gulf became more precarious than before.[29]

In the event of a war between, say, Indonesia and Malaysia that interfered with international shipping through the straits, it is hard to see how the US presence in the Philippines would help matters. If one of the nations were determined to obstruct the straits, they could not be prevented from doing so (Vertzberger 1982: 6-7). And it would invariably be cheaper to go around the straits than to try to keep them open by force (MccGwire 1975: 1073). Diplomacy would offer the best hope of restoring free navigation. For the reasons outlined above, the Soviet Union could be expected to favor such a solution. If the US were more determined to shut out Moscow than to reach a settlement, however, diplomacy might be of little avail.

The next case to be considered of threats to SLOCs is peacetime interference by the USSR. But, first of all, it is inconceivable that the Soviet Union could obstruct US or Japanese vessels on the high seas without it leading to war. Second, as already noted above, it is hard to imagine any gain to the Soviet Union of such an action that would outweigh the costs, given Moscow's strong stake in freedom of the seas (Leifer 1983: 22; Lehrack 1985: 58; MccGwire 1975: 1072; Grinter 1980: 30; MccGwire 1985: 404). It is significant that the Soviet Union has generally sided with the United States and other maritime nations in international controversies involving freedom of navigation (Vertzberger 1982: 4-5; Leifer 1983:21; Underhill 1987: 567). And, third, without access to Cam Ranh Bay, the ability of the Soviet Union to interfere with passage through the straits would be severely limited.

The final threat to the straits comes from peacetime interference by a littoral state. Indeed Malaysia and Indonesia have claimed the straits as part of their territorial waters. In the Law of the Sea Conference, however, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur compromised their position, as part of wide concessions by many nations. The Law of the Sea Treaty does not accept that the straits are national waters, but does require that vessels transiting the straits do so according to the rules of innocent passage (Simon 1985: 379). The United States has since refused to accept the treaty, and so the status of the straits remains in doubt (see Valencia 1985: 38-39).

Indonesia also claims the "archipelagic principle," whereby all waters between its outermost islands are part of its territorial sea. The US does not recognize the claim, which was first enunciated by Jakarta in 1957 as a way "to demonstrate the integral unity of a state fragmented by interposing waterways" "at a time when the very integrity of the republic was subject to threat" (Leifer 1983: 17)--a threat promoted by Washington (Wise and Ross 1964:145-56). Neither the archipelagic principle nor the other claims of the littoral states need interfere with free navigation, since none of the states involved rejects the right of innocent passage. The straits, however, might be endangered if the US were to try to provocatively challenge some of the claims, as it has done in the Gulf

of Sidra. Short of such an eventuality, there is no likelihood that the littoral states would prevent passage through the straits that are so important to their own economic well-being (MccGwire 1985: 403).

The right of innocent passage through the straits gets more complicated when it comes to warships. I will deal with the matter of projecting conventional US military power into the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf in the next section. Here I will consider only the issue of US ballistic missile carrying submarines. Potentially such vessels might want to transit the straits in order to be on station in the Indian Ocean. Submarines conforming to the rules of innocent passage are supposed to pass through the straits above the surface. However, the logic of a sea-based deterrent requires that one's adversary not know the location of one's strategic nuclear submarines. Nevertheless, this is not a compelling argument against a tradeoff of the Philippine bases.

First of all, Indonesia apparently allows US (but not Soviet) vessels to transit the straits submerged (Vertzberger 1982: 15). Second, new sea-launched ballistic missiles have a range that allows targets in the Soviet Union to be hit from more distant waters than the Indian Ocean. Third, Soviet surveillance of the Southeast Asian straits--and hence of US submarines passing through these straits--takes place from Cam Ranh Bay. With a tradeoff, the ability to perform such surveillance would be much reduced. And, fourth, it would simply be ironic if the reason the United States needed bases in the Philippines was to make sure that Indonesia did not try to assert its maritime claims.

Projecting Power into the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf

We come now to the fifth and last of the missions supposed to be accomplished by the US bases in the Philippines: namely, supporting operations in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. This is the crucial mission from the point of view of the Pentagon, but this does not mean that the mission is necessary for the genuine security of the United States and its people, nor that the mission promotes world peace or the interests of those living in the Indian Ocean region.

