HOW WAR MIGHT SPREAD TO EUROPE

MIROSLAV NINCIC
Preface

Not many people believe that a war is likely to start in Europe. Europe appears to be a continent with settled boundaries. As the years go by, scenarios of sudden unprovoked incursions across the border either by NATO or Warsaw Treaty Organization troops become less and less plausible.

In many other parts of the world the risks of war are much greater: and in most of these troubled areas the United States and the Soviet Union confront each other by proxy. The possibility cannot be excluded that these indirect conflicts might at some point become direct. Then war might well come to Europe.

In this book Mr Miroslav Nincic of New York University examines these risks. He studies the various areas outside Europe where the major powers—in particular the United States and the Soviet Union—confront each other, and looks at ways in which a war might spread. A final chapter puts forward suggestions about how this risk might be reduced.

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Frank Blackaby
Director
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### Acronyms

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<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALOC</td>
<td>Airlines of communication</td>
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<td>ASW</td>
<td>Anti-submarine warfare</td>
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<td>AWACS</td>
<td>Airborne warning and control system</td>
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<td>BPA</td>
<td>Basic principles agreement</td>
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<td>CENTO</td>
<td>Central Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>CMEA</td>
<td>Council for Mutual Economic Assistance</td>
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<td>COMEDEAST</td>
<td>Commander eastern Mediterranean (NATO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<td>EMP</td>
<td>Electromagnetic pulse</td>
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<td>FAR</td>
<td>Force d'action rapide (France)</td>
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<td>GIUK gap</td>
<td>Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap</td>
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<td>GLCM</td>
<td>Ground-launched cruise missile</td>
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<td>IEPG</td>
<td>Independent European programme group</td>
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<td>LRTNF</td>
<td>Long-range theatre nuclear force</td>
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<td>NADGE</td>
<td>NATO air defence ground environment</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWFW</td>
<td>Nuclear weapon-free zone</td>
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<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Oil producing and exporting countries</td>
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<td>PG/WIO</td>
<td>Persian Gulf/Western Indian Ocean</td>
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<td>POL</td>
<td>Petroleum, oil and lubricants (depots)</td>
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<td>SALT</td>
<td>Strategic arms limitation talks</td>
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<td>SAM</td>
<td>Surface-to-air missile</td>
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<td>SLBM</td>
<td>Submarine-launched ballistic missile</td>
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<td>SLOC</td>
<td>Sealanes of communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSN</td>
<td>Nuclear-propelled submarine</td>
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<tr>
<td>STRIKFORSOUTH</td>
<td>Naval striking and support force southern Europe</td>
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<td>TLAM-N</td>
<td>Tomahawk land-attack missile—nuclear</td>
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<td>TNF</td>
<td>Theatre nuclear forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCENTCOM</td>
<td>United States Central Command</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>Warsaw Treaty Organization</td>
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Chapter 1. The background: East-West relations and the Third World

I. Introduction

The security and welfare of most European countries on both sides of the Cold War divide are highly sensitive to the quality of US-Soviet relations and to the activities which these two nations engage in beyond their own borders. There are, indeed, few actions or commitments that any European nation might undertake independently that could affect the fate of the continent to the same extent as the external entanglements and the mutual relations of the alliance leaders. Many of these entanglements involve Third World regions and the level of US-Soviet tensions is often determined by competing objectives in these areas.

These statements must, of course, be placed in their historical context before being developed. Each instance of US-Soviet confrontation influences the nature and conduct of subsequent involvements by shaping the circumstances in which they occur. Each confrontation provides a learning experience not only for the protagonists themselves, but also for other nations whose interests are affected by the manner in which the superpowers manage their bilateral relations. It will thus be useful to examine how East-West and North-South relations have interacted in recent decades and to study the issue of European security in this light. In particular, an attempt will be made to show that:

1. Superpower relations are largely, though certainly not exclusively, determined by their fluctuating rivalries in the Third World.
2. The security of many European nations is conditioned by the consequences of these rivalries.

II. Cold Wars, detente and the Third World

It would be wrong to suggest that rivalries in the Third World have been the sole cause of shifts in US-Soviet relations. Other forces, both international
and indigenous, have also been at work. Fluctuating national moods and domestic politics, particularly in the USA, have had a significant impact. Events in Europe have also played a role. But to a large extent the history of US-Soviet relations has been conditioned by their competition in the Third World. Relations between the two superpowers have experienced three major surges in hostility since World War II (approximately 1945–52, 1957–63 and 1976 to the present), two plateaux with slight relaxations (1953–57 and 1963–68) and one extended and meaningful period of decreasing tensions (1969–75). This scheme can, in turn, be translated into three major waves of evolving relations: 1945–57, 1957–76 and 1976 to the present. Each shift has been characterized by a specific state of US and Soviet policies in the Third World.

