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Coping with the Aftermath of Afghanistan

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As the Moscow Olympics ended and the Soviet garrison in Afghanistan settled in for what appeared to be a long stay, the Western nations continued to search for ways to manage the crisis, to contemplate a solution, and to draw its lessons for the next time.

The following three articles focus on the nature of the crisis and the policy problem presented to the West. Ernst van der Beugel's is a broad assessment; he identifies both the continuities at play in Afghanistan - the Soviet willingness to exploit targets of opportunity, and the lingering bi-polar nature of international politics despite much commentary to the contrary, and - what is new - the decrease in American power, let alone hegemony, and its implications for American policy-making and the Western Alliance.

Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart focus on the utility and illusions of military power. They look specifically at the case of the Soviet withdrawal from Iran in 1946 and conclude that it was hardly a nuclear threat by the United States that induced the Soviet troops to move out. Joseph Hajda discusses the American embargo on grain exports to the Soviet Union, concluding that as an instrument of pressure on Soviet leaders it was at best limited. The United States Administration was far too optimistic in its assumptions that the Soviet Union would have great difficulty in circumventing the embargo.

Finally, in a letter to the Editor, A. J. R. Groom suggests that perhaps the West is using a double standard towards intervention when judging the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He suggests that the West should be helping the Soviet Union find a solution to her Afghanistan predicament, rather than moralizing about her policy and gloating over her dilemma.

After Afghanistan

ERNST VAN DER BEUGEL

The massive Soviet military intervention and occupation of Afghanistan gives rise to many questions. Perhaps the most important of these is whether the Soviet Union has entered a new phase in her foreign policy, in which direct military intervention outside her own traditional sphere of influence is becoming a normal expression of Soviet state interest.

It is not for the first time that this question is being asked; it arose - some 30 years ago - over the Korean conflict in 1950. The attack by North Korea on South Korea was generally regarded as proof that the Soviet Union had entered a new phase in which she was willing to use military means in order to attain expansionist objectives. The consequences then were profound. Post-1950 Western political develop-

ments, including the rearmament of West Germany, were at least partly the result of this interpretation, which was widely shared at the time. Whether this interpretation was actually correct, whether the Soviet Union had indeed begun to execute an expansionist strategic masterplan, was however as difficult to answer with confidence then as it is today.

The reasons for Soviet decisions, their motivation and timing inevitably remain a matter of speculation. It is possible today to take detailed and extremely precise satellite pictures of military deployment in the Soviet Union, but the decision-making process of the leaders in the Kremlin remains obscured by an almost impenetrable fog. This applies as much to academic experts on the Soviet Union as to those who are in charge of policy-making in the West. No President of the United States can have much insight into the Kremlin's decision-making

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process, the power positions, the relationship or the characters of Soviet leaders. It remains a closed book. The government of the United States can find out with no trouble at all how many nuclear weapons there are in the vicinity of Novosibirsk; it has no idea whatsoever who will be Brezhnev's successor, and even if it did the political implication of such a choice would still be unknown.

This gulf between the perfect technical ability to register facts and the lack of ability to penetrate the decision-making process and the forces behind it is unprecedented in history. Inevitably it makes a relationship, based on trust, between East and West so difficult to achieve, since it underlines the speculative nature of answers to questions about the reasons behind certain actions of the Soviet Union. Was the invasion of Afghanistan offensive or defensive? Is Afghanistan an exception or the first of a series of direct military interventions? What is the ability of the collective Soviet leadership to change course, what will they learn from Afghanistan? What is the influence of the military? Are they adventurous or conservative? Who determines the long term strategy? We do not know.

Yet, in spite of these uncertainties the invasion of Afghanistan can be placed in a set political framework, and in spite of the fog obscuring the decision-making process, it is possible to detect the basic pattern of Soviet foreign policy. Since 1945, and on some occasions long before then, this policy has been characterized by a large measure of consistency and fairly clearly defined goals: a dynamic notion of Soviet security and a steady effort to improve it wherever it is threatened, and to further the Soviet position whenever an opportunity for doing so at low cost arises. The Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan fits in with this consistent policy and these goals. An event like Afghanistan, then, was not unpredictable or entirely unexpected. Yet the direct military intervention of combat forces on a large scale by the Soviet Union in a country that is not a member of the Warsaw Pact (a Czechoslovakia and Hungary, which were members of the Warsaw Pact, and in Ethiopia or Angola, where they had proxies do the work) represents a departure from the past practices and thus

raises a number of political issues. Of these issues three closely interrelated ones will be discussed in this article. How does the invasion in Afghanistan affect: the relationship between the two super-powers? the development of American foreign policy? and the relationship between the United States and her West European allies?

The Return to Bipolarity

The international system is still dominated by the relationship between the super-powers, which continues to be the decisive factor for the central issue of war or peace. That is not to say that no serious local conflicts have arisen since 1945 or that none will arise in the future. But it is the relationship between the two major powers that will determine whether these conflicts engulf the world.

Before Afghanistan this was a view no longer universally accepted. Had not the emergence of China seriously undermined the bipolar nature of the international security structure? Had not the enormous economic potential of Western Europe and Japan eroded bipolarity even further? Had not the North-South issue eclipsed the East-West problem? Had it not been shown that crises in the world arose almost without exception outside the central relationship between the super-powers?

These were and are legitimate questions. But the invasion of Afghanistan has provided the answer: the bipolar relationship remains as important as it has been since 1945. Of course, the emergence of China is a political fact of great significance, but it will not, for the foreseeable future, challenge the supremacy of the bipolar system. Naturally, the economic potential of Europe and Japan is immensely important in international relations, but this potential has not seriously affected the essentially bipolar security structure as European and Japanese policies over the past year have amply demonstrated. And it is clear that many, if not most, sources of Third-world conflict are not the direct product of the relations between the two super-powers. But who would claim that control or escalation of these conflicts will not ultimately be determined by the behaviour of the United States and the Soviet Union?

This relationship has been remarkably constant in one overriding respect, namely that it

remains an adversary relationship, determined by fundamentally opposed interests. Important changes may have taken place since 1945, but the essential adversary character of the relations remains unaltered. The Soviet Union is much clearer about this than the United States, which gets tangled up at regular intervals in her own rhetoric. The Soviet Union has never interpreted the terms 'peaceful coexistence' or 'détente' in the same way as many in the West did (i.e., as the decrease in, or even disappearance of, conflict). For the Soviet Union the struggle goes on. There is no secrecy about that and no unpredictability, and in that sense, too, Afghanistan fits into the picture, as does the repeated Soviet insistence that East-West détente is fully compatible with the Soviet support for 'liberation movements' and with ideological competition. Of course, Soviet policy is not only influenced by ideology. The Soviet Union is a world power. Her foreign policy is based on her interpretation of national interest, a mixture of purely Russian tradition and a Marxist-Leninist view of international relations. But the ideological element must not be underestimated, and it would be absurd to think that the same policy would have been pursued if the USSR had had a different regime between 1917 and 1980.