Between 1955 and 1975, the US Navy sent warships to protect "US interests" in East Asia and the Indian Ocean twenty-six times (Hayes et al. 1986: 171). And such activity continues, as one enthusiast wrote in the US Navy's journal:

> The US Navy has been particularly active in the 1980s. Each year, US warships have demonstrated their power in the Persian Gulf, in the Mediterranean, off both coasts of Central America, in the Northwest Passage, in the Caribbean, and even in the Sea of Okhotsk. The navies of Argentina, Britain, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Honduras, Israel, South Korea, and Sweden have also had a go. But the US Navy has deserved first place on three counts:
>
> * It used or threatened limited naval force more often than any other navy.

* It did so on a grander scale.
* And, although it sometimes failed in its purpose, it never got itself--as Argentina did--into outright war (Cable 1986: 38).

Although the Pentagon regularly portrays the massive US defense budget as necessary to counter the Soviet Union, in fact Third World military intervention accounts for the biggest chunk of defense expenditures (Morland, 1986). As another expert notes, "crises involving US naval forces in operations against Third World states are becoming something of a norm in this decade--Grenada, Lebanon, Libya" (Vlahos 1986: 146). "No area of the world is beyond the scope of American interests," declared President Reagan (quoted in Indorf 1984: 22), but the Persian Gulf is perhaps the key focus of US intervention. The late Alvin J. Cottrell, a prominent naval scholar, described the problem in the Gulf this way:

> . . . a king rules in Saudi Arabia, a sultan in Oman, and ten shaikhs and emirs in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Until 1979, the shah ruled in Iran. Only in Iraq have nonroyal rulers been in power for very long. But there are many reasons to doubt whether the present state of affairs in the gulf can last. . . . The key state in the Persian Gulf region is Saudi Arabia because of its vast oil reserves and the influence it exerts on the smaller gulf states. If it were to shift from royal rule, this might well put continued Western access to oil resources of the area in doubt (Cottrell 1985: 454).

The last point is hardly compelling. Libya and Iran continue to sell oil to the West, except insofar as the West has refused to buy it. A shift from royal rule would not end oil sales, but might limit the profitability of such transactions to the Western oil companies. In any event, Cottrell continued:

> Naval deployments especially can play a key role in undergirding regional stability and inhibiting rapid and destabilizing political change.
>
> * * *
>
> The immediate cry of some academicians to the above will be that it offers a military response to sociopolitical problems. Those arguing this view fail to understand that the navy has two roles, one as a political instrument of foreign policy, the other as a war-fighting instrument. At present the US Navy is being utilized in the Indian Ocean in its peacetime mode as a political instrument, protecting American security interests by encouraging greater political stability in the area (Cottrell 1985: 455, 457).

Some have argued that in a nuclear age a superpower does not need a large fleet and bases all over the world. But Cottrell, writing with the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ridiculed such "blithe argument." Among other things,

"such an approach ignores the political benefits that can accrue to a country with the capability of employing its naval forces in support of foreign policy" (Cottrell and Moorer 1977: 35).

The United States has always considered itself to have the right to intervene wherever it chooses in pursuit of its interests, despite its having signed the UN Charter which expressly prohibits the use or threat of force. The only exception is cases of self-defense against armed attack, but, since Pearl Harbor, armed attack on the United States has been rare.

Sometimes we excuse law-breaking when some higher moral purpose is served, but US interventionism has not had such purpose. Washington has helped to overthrow governments that threatened US corporate interests in Iran, Guatemala, Chile (the latter two democratically elected), has intervened in civil wars on the side of the status quo and a corrupt elite (Vietnam, Lebanon in 1958, the Dominican Republic in 1965 [Chomsky and Herman 1979]), and in sub-Saharan Africa was the instigator of "the very first coup" in the region's postcolonial history, "the very first political assassination, and the very first junking of a legally constituted democratic system" (Kwitney 1984: 75). It is not humanitarianism that motivates US interventionism. When hundreds of thousands of Indonesians were massacred in 1965, the US considered this a great victory; when the Pakistani army went berserk in 1971, raping and murdering East Bengalis, Washington "tilted" toward Pakistan (Chomsky and Herman 1979: 205-217, 105-06; Van Hollen 1980).