Emergence and consolidation of the Cold War (1945–57)

Various factors have led each of the two wartime allies to regard the other as its most implacable foe. Though events in the Third World contributed to this deterioration in the early post-war years, incompatible objectives within Europe were more important. Differing interpretations of the Yalta agreements—particularly regarding the political future of Poland—appear to have provided the initial impulse for rising hostility. Moreover, the issues of 'free elections' and the form of government that East European nations were to have extended beyond Poland. They came to a head in Czechoslovakia where the forced resignation of President Benes, Jan Masaryk’s mysterious death and the consolidation of a Communist government in 1948 produced powerful shockwaves in the West.

Yet even these tensions were intensified by problems originating outside Europe. Iran provided the first major flash-point in the Third World. Iran was occupied by both the USSR and Great Britain during World War II. Towards the end of the war, the USSR refused to withdraw its troops until it, like Britain, had acquired local oil concessions. Under Western pressure Iran refused to grant oil concessions to the USSR and, in response, the USSR backed the creation of an independent republic of Azerbaijan with a pro-Soviet government buttressed by large concentrations of troops on the border. The threat of intervention by the UK and the USA caused Moscow to back down in 1946 but the resulting bitterness and mutual suspicion was to poison subsequent relations. Further strains in the same region grew from Stalin's insistence—based on what he seems to have thought was a promise made by Churchill—on acquiring a Soviet base in the Dardanelles Straits. The USA reacted strongly and President Truman went so far as to dispatch an aircraft-carrier taskforce to Istanbul. The Soviet Union once more backed down while the Cold War was further fuelled. It was given a further boost by the civil strife in Greece as well as by the victory of Mao Tse Tung’s forces in China.

In this climate, the position of US statesmen who, like Stimson, Marshal,
Hopkins and Byrnes, had argued against overstating the Soviet threat, was irretrievably weakened. By the same token, the hand of those most eager to place a predatory interpretation on all Soviet activities—Dean Acheson, for example—was considerably strengthened. Hostility towards the Soviet Union thus came to be a firm feature of the US leadership and political structure. The first wave of belligerence crested at the turn of the decade, following the Berlin blockade and the onset of the Korean War. (The Korean War first made a military clash between the two giants a real possibility.) Acheson’s failure to include South Korea in the ‘defense perimeter’ that he described in January 1950 may have emboldened North Korea to launch, six months later, a full-scale invasion. While subsequent evidence has shown that Moscow was probably not behind the decision to invade, the mood in the USA at the time was beyond an objective assessment of the Soviet role.

Hostility between the superpowers peaked at this stage but levelled off on a temporary plateau or even declined slightly despite the blustering rhetoric of the time. Ideological diatribes continued but acquired a somewhat stale flavour and actual behaviour became more circumspect. Partly due to Eisenhower’s fiscal conservatism, the mid-1950s witnessed no major leaps in the arms race. This period saw no significant US–Soviet confrontation in the Third World. This may partly have been a consequence of, but certainly also contributed to, the hiatus in Cold War tensions.

It seems, in fact, that Stalin never had a very strong interest in the Third World. Areas contiguous to the USSR were always much more important to the security-conscious Kremlin. Though the disintegration of colonial empires provided natural opportunities for expanding the Soviet sphere of influence, these opportunities were rarely taken. The military and economic significance of new nations may simply not have sufficed to interest Stalin seriously, and his view that nationalist leaders like Nehru, Gandhi and Sukarno were mere ‘imperialist lackeys’ may also account for Moscow’s apparent inactivity.

Stalin’s death in 1953 ushered in a change of attitude, a change that was consolidated by the Third World’s emergence as an independent political force after the Bandung Conference of 1955. Khrushchev embraced the non-aligned countries as part of a potential ‘zone of peace’ and recognized the significance of non-Marxist liberation movements. An increasing amount of Soviet military assistance and even economic aid were directed towards the Middle East (initially Egypt), Asia and, subsequently, Africa as well. The scope for clashing Soviet and US interests was thus expanded.

**The second wave and the Third World (1957–76)**

A new swell in hostility began to form around 1957. Several circumstances combined to revive a confrontational stance and the Third World played an important part in the process. The launching of Sputnik was a precipitating
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event. It created a feeling of vulnerability in the USA and a situation in which paranoia could readily thrive. This paranoia had already been aggravated by the Soviet invasion of Hungary. But once again, it was the Third World that furnished both the occasions and the arena for collisions and for the interventionism that this climate gave rise to.