Since the Second World War, this basic thrust of Soviet policy has meant that the Soviet Union uses, and will continue to use, opportunities of expanding her political and ideological position in the world unless there is a counter force present that may dissuade such a move by threatening Soviet security. In the absence of any other reliable indications of Soviet restraint of power, it would seem wrong to think that the Soviet Union can be prevented from taking advantage of opportunities she regards as favourable for her position in the world unless there is this threat. This has been precisely the basis of America's policy of containment in the post-war period. The basis of this policy was provided by a series of events between 1945 and 1947 which are well-known. The most lucid analysis is still George Kennan's article in *Foreign Affairs* of 19 July 1947, which influenced greatly the emergence and implementation of the policy of containment.¹

No fundamental change has taken place in the relationship between the two super-powers since the late 1940s, although American rhetoric leads to confusion - when one president says that the era of confrontation is over and that of co-operation has dawned (Nixon) and another claims that 'historical trends have weakened the foundation of the two principles which guided our foreign policy in the past: a belief that Soviet expansion was almost inevitable and that it must be contained', as did President Carter in his speech at Notre Dame University on 22 May 1977. The essence of the bipolar relationship is still this: fundamental differences between the two countries exist, but both wish to avoid a direct military confrontation. Even in the least tense periods, they have never had a common view of a world order; they only acknowledged that, within a relationship of fundamental rivalry, they should search for areas of common interest. There has never been a moment for either when it was not deemed necessary both to be strong and to negotiate. Whether such a situation is called Cold War or détente is not the main issue.

But there is one important exception to the notion that the basic elements of the relationship have remained unchanged. This is the shift in the balance of power. Even after America's nuclear monopoly had disappeared, she still held a clear qualitative military superiority for a long time. But today the situation is different. This article is not the place for a military-technical description of the disappearance of that superiority. The fact is that the military balance of power changed considerably in a relatively short period of time; one can now say that a state of parity has been reached between the super-powers or that the Soviet Union is gaining preponderance.

The relationship between the two world powers is, of course, not determined exclusively by the level of military power, but at times of crisis military force ratios acquire a particular weight. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has thus focused attention on the greatly changed balance of power. The consequences for international politics in general and for American politics in particular are already visible.

Change in US Foreign Policy

American post-war foreign policy is characterized by a number of rather unique aspects. Since its adoption in the late 1940s one of the

most impressive of these was the fact that, for many years before Vietnam, this policy had led almost exclusively to success and never to failure. But then the streak of success ended in Vietnam and it shattered the traditional American outlook on policy. One must be extremely careful about overstating differences between the average European and the average American, particularly as the phenomenon 'the average European' hardly exists. But if one mentions a difference, then that difference is that Americans live in the expectation of success, as opposed to the much more pessimistic view on the European side of the ocean. Henry Kissinger rightly said that, in the United States, nothing is more difficult to accept than the possibility of tragedy. Yet that is what America had to accept in South-East Asia.

A second characteristic of American foreign policy thinking is its frequent refusal to accept how complicated the world is. This is understandable. The United States only has two real foreign policy traditions: that of isolationism - in which case this complexity is not disturbing - and that of hegemony, which also has a simplifying effect. But while the first twenty years after the war were characterized by hegemony, the period after that was marked by the fact that the strongest leading country - in the West - one of the two super-powers - had to learn to operate in an extremely complicated world without being able to fall back on either the isolationist or the hegemonic tradition.

It was in the world of the first twenty years of hegemony that President Kennedy, at his inauguration in 1961, could proclaim unlimited American support for the friends of the United States and unlimited opposition to its enemies ('... oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty'). Four years before that, Eisenhower had issued what was then a thoroughly credible guarantee, accepted without dispute by America and the world, for the integrity of the countries in the Middle East. President Carter repeated this pledge virtually word for word in his State of the Union message in January 1980 - but what a world of difference lies between the two identical messages! They indicate the magnitude of the change.

Towards the end of the sixties and in the following decade, American hegemony as well as American optimism began to crumble. The

facts are known. Economically, the American balance of payments got out of control. The dependence on foreign sources of energy was underlined in 1973. Much more important, however, was the impact of two other events: Vietnam and Watergate.

Vietnam resulted in the traumatic shock of losing a war for the first time. The moral issues of the war tore American society apart, and made US military intervention abroad suspect in the eyes of large groups in America. No country, and certainly not a large and leading one, can pursue a foreign policy that is not based on some sort of consensus. Vietnam destroyed what had been for over two decades the American consensus, as it destroyed the cohesion of a major contributing force to the consensus: the 'liberal establishment'. That was the group that had developed and executed the post-war policy, had supported the Marshall Plan, NATO, the policy of integration for Germany and Japan, the Europe of Schumann and Monnet and many other aspects of that policy. That pillar of consensus exists no longer. Watergate, in combination with Vietnam, made the office of the President suspect, certainly as regards the implementation of foreign policy. The American constitution is not at all clear as to the role in foreign policy of the Congress on the one hand and of the President on the other. But from the time of F. D. Roosevelt up until Watergate, the outcome of the struggle had been in favour of the President. Abruptly, the President's position was weakened. Congress resumed a major role in the formulation and even the implementation of foreign policy. The 'imperial Presidency' disappeared.

The impact on foreign policy has been evident in the past years. The consensus was shaken, doubt sown and confidence weakened. One consequence of this has been the relative decline of the country's position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. This is especially apparent in the shifting balance of military power.

A second consequence is the reluctance to intervene militarily abroad beyond America's established alliances; the latter distinction is important since, in the last ten years, there has been less controversy than before about support for NATO, specifically about the stationing of some 300,000 Americans in Europe 35 years after the war. Outside the area of clear alliance

commitments, American reluctance to contemplate military involvement has been very marked. Now it seems that Afghanistan has put an end to the period of deliberate contraction of the American presence in the world by adding to the impact of other, earlier events: Angola, the Horn of Africa, Iran, different as they may have been in cause and effect, preceded Afghanistan and impaired the assumption, made by the Carter Administration, that the Soviet Union is essentially a *status quo* power. The hope that the North-South problem could be separated from the East-West relationship was dashed. The dependency on oil from the Middle East, originally viewed primarily as a Middle East problem, came to be perceived in the light of the relationship with the Soviet Union - a series of events which Afghanistan confirmed.

The change in Washington has been announced, as so often, with all the rhetoric of the American presidency - a *fortiori* in an election year - and has led to a strong emphasis on the shifting balance of power with the Soviet Union and to an attempt to reverse that process by an increased military effort. It is too early to say whether this is a definitive change or merely a temporary one. But there are signs that the lost consensus on the major questions of foreign policy is now reappearing. It will take time before the policy elements of the new consensus have become clearly defined, and much that is currently stated in the American debate reflects despite the often assertive tone, a search for answers which can only be gradually developed; one can only hope that the American tendency of over-simplification will not prevail when it comes to setting out the policies designed to satisfy the United States - and the West's - interests in a complex world.