In the latter case, the US might have intervened more directly but for the countervailing presence of Soviet vessels in the Bay of Bengal (Singh 1987: 168). And it is this that represents the Soviet threat: "In the event of local upheavals, Soviet surface warships in the area might well inhibit US intervention . . . ." (Cottrell and Moorer 1977: 65n19, quoting James Theberge). The Soviet naval units in the Indian Ocean do not pose a serious threat to the US carrier task forces in the region, but they do limit the freedom of action of the United States to intervene at will. In the words of one US Navy officer, "Put a Soviet aircraft carrier off Libya and see how that changes the situation" (Singh 1987: 170; Keller 1986: 11; for a cogent analysis of the lawlessness involved in the US attacks on Libya, see Chomsky 1986: 129-74).

This is not to suggest that Moscow is disinterestedly seeking to prevent US interventionism, or that it--any more than Washington--seeks through its foreign policy to promote humanitarian values. On the contrary, the Soviet Union, like the United States though on a smaller scale,[30] uses its naval assets for political purposes, to further Soviet interests, as defined by its leaders. Through ship visits, naval exercises, overflights, and the like, the USSR tries to intimidate Third World nations. And Moscow's actions in Afghanistan and Eastern Europe demonstrate that it is fully as capable of military interventionism as the United States.

It is sometimes concluded that both superpowers should be present militarily in Third World regions because they will check each others' more flagrant interventions. This may indeed be preferable to domination by a single superpower,

but there are good reasons why many of the nations in the Indian Ocean region reject this approach.

First, great power contention often exacerbates regional tensions. Second, the presence of both superpowers generates an arms race, with each seeking to balance or surpass the other, a situation that is inherently unstable. Third, having the US and the USSR in the area increases the likelihood that a conflict that occurs between them elsewhere will be fought in the Indian Ocean region as well, possibly with nuclear weapons. Fourth, US interventionary forces are nuclear equipped--in order to discourage any Soviet interference with US intervention (Hayes et al. 1986: 145-150); this might turn a local conflict into a nuclear holocaust. Fifth, although the presence of the other superpower has inhibited interventions, it has not prevented them. And, sixth, there will be times when the interests of the two superpowers are the same, but contrary to the interests of a regional state. Nothing in the moral record of the superpowers justifies their serving, even jointly, as a global police force.

For these reasons, the littoral states have sought to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, excluding from the region all foreign military bases and military forces. Such a proposal has been endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the United Nations, including the Soviet Union; it has been rejected by the United States and Western European nations. In 1977 there was some reason for optimism when the US and the USSR began Naval Arms Limitations Talks and President Carter called for the "complete demilitarization of the Indian Ocean." Within a week, however, the US changed its position to one of seeking "mutual military restraint." And after four inconclusive meetings the US withdrew from the talks, ostensibly in protest against Soviet-Cuban intervention on the Ethiopian side in the Ogaden war--not a compelling reason given that the Ogaden is part of Ethiopia, and was being invaded by Somalia--but actually because Washington was unwilling to give up its military advantage in the region (Bukarambe 1985: 57-58). The United States had established a position in the Indian Ocean before the Soviet Union (Bukarambe 1985: 52-53) and continues to maintain naval superiority there (Bowman and Lefebvre 1985: 427).