As early as June 1958, 14,000 US troops landed in Lebanon to quell an allegedly Communist-led rebellion and to provide a display of force and will designed to impress Nasser and the United Arab Republic, whose regional influence was so distressing to Washington. The resurging tension was further increased by the approaching US election. Ambitious democrats—including Kennedy, Humphrey and Johnson—used Cold War themes to great advantage throughout their campaigns. They clearly considered that militant statements such as charges of ‘missile gaps’ and demands for ‘expanded deterrence’ would help their electoral chances.

Kennedy emerged as the victor and the Third World came to occupy an increasingly central position in US perceptions. Concern with revolutionary movements pervaded the foreign policy agenda and new emphasis was placed on force-projection capabilities. This emphasis included the creation of ‘special forces’ designed specifically for Third World contingencies.

The first and most important perceived threat originated in Latin America. Castro’s successful revolution, with its rapidly apparent Marxist character, was a major jolt to the Kennedy Administration. The United States, whose influence in that small country had previously prevailed, was rebuffed by the new Cuban leadership which moved decisively into the Soviet orbit. A near-obsession with the possibility of radical political transformations in Latin America emerged. This spectre was dealt with by various means, ranging from economic assistance (the Alliance for Progress) to overt military intervention (the Bay of Pigs; the Dominican Republic).

While the upheavals in the Belgian Congo brought the East–West confrontation to sub-Saharan Africa, the most profound consequences at the time were caused by US intervention in Viet Nam. Ever since France’s expulsion from the region, US leaders had made constant reference to the ‘domino theory’. Viet Nam, Kennedy said, was “the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia, the keystone of the arch, the finger in the dike...”. As the number of US troops climbed to half a million, North Viet Nam and the Viet Cong were materially supported by the USSR and, to a much smaller extent, by China. The bitterness associated with Viet Nam created an obstacle to a relaxation of superpower tensions throughout most of the 1960s.

Paradoxically, the most dramatic confrontation in the Third World also provided a major impetus for controlling the most perilous aspects of US–Soviet rivalry. The near-brush with nuclear disaster provoked by the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 initiated a halting movement towards arms control. It also laid certain foundations—such as the Hot Line Agreement—for managing future crises. Indeed, a modest retreat from the second peak of post-war hostility was initiated. Little progress was, however, made
for several years. The issue of Viet Nam and, possibly, the Johnson Administration's need to fend off challenges to its domestic programmes from the political right by demonstrating its resolute toughness abroad, hampered real progress until the end of the decade.

Richard Nixon's election created unprecedented opportunities for improved relations. The US public's weariness with foreign military adventures reduced the domestic political risks of a political withdrawal from Viet Nam and the President's anti-Communist credentials protected him from charges of appeasement as he sought to chart a new course in superpower relations. These shifts were further facilitated by the Kremlin's unwillingness to let events in south-east Asia jeopardize Nixon's endeavours.

The two nations embarked on a promising, though ephemeral, period of detente. In addition to the achievements in arms control which the period registered (SALT I and the Vladivostok Accord) and the expansion of commercial and other exchanges between the two sides, a serious attempt was made to develop a basis for non-confrontational relations in the Third World.

As part of what was conceived to be a general road-map for better relations, Nixon and Brezhnev signed a document in May 1972 which was known as the Basic Principles Agreement (BPA). Not only did the agreement state that ideological and social differences should be the object of peaceful negotiations, but it also observed that "Both sides recognise that efforts to obtain unilateral advantages at the expense of the other, directly or indirectly, are inconsistent with these objectives". This provision was taken to refer principally to each side's policy in the developing world. It lacked specificity and its implications have been interpreted differently by the two countries, but it did represent a first attempt to lay the general ground rules for competition in third areas.

A new Cold War (1976 to the present)

It is difficult to identify a definite point at which the detente of the early 1970s yielded to the belligerence of recent years, but the initial impetus probably dates from late in 1973 at the time of the Six Day War. The United States suspected that the Kremlin had prior knowledge of the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria and had, by not alerting Washington, violated the spirit of detente as well as the BPA. This marked a first turning point in superpower relations. Real damage may not have been immediately visible—contacts between the two countries were expanded in 1974 and the Vladivostok Accord was signed in November of that year—but the foundation for continued co-operation had been shaken. This foundation was further undermined by internal political developments in the USA.