Focus on the Alliance

The time when it was confidently assumed that the interests of a powerful America and a unified Europe would run automatically parallel (Kennedy's Atlantic Partnership concept) has passed. Rather - and the Afghan crisis has confirmed this - differences of interests between the United States and her European allies seem to become more marked as Europe moves towards a greater degree of political cohesion.

If there is a slowly developing European process of common decision-making in foreign

policy, a number of essential points of that policy are still vague. There are the uncertainties over basic objectives of European cooperation. Britain has a fundamentally different idea on this than France for whom 'being different from the US' retains a high priority in her foreign policy. The Federal Republic of Germany, so central in the American-European relationship, depends on the United States for her security, but at the same time seeks to continue her 'Ostpolitik' and to increase her special relationship with France - goals which are becoming increasingly difficult to reconcile.

But differences arise not only over fundamentals; they are no less visible on practical issues of day-to-day policy. There is a real danger that European governments, anxious to demonstrate cohesion but as yet unable to do so in specific, constructive policies, will be tempted to show their cohesion instead in a distancing from US policies. The Declaration of the Nine on the Middle East, passed in June 1980 at the European Summit in Venice, is a case in point - a declaration which could in no way improve the prospects of settlement in the Arab-Israeli dispute but, through demonstrating distance from the US position, created the image of a common European 'strategy'. This tendency was, of course, further encouraged by widespread lack of faith in the competence of the present American administration, quite apart from the content of its policy.

Afghanistan has brought the underlying problem into sharper focus. In the United States it has promoted the question to what extent the solidarity of the European allies can be relied on, if they do not practise solidarity in a crisis, and the doubts that there will be a positive answer have increased. The question becomes all the more pressing as the issue here is not solidarity for solidarity's sake, but the fact that it is difficult for many in the United States to accept that events in Afghanistan threaten American interests more than those of the European allies. Afghanistan is thus a test case for many who in the past have firmly upheld the alliance with Europe.

In the American view, Afghanistan could be a starting point for Soviet domination of the Persian Gulf; the fact that countries which are four or five times as dependent on events in that part of the world hesitate to follow

American policy, or even oppose it, gives rise to feelings ranging from surprise to anger. Most European governments, on the other hand, refused to share this analysis. They were less concerned with the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan than fearing that the the American reaction to Afghanistan could affect détente on the main East-West front, i.e., in Europe. Theo Sommer formulated for many in Western Europe, and perhaps particularly in Germany, when he wrote 'Europe must not become an area of tension simply because there is tension elsewhere. Battles lost in Luanda, Addis Ababa or Kabul cannot be won in Berlin . . . It is a safe bet, that contrary to the expectations of most Americans, the rape of Afghanistan will not put to rest the old argument between US policy-makers and Europeans about the uses of détente, about linkage, or about the necessity of keeping on speaking terms with the East, even in stormy weather. In fact, the argument is likely to be exacerbated in the Alliance. A French-German axis of interest is emerging whose leaders are intent not on cancelling détente in Europe . . .'

This goes to the heart of what Afghanistan has brought to the fore in the American-European relationship. After Afghanistan the US believed that there was a connection between events there and in the rest of the world, and requested the active co-operation of her allies. Many in Europe on the other hand, seemed to hope that tension and détente could exist simultaneously in different parts of the world, and that this would allow room for differences in the policies of the important allies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

NOTES

European détente is based on effective deterrence, in other words on the continuing protection by the United States. That is the reason why it is highly unlikely that the same thing will happen in Western Europe as happened in Afghanistan. It is the only reason why Berlin is not Kabul. This does not imply that American policy after Afghanistan should be followed uncritically. It does imply, however, that the margin in which deviation from this policy is possible and desirable is small. A division of labour in which the United States assumes responsibility for defence and Western Europe for détente would increase the problems between them so much as to make a fatal break nearly inevitable. It is here that the analysis on the problems for the Alliance links up with the two points made above: the reaffirmation of bipolarity and the re-emergence of a more assertive foreign policy consensus in the United States. Europe, if it ever could, will not now remain an 'island of détente'; Third-world crises, whether we like it or not, will directly affect relations in the Northern part of the globe; and a European tendency to define common positions in contrast to those of the United States will not only lack effectiveness but also fail to influence American policy to take European interests into account, while increasing the strains in the Western Alliance as a whole.

Afghanistan is, therefore, much more than the isolated victim of Soviet military occupation. It has brought the problems for our security into sharper focus. And it has identified the challenge which we have to meet if the structure of the Western security alliance is to be maintained.

masterful description he gave in 1947 of the essence of Soviet policy, but he now characterizes them as a bizarre aberration that he cannot explain. 'It was a move decidedly not in character for either Kossygin or Brezhnev. Gromyko, too, is unlikely to have approved it'. And he then goes on to criticize the American reaction. The Kennan mystery remains unsolved.

* 7 America and the World 1979, Foreign Affairs 1980 vol 58 no. 3, pp. 634-5.

Afghanistan and the 1946 Iran Analogy

BARRY M. BLECHMAN and DOUGLAS M. HART

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has been a classic case of *deja vu* in the foreign policy community and it was probably inevitable that analogies would be drawn between the current crisis in South-west Asia and the 1946 confrontation over Soviet troops in Iran. Superficially, the two have many common elements. Escalating from a local situation, each crisis represented a watershed in Soviet-American relations, a break in the co-operation that had seemed to characterize those relations in preceding years. Each confrontation stemmed from Soviet occupation of foreign territory, but more importantly featured the now-familiar ingredients of oil, ideology and geopolitics. Elements of the US domestic situation are also similar. The Secretary of State in 1946, James F. Byrnes, was accused of appeasement by hard-liners, while the popular press compared the international climate to that of Munich in 1938. The President, Harry S. Truman, was considered to be naive about international politics by almost all observers, especially those in the Congress.

These comparisons are usually made with a sense of nostalgia. America remembers the earlier period as a halcyon time when she dominated international politics and American military power assured the defence of US interests and world-wide respect for her wishes. Recently, for example, in an article aptly entitled 'The Good Old Days', *Time* magazine reported President Truman's version of how the 1946 crisis was resolved, as told to Senator Henry Jackson. Truman is reported to have said that the way he caused the Soviet Union to withdraw her forces from Iran was to 'summon' the Soviet Ambassador to the White House and tell him that unless Soviet troops were evacuated from Iran within 48 hours, the United States would use the atomic bomb. Truman is quoted as saying that the Soviet Union withdrew in 24 hours.

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The dangers of exaggerating the utility of military power are as grave as those of underestimating its value. Having sweepingly disparaged military power for years following the *débacle* of Vietnam, the US is now swinging the other way, uncritically embracing military threats and military operations as simple solutions for all ills. The *Time* report of the 1946 Iranian case illustrates this new military chic but the report is entirely without substantiation. Military threats did not bring about the Soviet withdrawal from Iran in 1946; there was not a hint of an ultimatum. Nuclear weapons were as far from the mind of American decision-makers in that situation as was Afghanistan from the American consciousness before last Christmas.