This US military superiority is not primarily designed to check Soviet expansionism, but to permit the United States to intervene in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. The Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), for example, was conceived as early as August 1977, well before the Soviet move into Afghanistan. The RDF was designed to give the US an "intervention capability" that could be used unilaterally in Third World contingencies (Kulkarni 1987: 44). Is such interventionary capability necessary for the security of the United States or, more importantly, for promoting peace and justice? Consider the answer to just the security part of this question from Japan, a nation much more vitally dependent upon the resources of the region than the US:

> The likelihood of intraregional conflict is much greater in Japanese eyes than that of a Soviet military invasion of the region. Indeed, one such conflict has been going on between Iraq and Iran. The

> fact that the presence in the Persian Gulf waters of some thirty ships of the United States Sixth and Seventh fleets, including two formidable aircraft carriers, did not prevent the outbreak of that conflict suggests the rather limited utility of the RDF for the prevention of future intraregional conflict even if the RDF units were deployed in close proximity to the contending states. This, however, is not the only problem in such a contingency. "US military intervention to prevent or stop a conflict between states in the area or to support a friendly ruler in trouble would elicit broad-based opposition to the United States," argues David Newsom, a seasoned specialist. Such intervention "would very likely result in exactly what it sought to avoid: severely curtailed oil production" (Tsurutari 1985: 498).

As for internal problems,

> America's experience in Iran seems to suggest the high probability that external intervention in a politically unstable state of the region for the purpose of shoring up its incumbent regime would prove to be counter-productive. At the very best, such intervention would amount to a high-stakes gamble unless the RDF were prepared to occupy the country in question. As Newsom contends, "Political upheaval can but need not result in the loss of either production or access [to oil]; outside intervention will almost certainly destroy both" (Tsurutari 1985: 498-99).

Genuine US interests, and the interests of all those living in the Indian Ocean region, would be far better served by demilitarizing the area than by maintaining the capability to project US power. Both the US and the USSR would be less able to obstruct self-determination for the people of the Third World. The danger of superpower conflict would be reduced. Neither Washington nor Moscow would have to worry as much about its adversary obtaining geopolitical advantage in the region. And the immense military expenditures that now go to power projection, to purposes far beyond any legitimate notion of defense, could be redirected to support urgent social programs at home and desperately needed economic development abroad.

Conclusion

The various missions of the US bases in the Philippines have now been examined. Some, like the mission of supporting intervention in the Persian Gulf, should not be performed at all. Others, like countering the Soviet presence in Southeast Asia, would be easier performed by accepting Gorbachev's tradeoff proposal.

Because Subic and Clark are so much more valuable militarily than the Soviet facilities at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang, there will obviously be some

reluctance to having a simple one-for-one exchange (see AP 1988: 7). And indeed it makes good sense to couple any Philippines-Vietnam tradeoff to a number of other agreements: the establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality in Southeast Asia; denuclearization of Southeast Asia; demilitarization and denuclearization of the Indian Ocean; and even the reduction of Soviet military forces in Soviet Asia. All would face little obstacle from Moscow--indeed the first three have been endorsed by the Soviet government and the last implied ("USSR Envoy . . ." 1988: 16). With the proper political will in Washington none of this would be utopian.

Trading off the US bases in the Philippines for Soviet bases in Vietnam offers a major step toward the creation of a more peaceful and just world. As the US-Philippine Military Bases Agreement is renegotiated in coming months, it will be important to urge the tradeoff option.

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Notes

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[1]There are other US military facilities in the Philippines, but Subic and Clark are the main ones and the others are sometimes considered their subsidiaries. I shall follow the practice of letting Subic and Clark refer as well to Cubi Point Naval Station, the San Miguel Naval Communications Station, and the other lesser facilities.

[2]For example, reference is made to the number of Soviet ships at Cam Ranh Bay at any one time compared to the lesser number at Subic, with the suggestion that this represents a Soviet advantage (USIS 1986: 8). In fact, however, a much larger fraction of the Soviet ships are auxiliary vessels (Wilkes 1986: 6) and Soviet ships leave port much less often than their US counterparts (McBeth 1985: 45). Indeed, US analysts have been trying to explain the rather modest scale of Soviet deployment at Cam Ranh (McDonald 1987: 34-35). The second edition of the USIS booklet provides an aerial photograph of Cam Ranh Bay, showing three submarines, two "small surface combatants," and three cargo ships, hardly a formidable presence (USIS 1987: 9).