The anti-detente and neo-conservative movement that has subsequently shaped much of US foreign policy gained a firm foothold in the national political structure at this time. It included hard-line factions of the Democratic Party as well as the more traditional right-wing forces and
advocated Cold War views that the Republican Administration had either muted or abandoned. Grouped in such bodies as the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and the bipartisan Committee on the Present Danger, the movement soon became the most powerful influence on US policy towards the Soviet Union and managed, during much of the remainder of the decade, to block further movement towards co-operation. While such domestic forces were important, it is improbable that they could successfully have scuttled detente had Soviet activities not abetted their efforts. Many of these activities, moreover, directly involved the Third World.

In what may have been a response to the various amendments that finally undermined the US-Soviet trade bill, Cuban troops were encouraged in 1975 to intervene in the Angolan Civil War in support of the Marxist Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA). The United States in turn expanded its own assistance to União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) and the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA), both anti-Soviet forces and rivals of the MPLA. In the 1976 primary elections, and under attack from the Reagan campaign, President Ford formally dropped the word ‘detente’ from his political vocabulary. Relations were launched on an accelerating downward course and were further undermined by conflicting US-Soviet interests in the Horn of Africa.

The increasingly strong Soviet link to Ethiopia, following the ousting of Haile Selassie by the nominally Marxist government of Mengistu Haile Mariam, also implied the dislodgement of the USA from Ethiopia. In April 1977 Ethiopia’s military relationship with Washington was terminated and, in September, Addis Ababa signed a military agreement with the USSR. At the same time, open warfare broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden region. By late 1977, 14 000 Cuban troops and several hundred Soviet military advisers arrived to assist their client’s military efforts.

This provided additional ammunition to those US political elites which had lobbied against detente. Senators Jackson and Baker, for example, suggested that Soviet behaviour in Africa should be considered sufficient grounds for rejecting a new SALT agreement. Pressures even appeared within the Carter Administration for linking arms control to Moscow’s behaviour in the Third World. The US reaction notwithstanding, the Soviet and Cuban military presence in Ethiopia was expanded in 1979.

The invasion of Afghanistan on 24 December 1979 definitively terminated a chapter in superpower relations. The tribal rebellion had been gaining momentum and despite the repressive efforts of Hafizullah Amin, who had replaced Mohammad Taraki as Prime Minister, organized unrest was growing in the country. The unrest threatened to undermine the Marxist government and to replace it with a fundamentalist and anti-Soviet Islamic regime. The reasons for the Soviet invasion are open to interpretation but their general outlines are fairly clear. The prospect of an unbroken string of hostile nations—Iran, Afghanistan and China—on the southern flank of the USSR, the fear that Islamic extremism might spread to the country’s own
Asian regions and the feeling that SALT II had, in any case, been successfully blocked by US hawks, probably furnished the rationale for a full-scale invasion.

The US response, like that of the rest of the world, was swift, vigorous and bitter. Arms control was in a shambles, the hard-liners felt vindicated and President Carter threatened to meet any further Soviet incursion into the Persian Gulf with military force. Detente's death-knell had sounded. Its actual demise was the culmination of a process whereby the interplay of domestic US politics and superpower regional involvements tore down the edifice constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It is evident that US-Soviet relations cannot be insulated from the entanglements of the two sides in the Third World. It ought also to be clear that the security of European countries is inextricably bound to this whole complex of relations.

III. The implications for European security

The effects of US-Soviet confrontations in the Third World on European security can manifest themselves in two ways. They can affect the general tenor of East-West relations, and they can provoke specific actions against European nations. The first kind of effect may have been more in evidence in the past but specific actions against European countries may become more frequent and more serious in the future.

Indivisible tension

Inter-alliance tension in Europe has clearly been influenced by Washington's and Moscow's extra-European rivalry. The link has been less of a causal nature than of an interactive, mutually reinforcing one. The consequences for Europe have, nevertheless, been quite substantial. At an early stage of the Cold War, the Kremlin's assumed involvement in the invasion of South Korea was viewed by the USA as evidence of more global designs: "Soviet willingness to use force in Asia was seen, at the least, as applying political pressure in Europe, thereby threatening to undo the US effort to stabilize the Western part of the continent". Because of Korea, US congressional opposition to a conventional military build-up in Europe vanished. The integration of NATO, an increased presence of US troops and expanded military aid to its allies followed. A significant facet of the developing Cold War was the US-sponsored rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany and the tremors which this caused in the USSR.

The second major surge in East-West enmity of the late 1950s and early 1960s had roots in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. While Third World issues were obviously not the cause of the major problem in Europe itself—the matter of a divided Germany and of Berlin—they did have an
indirect effect. They served to intensify mutual suspicion and threat perceptions and thus hindered constructive dialogue on the problem of immediate European concern. The recurring crises over Berlin between 1958 and 1960 brought the opposing blocs closer to actual warfare in Europe than at any time before or since.