This is not to say that the armed forces or military threats cannot be effective instruments in support of foreign policy; obviously, they are often decisive. But military power can be employed effectively only in specific types of situations, and only when used for purposes that are supported by the broad thrust of the nation's history, past policies, and capabilities. Over the long term, American interests are protected best by foreign policies that are credible and sustainable in the light of the public's sense of national purpose and interests, as well as contemporary political realities. Military power can play an important part in such policies, but it cannot be the sole or even dominant instrument of policy. Nor can it be used or threatened capriciously. It would be a serious error to let the present infatuation with quick military solutions overshadow the need for longer-term and broader-based policies that can deal effectively with a range of concerns. The 1946 Iranian crisis is a good illustration of these points.

The 1946 Crisis

The origins of the Soviet-American disagreement over Iran lay in the partition of that country by Soviet and British forces in August 1941, to preclude a similar fate at the hands of the Nazis, who had the sympathy, if not the

support of the recently-deposed Shah's father. Dividing the country roughly in the middle, the two powers garrisoned their sectors with troops, pledging to respect Iranian independence and territorial integrity by withdrawing no later than six months after the defeat of the Axis; a date which turned out to be 2 March 1946. During the war Iran served as an important conduit for American lend-lease equipment to the Soviet Union, particularly as the northern sea route to Murmansk came under increasing pressure from German U-boats. This led to the introduction of American logistical forces, which, combined with Iran's enormous petroleum resources, prompted official US interest in post-war developments.

British and American troops began to withdraw soon after V-J day. The Soviet Union, however, had established a quasi-independent regime in Azerbaijan, the part of the territory she occupied nearest her border, and had an obvious interest in the potential oil riches of the region. Fearing that Stalin had no intention of withdrawing by the agreed date, the Iranian government directed its ambassador to the UN to raise the matter in the Security Council early in 1946. It soon became clear that the Iranian fears were well-grounded. On 6 March George Kennan, then US Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, delivered a note to the Soviet Foreign Ministry requesting the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Azerbaijan. The substance of this message appeared in *The New York Times* on the same day (the problem of news leaks has not changed much in 34 years either). Simultaneously, the State Department began to receive reports that the Soviet Union was augmenting her units in Iran.²

On 8 March Secretary Byrnes again wrote to the Soviet Foreign Minister, requesting information on Soviet military activity in Iran and an explanation. When four days passed without a reply, the State Department announced that Soviet tanks were advancing on Teheran. The USSR finally responded on 15 March: not surprisingly, she denied the charges. Just exactly what she was up to in Iran remains unclear.³

In the latter part of March the focus of the crisis shifted again to the UN, as the Security Council opened debate on the 25th. The Soviet Ambassador, Andrei Gromyko, tried unsuccessfully to get the debate postponed. He was aided

by an announcement that all Soviet troops would be pulled out in five or six weeks, but Washington was in no mood to compromise. On 27 March Secretary Byrnes personally argued the American case against postponement at the United Nations, winning kudos from the press, a majority of the Security Council to the US side, and the first of many Soviet walkouts.

The crisis broke a short time later, on 4 April, when the Soviet Union and Iran announced a formal agreement calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops by early May in return for a 51 per cent Soviet share in a new Soviet-Iranian oil company. On 21 May Iranian troops entered Azerbaijan and reported the complete removal of Soviet men and equipment. Having verified Soviet compliance with the April agreement, the Iranians promptly broke it. Their army marched on Tabriz and removed the Soviet-installed government; a short time later, the Iranian legislature repudiated the joint stock arrangement.

What caused the Soviet Union to withdraw from Iran in 1947? A tough and unyielding American position? Threats implied by a movement of American military forces? A nuclear ultimatum? At various times, Truman is pointed to each of these. The answer, however, is 'none of the above.'

The Crisis According to Truman

We have found references to seven occasions on which President Truman discussed what caused the USSR to withdraw from Iran. In late 1950, he privately told historian Herbert Feis he had 'laid down an ultimatum' during the crisis.⁴ He first spoke of the ultimatum publicly at a press conference on 24 April 1952: 'In 1945 I had to send an ultimatum to the head of the Soviet Union to get out of Persia . . . It was a message from me to Stalin to get out of Persia. Unless he did get out, we would put some more people in there. And he got out.'⁵

Truman mentioned the situation in a similar way in the second volume of his memoirs, published in 1956, and again in an article published in *The New York Times* in 1957. The Iranian crisis came up a fifth time during a question and answer period at Columbia University two years later, and once again in an interview with historian Herbert Druks. Most recently there is Senator Jackson's account,⁶

Although the President frequently confused the dates of the incident and offered several versions of how the ultimatum was conveyed - directly to Stalin, to Soviet Ambassador Gromyko, from Byrnes to Foreign Minister Molotov - the three essentials of his story remained similar: (a) the United States issued an ultimatum; (b) it was backed up by the movement, or threat of movement of American military forces; (c) the Soviet Union complied immediately.

The former President is virtually alone in this remembrance of the crisis, however. Although the classified documents of the period are now publicly available, nothing resembling an 'ultimatum' has been discovered. Byrnes is silent on this subject in his memoirs, and a search of the former Secretary's personal papers, stored at Clemson University, has revealed nothing. Dean Acheson, who was Under-Secretary of State during the crisis, fails to mention an ultimatum to Stalin in his works. Charles Bohlen, a leading Soviet expert and one of Byrnes' closest aides in 1946, is equally mute. Neither Secretary of War Patterson nor Secretary of the Navy Forrestal have anything to say on the subject in their papers. In commenting on the crisis, the official State Department historians stated persuasively:

No documentation on the sending of an ultimatum to the Soviet Union has been found in the [State] Department files or in the files of the Department of Defense, nor have several of the highest officers of the Department in 1946 been able to affirm the sending of an ultimatum.⁷

The notes actually delivered to the Soviet Union during the Iranian crisis cannot be called ultimatums, nor threats by any stretch of the imagination. The 6 March communication, the one probably referred to by Truman at his press conference, is exceedingly mild and positive. After repeating the recent history of the situation, and noting that the United States could not remain 'indifferent', it stated:

The Government of the United States, in the spirit of friendly association which developed between the United States and the Soviet Union in the successful effort against the common enemy and as a fellow member of

the United Nations, expresses the earnest hope that the Government of the Soviet Union will do its part, by withdrawing immediately all Soviet forces from the territory of Iran, to promote the international confidence which is necessary for peaceful progress among the peoples of all nations.⁸

These are hardly the words to imply or to accompany a threat of war. Acheson calls the subsequent 8 March cable to Molotov a 'public inquiry'; it was simply a request for information concerning the alleged Soviet troop movements toward Teheran.⁹

If Truman did transmit an ultimatum, then, such a demarche had to have been formulated in late March or early April. At a press conference on 28 March, however, the President stated that he had no intention of communicating with Premier Stalin directly'. Five days earlier, the President had met with General Walter Bedell Smith, whose position as Ambassador to the Soviet Union had just been confirmed. Truman's sense of this meeting, recorded in his own handwriting in his appointment log is revealing:

I told him [Bedell Smith] to tell Stalin I had always held him to be a man to keep his word. Troops in Iran after March 2 upset that theory. Also told him to urge Stalin to come to U.S.A., gave him a copy of [Secretary of Commerce, Henry] Wallace's letter, 3/14/46.¹⁰

It is hard to believe that a President, even one as unvarnished and straightforward as Harry Truman, would be so brazen as to couple a threat of atomic war with a welcoming invitation to visit the United States and the conciliatory words of Henry Wallace, the Andrew Young of the Truman Administration.