[3]E.g.: "Soviet ambassador to Manila, Vadim Ivanovich Shabalin, took a crack at the sensitive issue by suggesting that the best way to achieve peace in the Asia Pacific region is for all foreign powers to dismantle their military bases in the area" (Benoza 1987: 10). The new Soviet ambassador, Oleg Sokolov "reiterated the statement made by USSR General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev last year in Vladivostok that if the US pulls out its military bases in the Philippines, the Soviet Union will not let it go unanswered. Asked what specifically would be the USSR's answer, Sokolov said, 'We will discuss that later'" ("Soviet Envoy . . ." 1987: 1, 6). Journalist James Fallows relates that when he asked a

Soviet diplomat in Singapore how his government would view a bases swap, the latter nearly swallowed an ice-cube in his eagerness: "We would be ready!" (Fallows 1988: 28). And Flora Lewis (1988: 29) reports renewed Soviet suggestions of a tradeoff.

Insight magazine ("The New Ambassador . . . " 1988: 40) has reported that Soviet ambassador Sokolov has ruled out a tradeoff because of the "overwhelming military presence of another Asian power in the area." Sokolov's remarks in fact were vague; he repeated Gorbachev's Vladivostok phrasing and declined to make it any more specific. He did refer to another power as affecting the military balance and implied that a reduced foreign presence in the region should include China as well. But he did not rule out a tradeoff ("Paper Interviews . . ." 1988: 14). My reading of Sokolov's remarks is confirmed by First Secretary Lev Orekhov of the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

The vagueness in the Soviet position is infuriating, but reflects, I believe, their reluctance to embarrass their Vietnamese ally which as a matter of pride stubbornly refuses to acknowledge that there are foreign bases in its country.

[4]Analysts who talk of the Soviet Union obtaining military bases in the Philippines give no evidence that this is even a remote possibility. Thus, Owen Harries (1985: 52), states without fact or argument:

> It is by no means unlikely that a situation may develop, sooner rather than later, in which the American government and people will be faced with an excruciating choice: either to involve themselves in 'another Vietnam' in the same part of the world, or to reconcile themselves to seeing the reality and the symbolism of Cam Ranh Bay repeated in the case of Clark and Subic.

No known opponent of US bases in the Philippines has called for their replacement by Soviet bases. The New People's Army and its political allies are vigorous nationalists and, unlike the Vietnamese communists, extremely critical of the Soviet Union. Efforts by some sources to show a Soviet connection to the NPA have been unconvincing. See Rosenberg 1985, for a telling refutation of Rosenberger 1985b. This is not to say, of course, that Washington could not engineer a self-fulfilling prophesy: if it took steps to isolate and destabilize a Philippines without US bases, it might be able to force it into Moscow's hands.

[5]The list that follows is drawn from US Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs 1983, and Bowen 1986. I do not specifically list communications functions, many of which are quite important, because they are subsumed under the five categories listed. Thus, for example, communications for naval units deployed in the Indian Ocean will be considered under the heading of power projection into the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.

[6]The rather blasé attitude of US officials toward the nuclear threat to the Philippines is indicated by the fact that a member of the Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee of the House denied that SS-20s could reach the Philippines (interview with Robert Torricelli, 11 June 1987, Hackensack, NJ). For evidence

that the Philippines is within range and probably targeted, see Berman and Baker 1982: 21; US Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs 1983: 70.

[7]USIS (1986: 30) has stated that the Philippine bases "are of little significance in a nuclear exchange between the superpowers." "Nothing at Clark or Subic threatens the Soviet homeland." This assertion disingenuously ignores the communications facilities and anti-submarine warfare assets located in the Philippines, and their role in nuclear war-fighting.

[8]Liberals and radicals in New Zealand "do not see the Soviet Union as the most troubling outside influence in the Pacific. That honor belongs to France, the only colonial power remaining in the region" (Hanson 1987: 150).