If the United States had issued an ultimatum, moreover, it is not clear what military forces would have been used to carry it out. At various times, Truman stated that he directed the movement of ground forces, or naval forces, or both. A recent Brookings Institution study, however, which unearthed 215 incidents between 1945 and 1975 in which changes were made in the physical disposition of American armed forces in connection with situations abroad, found no evidence of military moves related to the 1946 Iranian crisis. The battleship *Missouri* was sent

to the Mediterranean in March of 1946, but that was connected to the situation in Turkey. In the 1940s, neither the *Missouri* nor any other American naval forces sailing in the Mediterranean would have been useful in Iran. American warships made their first post-war appearance in the Persian Gulf in 1948.¹¹

American ground troops were in an extraordinary state of disarray. Between 30 June 1945 and 30 June 1946, the strength of the US Army dropped from more than eight million to less than two million; the Marine Corps, from 475,000 to 156,000. By all accounts, those few who remained were in no mood and no condition to fight anyone, far less the Red Army on its own border.¹²

As for the alleged nuclear threat, the most disturbing of the several versions of what type of force might have backed up the putative 'ultimatum', Milton Gustafson, Chief of the Diplomatic Branch of the National Archives writes: 'There is no historical evidence to support that statement. The documentary evidence suggests negotiations that were much more complex.'¹³

Time reports that Truman 'summoned' Gro-nyko to the White House and confronted the young diplomat with a 48-hour ultimatum. Indeed, at a press conference on 21 March 1946, Truman indicated that he intended to meet with Groznyko at 11 a.m. that day. However, neither Matthew Connelly's record of the President's appointments nor the files of Truman's personal secretary mention a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador then; they do note that he met at that hour with the Honorable Ganson Parcell, chairman of the Securities Exchange Commission, at the latter's request. The staff of the Harry S. Truman Memorial Library has found no evidence of any meeting between Truman and Groznyko between March and May of 1946; this was in the days, after all, when foreign policy was implemented by secretaries of State, not presidents. In any event, Groznyko would have been an unusual medium through which to convey a threat of such gravity. The future foreign minister at the time was a new-comer.¹⁴

The minimal size of the US atomic arsenal in 1946 also raises doubts about the nuclear threat. The actual number of weapons available has not been released by the Department of

Energy, but open sources make clear the paucity of the fledgling nuclear force. For example, General Carl Spaatz, then Air Force Chief of Staff, places the number of bombs available in early 1946 at around twelve; most other accounts report a similar or even smaller number of relatively low-yield (20 kiloton) bombs. Historian David Rosenberg relates that all these weapons were unassembleable, and that it took a year to establish a military assembly team to replace the war. Such a state of affairs made it impossible to employ even this small number of weapons on short notice. Further, in September of 1946 there were still only twenty crews trained to drop the A-bomb, and only ten of the 27 B-29 bombers configured for atomic delivery were truly operational.¹⁵

Why did Truman's account of the situation diverge so markedly from everyone else's? He might have acted in ignorance. Apparently he was not told the exact size of the nuclear stockpile until 3 April 1947. David Lilienthal, the first chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, recalled 'it was quite a shock' when the President learned how few war bullets there were in his gun. Two months earlier the Joint Chiefs of Staff had informed the military service secretaries that the existing number of atomic bombs was 'inadequate to meet the security requirements of the United States'.¹⁶

Perhaps the former President's version of the 1946 Iranian crisis began as an honest account of how he remembered the incident, and acquired greater ferocity over the years. Indeed, it is not inconceivable that Truman ordered that an ultimatum be sent to Stalin in March 1946, an order which ended up in the mild State Department note quoted above. The bureaucracy's modulations of Truman's orders are well-documented, and Truman himself expressed bemused sympathy for his successor, Dwight Eisenhower, when 'Ike' realized that being President was not like being a general in the army. But President Truman also had clear political and personal reasons for the version he recalled. At the time of his original public pronouncement in April 1952, Truman was fighting hard for the defence budget request he had submitted to the Congress. As he stated at the press conference,

We would take the necessary steps if he [Stalin] did not get out. And we had a fleet at that time in the Persian Gulf [sic], and we had a lot of soldiers over in that neighborhood - which we haven't got now or anywhere else, unless congress goes ahead and gives us a chance to put our defense program into effect¹⁷ (author's italics).

In 1957, Truman's comments came in the context of partisan criticism of the Eisenhower Administration's handling of the Syrian crisis. And always after leaving office, Truman was sensitive to charges that he had been too soft on the Soviet Union.

But explanations are in the realm of speculation. What we do know is that President Truman's version of the 1946 crisis is mistaken in its essential elements. Nothing resembling an ultimatum was issued. No US military threats were made, either verbally or through the movement of military forces. There was not a hint of a nuclear threat. And although the USSR complied with the US request, she did so at a leisurely pace, not removing her troops finally until the end of May - that is to say six weeks, not 24 hours, from the height of the crisis.

Lessons

If the United States did not make military threats of any kind, much less nuclear threats, why, then did the Soviet Union withdraw from Iran? Some have suggested the force of world opinion. This is unlikely, although the United Nations does seem to have worked well as a forum to make clear to the Soviet Union where the rest of the world stood. More credible explanations probably concern global strategy. The withdrawal from Iran was only one of several conciliatory gestures on the part of the Soviet Union at the time. Also in the first six months of 1946, Soviet troops were withdrawn from Northern China and Manchuria, and the USSR settled a border dispute with Afghanistan. She also eased up on her claim to assume at least one of Italy's former colonies.

Notice, however, that each of these gestures concerned areas outside central Europe. There were no steps back in the latter; indeed, while Soviet troops remained in place in Germany, Poland, and other nations, Soviet agents actively

sought to install Communist governments in Eastern Europe. In short, this was a time of consolidation in Soviet strategy. While tightening his grip on the area most vital to Soviet interests, Stalin sought to allay Western fears and avoid Western reaction by stepping back from claims in less important regions. There was ample evidence that the West was becoming aroused. March of 1946, for example, the height of the Iranian crisis, also saw Winston Churchill's famous speech at Fulton, Missouri: 'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent.' Not wishing to aggravate the situation, Stalin skillfully kindled Western hopes by appearing conciliatory in regions to the south and east of the Soviet Union. The strategy paid off for nearly a year, until new pressures on Greece and Turkey finally led to the Truman Doctrine in 1947.