[9]Kessler (1985: 9) states that the US presence "is in part the reason why the Philippines is welcomed in the ASEAN Club." Noting that intra-regional economic links are weak in Southeast Asia, Kessler then declares without further explanation: "Take away the American relationship and the ties with the rest of Asia, the Philippines will be set adrift in the Pacific." The implication here is that without the bases the ties to Asia would be lost, that without the bases the Philippines would have less in common with its neighbors than with the bases. This is certainly contrary to the widely held view that it is precisely the Philippines' special relationship with the United States that interferes with its fully joining Asia. For example, among the reasons advanced by Indonesian elites in the early 1970s for Jakarta rejecting military alliances was that it would "run the risk of ending up like the Philippines, a country with no real identity of its own" (Simon 1982: 5, citing a study by Frank Weinstein).

[10]E.g., it does not take sides in the conflicts between Vietnam and Kampuchea and between Vietnam and China, hoping that "the countries concerned sit down at the conference table and settle their differences in a fraternal manner" ("10 Years Ago . . ." 1985: 18; see also "On the International . . ." 1987: 10).

[11]See US Select Committee on Intelligence 1985: 7-8; Rosenberg 1985: 86-87; US Committee on Foreign Affairs 1986: 24-25, 50, 56; Kessler 1987: B1, B4; Porter 1987: 17. Rosenberger (1985a; 1985b) has tried to make the case for Soviet-NPA ties, but it is a rather lame effort. Among the evidence he cites for a USSR-CPP connection is the fact that both oppose US policy in Nicaragua (Rosenberger 1985b: 137). A. James Gregor told assembled specialists in February 1986 that there was evidence of outside support for the NPA, but when pressed his only substantiation was Rosenberger's article (1985b) (US Committee on Foreign Affairs 1986: 15, 22).

[12]In 1969, the administration had to assure Congress that "Although the dissidents have profited from the bases, they are not dependent on them . . . ." (US Subcommittee on Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad 1969: 355). These dissidents, of course, were not the NPA, but today Bataan, near Subic Naval Base, is one of the insurgents' strongholds. Indeed, an armed NPA squad is thought to have camped within the Subic base perimeter (Fallows 1988: 24; see also Nunez 1988: 8; "2 Olongapo . . ." 1988: 7).

[13]Gordon disagrees with the Asian perception. He writes:

> Reflecting precisely that spurious parity about which Secretary of State Haig has so bitterly complained in Europe, in the view of some Asians, US bases in the Philippines have somehow entitled the USSR to its presence in Vietnam. In this perspective, if the United States has bases at Clark and Subic, then who can complain about the (implicitly) equivalent Soviet use of Cam Ranh and Danang?" (B. Gordon 1983: 202).

Gordon is right to note the spurious parity, but it operates in the opposite direction: the Philippine bases are of much greater military significance than the facilities in Vietnam.

[14]This is not just a debater's point. In the late 1950s the United States, from its bases in the Philippines, supported rightwing rebels trying to overthrow Sukarno (Wise and Ross 1964: 145-56).

[15]In practice, of course, Indonesia is not as neutral between the United States and the Soviet Union as these comments imply. Economic ties with the West are much stronger than with the USSR (Simon 1982: 29, 31), military aid comes overwhelmingly from the West (US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency 1985: 132), and apparently favoritism is shown to US naval vessels in traversing the straits adjoining the Indonesian archipelago (Vertzberger 1982: 15).

[16]Two years later Wanandi (1985: 61) wrote that if in 1991 the Philippine government refused to renew the US military bases agreement, a phasing out of the bases could be arranged.

> Such a solution would certainly be acceptable to the rest of ASEAN, as long as the overall military balance of forces in the region can be maintained. After all, only if such a balance is preserved can ASEAN realize its aim of establishing a Zone of Peace, Friendship and Neutrality in Southeast Asia.

[17]"Over and over again the US has acquiesced in attempts by Beijing to block a more compromise oriented policy by some ASEAN countries" (van der Kroef 1986: 63-64). "United States policy has become bound to the Chinese view of what is an intensely private quarrel between the Vietnamese and the Chinese leaderships and has adopted a strategy that bludgeons Vietnam and the Soviet Union together. The Vietnamese have had no other alternative other than to seek Soviet support" (Buszynski 1983: 236; see also Buszynski 1987: 769-74).