None of this is to suggest that American military strength was irrelevant. Stalin's care was no doubt due, at least in part, to his appreciation for the military capacity of the United States. After all, the world had just witnessed a demonstration of the extraordinary potential of US war industry and technology, as well as the resilience, toughness and commitment of the American people when provoked. Soviet leaders thus were willing to forego immediate gains of lesser importance, in order to avoid diverting its most dangerous foe from the military demobilization it was then pursuing.

But a reputation for military strength and potency and the respect it engenders is one thing, and empty gestures and even emptier threats something quite different. In a sense, when a nation resorts to displays of military force and, even more, when it resorts to tough talk about the use of force, we are witnessing the failure of past policies: failure to make clear what constitutes one's vital interests, and failure to develop and maintain a credible military capability to defend those interests. Recent threats by high-ranking American defence officials that, if necessary, the United States would use nuclear weapons in defence of the Persian Gulf, are symptomatic of American vulnerabilities in South-west Asia - not American strength. They are as much a confession of US military weakness as that part of the world today as were Khrushchev's threats in the mid-

1950s to use nuclear rockets in defence of Soviet interests in the Middle East confessions of Soviet unpreparedness.

As concerns Iran, President Truman talked a tougher game after the incident than he did during it. Having a big stick, so to speak, in the form of the still-fresh American triumph in World War II, he could afford to speak softly. More recent history has called into question the credibility of American military power. That credibility will not be rebuilt with threats, or talk, or gestures; it will take years of hard work.

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And while US military strength is being restored, it would be as foolish as it is dangerous to depend on bluffs, especially nuclear ones, to protect American interests. A sensible US policy for South-west Asia must look to the long term, pursuing steady and consistent courses of action that delineate our purposes, objectives and desired relationships, while building relevant military power sufficient to defend American interests in that region. In the interim, diplomacy must avoid, not precipitate, situations which might force a showdown.

¹ *Time Magazine*, 28 January 1980, p. 13.

² *The New York Times*, 6 March 1946.

³ *The New York Times*, 20 March 1946.

⁴ Herbert Fois, *From Trust to Terror* (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 10.

⁵ *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1952-1953* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1966), pp. 291, 294.

⁶ *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume II, Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 94-5.

⁷ *The New York Times*, 25 August 1957; Herbert Fois, *Harry S. Truman and the Russians, 1945-1953* (New York: Speller, 1967), p. 175.

⁸ US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VII* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1969), p. 348.

⁹ Raymond Deneett and Robert K. Turner (eds), *Documents on American Foreign Relations: Volume VIII* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1948), pp. 856-7.

¹⁰ Dean Ashton, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 197.

¹¹ Taken from Truman's Daily Appointment Calendar for Saturday, 23 March 1946; provided courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri.

¹² Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1978), pp. 1-2, 547-8.

¹³ *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part II* (Washington, DC: USGPO, 1975), p. 1141.

¹⁴ Private correspondence between Milton S. Gustofson and the authors, February 1980.

¹⁵ Adam Uman, *Expansion and Coexistence* (New York: Praeger, 1968), p. 380.

¹⁶ David A. Rosenber, 'American Atomic Strategy and the Hydrogen Bomb Decision', *Journal of American History*, Volume LXVI (June 1979), pp. 62-87.

¹⁷ *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal: The Atomic Energy Years 1945-1950, Volume II* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 165-6; Rosenber, *op. cit.* in note 15, p. 86.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.* in note 5, pp. 294-5.

The Soviet Grain Embargo

JOSEPH HAJDA

Soviet military action in Afghanistan has triggered major shifts in American foreign policy. In his address to the nation on 4 January 1980, President Carter announced the forms of 'punishment' to be administered to the Soviet Union for her invasion of Afghanistan, and called on other nations 'committed to world peace and stability' not to continue to do business at Kansas State University.

As usual with the Soviet Union. Shortly after launching the campaign of economic and other sanctions, he vowed to stick to the campaign, gloomily forecasting that 'under even the best of circumstances, normal trade will not be resumed with the Soviet Union.'

President Carter decided to halt or reduce exports to the USSR in three areas: high technology or other strategic items, fishing privileges in United States waters, and grain.

By far the most controversial action was his decision concerning grain exports.

'The 17 million tons of grain ordered by the Soviet Union in excess of that amount which we are committed to sell will not be delivered. This grain was not intended for human consumption but was to be used for building up Soviet livestock herds ... After consultation with other principal grain exporting nations, I am confident that they will not replace these quantities of grain by additional shipments on their part to the Soviet Union.'

This article examines the Carter Administration decision to embargo part of the grain sales to the Soviet Union and the effects of that move. It highlights the ways in which the embargo has been circumvented by other grain suppliers, and the case with which the Soviet Union can compensate in other ways.¹ The grain embargo carries lessons for the future about the use and the limitations of agricultural trade as an element of political influence.

The Decisions

The Administration officials explained that economic sanctions were intended to impress on the Soviet leaders that the action they took in Afghanistan brought upon them unacceptable costs.

Yet the immediate effect of the embargo was not appreciated by Washington at the outset. Administration officials were unaware of what was at stake in the US grain sector, nor did they fully understand the international politics of East-West commodity trade. The decision was made hastily, without careful examination and extensive deliberation. Reports of substantial disagreements among the President's advisers over the decision indicated that the Secretary of Agriculture, Bob Bergland, concerned about its implications for grain farmers, expressed great reluctance about the embargo.²

According to Secretary Bergland, the US Department of Agriculture began examining the potential effect of suspending grain sales to the Soviet Union on 2 January 1980 - just two days before the President's announcement of the economic sanctions - but was not in a position to make a recommendation regarding the implications of the sales suspension because

he and his department did not have access to all necessary information. As a result, some of the most important implications were not even considered until after 4 January.

Although the Export Administration Act of 1979 requires consultation by the Secretary of Commerce with affected industries (i.e., in the case of grain embargo with grain producers, firms in the grain sector, rail and barge lines companies and other affected industries) before export controls are imposed for foreign policy reasons, no such consultation took place before the embargo on agricultural commodities was imposed. Similarly, the decision to embargo part of the grain sales to the Soviet Union was a unilateral US policy initiative, and American allies and others were urged to accede to this initiative only after it was announced.

Defending the Administration action, officials argued that the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan demanded prompt and forceful response by the United States, and that restrictions on agricultural exports to the USSR were designed to further US national security and foreign policy interests.³ The United States - the major supplier of wheat and corn both in world and Soviet trade - used the restrictions as a critical element in efforts to demonstrate to the Soviet Union the tangible costs of engaging in armed aggression. According to the Administration, additional grain supplies available in the world market were limited, and the probability of a success for this initiative appeared to be very good.

The President told Congress that the 17 million tons of suspended grain sales would make a significant contribution to the military potential of the Soviet Union, but did not explain why the same was not also true regarding the amount of shipment still allowed. He suspended grain exports and re-exports from the United States to the Soviet Union, except for exports of wheat and corn authorized under the Soviet-American agreement of 20 October 1975, on the supply of grain, which obligated the United States to sell to the Soviet Union 6-8 million tons of grain annually for a five-year period starting 1 October 1976. Administration officials told those who were mystified by the exception that the commitment to sell 6-8 million tons was a formal obligation,

while the amount above that - the 17 million tons which required special authorization in October 1979 - was not, despite the fact that it was generally perceived as an executive branch commitment.

There were other peculiarities. The President pointed out that the embargoed grain was to be used for building up Soviet livestock herds and was not intended for human consumption, but he did not add that his move could lead to cuts in the meat consumption by the mass of the Soviet people. No less perturbing was his statement that the United States would use some of the grain shipments withheld from the Soviet Union to 'increase amounts of grain devoted to the alleviation of hunger in poor countries.' It seemed cynical to tell the poor countries that if Soviet military action makes grain sales to the USSR unwise, then the United States will make such grain available to needy nations.

Circumventing the Embargo
The most controversial aspect of the Administration effort to mobilize support for the embargo was its assessment that it would not be circumvented by other grain suppliers. The 17 million tons of embargoed grain, valued at about \$2.3 billion, amounted to some 7.5 per cent of the projected total Soviet requirement. The Administration assumed that the decrease in total grain and feed caused by the embargo would be high enough to drive home to Soviet leaders the price to be paid for Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Without substitutes from other sources, the embargo was expected to cause the loss of up to half of projected grain imports for fiscal year 1980, a major reduction in the availability of livestock feed, the slaughter of livestock that could not be fed, and a significant reduction in Soviet meat production below planned levels.

Although it is difficult to quantify the impact of trade on the Soviet economy, the Administration set up a special monitoring system which was developed by the US Department of Agriculture to check on grain shipments to the Soviet Union. However, official pronouncements were based on the assumption that circumvention of the restrictions would be held to a minimum and there is evidence that estimates issued were sometimes manipulated for political reasons. Naïve calculations were used

to demonstrate the effectiveness of the embargo. Unrealistic expectations were kept alive even after less foolish calculations showed that the Administration greatly underrated the Soviet ability to purchase grain from other sources.

While Administration spokesmen insisted in summer 1980 that US efforts to deny grain to the USSR were very successful, critics argued that Carter's ill-conceived, ineffective and improperly implemented grain embargo should be terminated immediately. Anti-embargo forces emphasized the adverse economic impact of the restrictions on American grain farmers, on firms and employees in the grain sector and on communities in grain-producing areas, along with the likelihood that the embargo was circumvented by other grain suppliers so that the Soviet Union would be able to import enough grain to avoid undesirable consequences of the Administration action.*

The President was overly optimistic in his assessment of other nations' intentions when he said on 4 January 1980 that he was confident that the principal grain exporting nations would not replace the embargoed quantities of grain by additional shipments on their part to the Soviet Union. The Administration brought together in Washington on 12 January 1980 representatives of the key grain suppliers: Canada, Australia, the European Community and Argentina. The purpose of the consultation was to explain the American move and get these suppliers to agree neither to sell uncommitted grain nor to undo existing contracts with other purchasers and sell to the USSR.

The major grain exporters generally agreed that their governments would not directly or indirectly replace US grain withheld from the Soviet Union. But Argentina stated that she would not participate in economic sanctions and would not control her sales by destination, clearly indicating non-support of the embargo. Canada informed the Administration that she would refrain from grain sales to the Soviet Union in excess of normal and traditional levels, thus raising the question of what constitutes normal and traditional levels. Australia stated that she would not seek to replace wheat contracts taken off the market by US action, but did not resort to Canada's form of assurance. Canada, Australia and the European Community made it clear that they were not in a

position to control all international grain transactions (meaning that commercial pressures would make the agreement less effective than the Administration hoped).

Preliminary estimates of grain trade for July 1979 to June 1980 show that the Soviet Union imported a record amount of grain - some 31.5 million tons, breaking the 1975-6 record of 26.1 million tons. (Accounting for 16 per cent of world grain imports, the Soviet Union was the leading grain importing country.) The United States remained the USSR's leading single country supplier for the whole July-June period, but for the first time since 1975 Soviet grain supplies from other sources surpassed those from the US (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sources of USSR Grain Imports (million metric tons)

	1978-9	1979-80
July-December	6.9	16.9
from US	4.0	12.2
from others	2.9	4.7
January-June	8.7	14.6
from US	7.2	3.1
from others	1.5	11.5
Total:	15.6	31.5
from US	11.2	15.3
from others	4.4	16.2

Source: Update: Impact of Agricultural Trade Restrictions on the Soviet Union. (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, July 1980), p. 4.

The scenario written by the Administration became unrealistic when the grain exporting countries would not play the roles the United States had cast for them. Argentina - after the US, the most significant exporter of diversified grains in the world - undertook a massive shift of her grain from traditional markets to the Soviet Union, selling her grain at premium prices and letting the US export companies and other suppliers sell grain in markets that previously were Argentina's. Blunting the effects of the embargo from the very beginning, Argentina signed a long-term agreement on 10 July 1980 to supply the Soviet Union with 22.5 million tons of corn, sorghum and soybeans over the next five years. The failure of the Administration to deflect Argentina from taking advantage of the US restrictions was reflected

in the preliminary estimate of 5.5 million tons of Argentine grain exports to the USSR in July 1979-June 1980.⁸ Australia's and Canada's exports, 3.9 and 3.5 million tons, respectively, ranked behind Argentina, but were relatively high, indicating that pressure from grain producers and exporting organizations effectively prevented any losses due to the US action. According to the estimates, the European Community was a minor supplier with 0.8 million tons. India supplied 2 million tons of wheat to the Soviet Union, repaying a Soviet wheat loan in kind and exchanging wheat for oil. Other suppliers provided smaller amounts. It is noteworthy that the Administration took no sanctions, such as curtailing trade, against Argentina or other grain exporting countries.

With respect to the re-export of American grain from third countries to the Soviet Union, the fungible nature of the commodities makes it very difficult to control their ultimate destination. While trade and other sources reported several instances of such re-exports, investigations of diversion or trans-shipment (directed by the US Department of Commerce) during the first six months of 1980 found that no violation of the US grain sales suspension was demonstrated.⁹

While the possibility of re-exports is a global problem, the suspicion of such actions is especially great with countries of Eastern Europe. Soviet military, political and economic power not only limits their freedom of manoeuvre, but also imposes a certain degree of prudent loyalty to the Soviet Union. The current frayed state of Soviet-American relations complicating matters still further and made manoeuvring by Eastern European countries more difficult than when the friction was less acute.