[18]Florentino 1987: 1, 8; Thach 1988: 5. See also Tordesillas 1987. A year earlier, Vietnamese officials called for a freezing of the superpower presence in the region (Chanda 1986: 48).

[19]Fear of China by the nations of Southeast Asia has some legitimate sources and some illegitimate. Historically, China has sought to control the region, though one should also note that China's record of aggressiveness since 1949 has been much exaggerated (for discussion, see, for example, Chomsky 1969: 364-65n29). And Southeast Asian claims that Beijing uses the overseas Chinese

population as a fifth column often hide the continuing discrimination suffered by ethnic Chinese in many of the region's countries.

[20]China has also unofficially let it be known that it would raise no objection to the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia (Sricharatchanya 1987: 16).

[21]The invasion, sharply denounced by the UN General Assembly, is referred to by one scholar as the "suppression of separatist forces" (Simon 1982: 44).

[22]This of course raises the danger of a potential US-Soviet condominium to control the Third World, but the two superpowers probably have less power through the UN than they do in a free-for-all international environment, and superpower intervention, whether jointly or unilaterally, should be rendered less likely by the removal of foreign bases and a ZOPFAN prohibition against naval shows of force, etc.

[23]The study goes on to say that, if US bases were removed from the Philippines, there would be increased demands on Guam to support operations in Southeast Asia, which together with its Northeast Asian role, would place excessive burdens on it. Under the tradeoff proposal and some version of ZOPFAN, however, the United States' Southeast Asian role would not be a factor.

[24]For further discussion of the military balance in the Pacific, see McDonald 1987: 34; Arkin and Chappell 1985; and the evidence collected in Hayes et al. 1986: 291-320; and Bello 1984: 8-9. Experts know that the Soviet navy has improved, while its numbers have declined (Daniel and Tarleton 1985: 90; Daniel and Tarleton 1986: 98); the same logic should lead one to be very wary of propagandists who report only numbers of vessels in describing the US-Soviet military balance.

Moreover, Soviet naval deployments have declined worldwide (Reuters 1988: 6, citing *Jane's Defense Weekly*; M. Gordon 1988: 1, 13) and in Asia-Pacific specifically (Tordesillas 1988a: 3; 1988b: 5).

[25]". . . some Japanese even tend to argue that Americans overstate the Soviet threat mainly as a prod to bring about a rise in Japan's defense budget" (B. Gordon 1983: 201).

[26]A Japanese expert notes that sea power is of no use if the oil fields themselves are lost, and thus a Japanese naval presence in the Indian Ocean "could not address the types of threats that Japanese analysts fear most" (Tsurutari 1985: 497). Japan's recent offers of support to US policy in the Persian Gulf are not as significant as the reluctance Tokyo showed in backing its major ally.

[27]And Soviet naval strategy--as judged from its ship construction and its naval activities--seems intended to defend Soviet territory and waters from US attack (see Hayes et al. 1986: 295; Arkin and Chappell 1985: 484-85). Even the construction of its first large modern aircraft carrier (the US plans 15) will not give Moscow a significant power projection capability in this century (Backer 1985; Keller 1986: 11).

[28]In wartime, US control of Southeast Asian SLOCs would deny the Soviet Union access to the Persian Gulf from the Pacific (Bowen 1986: 12). But a

Soviet fleet bottled up in the Sea of Japan, with no forces stationed in Vietnam, would be unable to get to the Indian Ocean whether or not there were US bases in the Philippines. For a general critique of the choke-points argument, see Johnson 1985/86: 36.

[29]Incidently, with the construction of pipelines, the gulf is no longer a critical waterway for the transportation of crude oil (Ibrahim 1987: 29, 30).

[30]E.g.: "The Soviet Navy tends to bring its ships out of port only for large, well-prepared maneuvers," a US Seventh Fleet intelligence officer said. "The United States Navy, by contrast, keeps at least half its fleet at sea on a constant round of maneuvers and port calls" ("In the Western . . ." 1985: A6).

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[FEER=Far Eastern Economic Review; NYT=New York Times; WP=Washington Post]

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