The US decision to embargo part of the grain sales was directed exclusively at the Soviet Union, and no changes were made in American trade regulations for Eastern European countries. However, the announced US goal of building stronger ties with them, especially economic ties (primarily through trade expansion) was linked by their behaviour in the sphere of grain trade, i.e. their acceptance of the US position on grain re-exports. According to the Administration, diversion or trans-shipment of American grain to the Soviet Union would inevitably make it

impossible to differentiate between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in US export controls.⁷

But the policy of differentiation is an attractive one, which brings the American economy direct benefits - including a favourable trade balance with Eastern Europe of \$1 billion in 1979 - and trade makes a political contribution to diversity in the region. At the same time, it is apparent that all the countries of the region want to strengthen their trade and financial ties with the West. Even though they do not want to be perceived as the Soviet Union's shadows, their status in the Soviet alliance system prevents them from accepting the US scenario. East Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia imported a lot of US grain in the period 1979-80, and some diversion probably occurred, perhaps indirectly, by shipping locally produced grain to the USSR, or by re-exporting grain purchased elsewhere through a very complicated and costly procedure.⁸

Lessons of the Embargo

All things considered, the Soviet Union appears to be coping better with the embargo than the United States anticipated in January 1980. But there is probably something to the assumption that the Soviet Union's ability to acquire grain from foreign sources was reduced in the first half of 1980. Without engaging in polemics about the size of this reduction, let us briefly examine the likely ways the USSR offset the cuts in imports. What are the prospects for improving the ease with which the Soviet Union can compensate in other ways?

First, the shortfall in wheat and feed grain was offset by drawing on the stock available as a result of the record Soviet grain production in 1978. Preliminary reports about prospective Soviet grain purchases in 1980-81 indicate that she will make every effort to find the required quantities of grains in the world market to replenish her grain stock. According to the US Department of Agriculture estimates, Soviet grain imports from July 1980 to June 1981 will be 22-34 million tons. Despite US export restrictions, another year of record Soviet imports is a possibility, but the decision to import grain and other agricultural commodities depends largely on the Soviet 1980 grain crop and possible shortfalls.

Second, while the available supply of wheat had little or no impact on the Soviet bread supply, the availability of feed grain combined with the rather poor supply of other feeds resulted in a shortfall in meat production and led to a substantial increase in meat imports both in 1979 and 1980. US Department of Agriculture projects record meat imports in 1980, with all major suppliers shipping at least as much as in 1979, and with Argentina and Australia selling significantly more meat than in 1979.¹⁰

Third, after delaying its decision several months, the Administration permitted US grain exporting companies to resume negotiations with the Soviet Union for sales up to 8 million tons of the 1980 crop, obligated under the fifth year of the US-Soviet grain agreement (1 October 1980-30 September 1981). It is noteworthy that American and Soviet government officials met in Paris (not Washington or Moscow as was customary before 1980) in August 1980 to review the agreement. If the USSR decides to purchase 8 million tons of grain from the United States, the US will remain the leading Soviet supplier of grain. The Soviet Union, however, will most likely continue in 1980-81 her current emphasis on diversifying her sources of grain supply.

Fourth, the reinstatement of autarky by the USSR does not appear to be a viable option, because it would be much more costly than the current import policy. The Soviet government would have to rely on extraordinary measures to achieve a self-supply of grain.¹¹

What lessons can be learned from the grain embargo experience for the future, both about the use of agricultural trade as an element of political influence and understanding of its limitations? Does it have any effects on the Soviet Union? It does suggest that the chances of coping with Soviet global policy through linkage with agricultural trade are slim. It may be relatively easy for the United States to influence her allies' policies through linkage: to maintain their security they may have to support US economic initiatives. It is more difficult for the United States to affect a non-aligned country like Argentina, determined to gain an economic advantage in world trade, or on a super-power like the Soviet Union, seeking selective and limited decrease of friction with the West, but not

willing to make concessions in the realm of security and foreign policy in exchange for grain sales.

Commercial interests are bound to conduct agricultural trade with the Soviet Union on the basis of reciprocal benefits, making each deal on its own merits, and seeing agricultural trade as contributing to development, national economic growth, and general well-being on both sides. Thus the use of agricultural trade to punish the Soviet Union is unreliable. A partial and temporary grain embargo can be looked upon as an understandable measure under extraordinary circumstances, but it is unrealistic to expect dramatic effects as long as the Soviet Union is able to obtain needed grains from other sources, or diminish grain import needs, with relative ease. Since the Soviet government maintains discreet silence about its dependence on Western grain supplies, the likely total impact of the US restrictions cannot be accurately assessed at this time.

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¹ This article is a companion piece to my paper, 'The Outlook for East-West Agricultural Trade', presented at the International East-West Congress on "East-West Relations: Prospects for the 1980s", Rome, 22-5 April 1980. There is some overlap, but only a small part of this article is from the paper.

² *New York Times*, 10 January 1980.

³ For an official appraisal of the embargo, see *East-West Relations in the Aftermath of Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, Washington, DC: House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearings, 24 and 30 January 1980.

⁴ For a discussion of the US use of food as an instrument of policy, see Joseph W. Wiltner and Sharon B. Webster, 'Food Power: Food in International Politics', in Joseph Hajdu *et al.* (eds.) *Political Aspects of World Food Problems* (Manhattan: Kansas State University, 1978).

⁵ Based on July 1980 estimates of the US Department of Agriculture.

⁶ See *Update*, p. 2.

⁷ Speech by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert L. Barry, 'US Policy and Eastern Europe', 22 April 1980.

The Soviet grain embargo has highlighted the need to consult more fully with allies and other governments before deciding on a scenario involving other countries. Lack of adequate consultation can result in a scenario that is economically unrealistic and politically counterproductive. Policy should be based less on overly optimistic expectations or illusions and more, even under extraordinary circumstances, on a hard look at the prospects.

The Soviet grain embargo shows that the likelihood of circumvention is so high as to make the use of unilateral US agricultural trade restrictions unpromising. The American government cannot sustain them for long unless the possibilities of curtailing the Soviet access to alternative sources of grain supplies are real and unless the United States and the countries supporting the trade restrictions are prepared to accept the economic and political costs associated with the restrictions.

⁸ For a more detailed analysis of agriculture in Eastern Europe, see Roy D. Laird, Joseph Hajdu, and Betty A. Laird (eds.) *The Future of Agriculture in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: The 1976-80 Five Year Plans* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977); Joseph Hajdu, 'Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa - eine Gesamtstudie', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6 November 1979, pp. 17-18; and Joseph Hajdu, 'The Impact of Current Policies on Modernizing Agriculture in Eastern Europe', in Ronald A. Francisco, Betty A. Laird, and Roy D. Laird (eds.) *Agricultural Policies in the USSR and Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980).

⁹ *Foreign Agriculture* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, July 1980), p. 5.

¹⁰ See *Update*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹ For an assessment of various sectors of the USSR's agricultural economy in the context of the US grain and phosphate embargo see Günter Jaehne (ed.) *Sowjetische Landwirtschaft und Embargo* (Berlin (West): Duncker & Humboldt, 1980). The study was prepared by a team of specialists at Justus Liebig University in Giessen.

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