Finally, the third and most recent surge in tension, attributable to a combination of Soviet activity in Africa and political developments in the United States, has produced significant ramifications for Europe. The major manifestation of this is the thorny issue of theatre nuclear forces (TNF). While the problem of TNFs would probably have emerged in the absence of quarrels in Africa, its negotiated solution would almost certainly have been easier if the political climate had not been thus poisoned. Again, the security interests of both NATO and WTO countries have, at least in part, been conditioned by the extra-European disputes of the alliance leaders.

These processes have also operated in reverse. The detente of the late 1960s and early 1970s was facilitated by the superpowers’ willingness to mute their differences in the southern hemisphere which, in turn, encouraged East–West co-operation in Europe. The Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin of 1971 was a major beneficiary of, as well as a further contribution to, improved relations. Negotiations leading to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) also got under way at this time and economic exchanges between members of the European Community and Eastern Europe improved substantially. Thus it can be seen that East–West tension in Europe is inseparable from East–West tension in the Third World, if only because they both create and partake of the same overall political climate.

Specific consequences: the record so far

In addition to the overall relationship between East–West tension in the Third World and in Europe, individual clashes in non-European regions could have immediate implications for various European nations. For example, a superpower suffering heavy losses in a Third World conflict at the hands of its rival, or one to whom such losses seemed imminent, might, if the stakes were high enough, compensate by taking military action against the other superpower’s interests elsewhere. There are circumstances in which this could involve parts of Europe.

Such a threat was present during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. Since the US naval position in the Caribbean was vastly superior to that of the USSR, and since air strikes against Cuba could easily be launched from the US mainland, military action to remove the Soviet missiles could, in principle, have been successfully undertaken. Consequently it was feared that the USSR might retaliate against NATO countries in regions where its own logistical position was more favourable. Berlin, isolated 175 kilometres inside
The Background

The German Democratic Republic, was an obvious possibility. In anticipation of the danger, 'precautionary measures' were taken by the West German government in order to bolster the 'defence readiness' of the country's armed forces. The allied military presence was strengthened while Berlin households began stocking food. In addition, a message from Khrushchev to Kennedy on 28 October carried the implied threat of an invasion of Turkey, a NATO member, if Cuba were attacked. In the end a military confrontation was averted, but the crisis dramatically illustrated the possible consequences of such situations for Europe. Dangers of this sort increase with the geographical indivisibility of either side's military strategy and recent trends in military doctrine are disquieting in this regard.

US–Soviet confrontations in the Third World need not necessarily invite actions against European nations only on the part of the rival superpower. Local parties to the conflict might, for example, seek to retaliate against countries which are, even if only indirectly, associated with the hostilities. A case in point is the Six Day War of 1973. On that occasion the USA supplied weapons to Israel using NATO bases in Western Europe as transport points. In response, the Arab members of OPEC (Oil Producing and Exporting Countries) imposed an embargo that threatened severe damage to a number of West European economies.

Most relevantly, perhaps, a European ally of either alliance leader may find itself involved, directly or indirectly, in its leader's regional conflicts and thus have to bear all the associated perils and costs. The bulk of this study will examine the circumstances in which such involvements could occur in the future. It is worth noting that the actual historical record is largely blank. Neither the European members of NATO nor their WTO counterparts have been drawn into their leader's Third World adventures either at all frequently or at all meaningfully. Token contributions were furnished by a few allies to the US interventionary force in Korea, but so far things have not gone much further than this.

When the USA considered intervening in order to shore up the French position at Dien Bien Phu—probably by air strikes, possibly even with nuclear weapons—efforts were made to enlist British support as well. Nothing came of this however. Churchill was not interested and the US Senate was unenthusiastic. In fact, in the immediate post-war decades, it was more usual for European powers to seek US support for their external policies than vice versa. Frequently they were unsuccessful. In the case of the Dutch East Indies (the Republic of Indonesia since independence in 1949) the USA did not support the Netherlands, nor did it support Dutch claims to West Irian (which Indonesia acquired in 1962). The Anglo-French attack on Egypt, which followed Nasser's decision to nationalize British and French investment in the Suez Canal, provoked major acrimony within the Atlantic Alliance as the USA acted against the invasion in the United Nations. The USA actually cut off oil supplies from Latin America that were needed by the
UK and France to replace the lost Middle Eastern oil. Subsequent relations between France and the USA were not helped by Washington’s unwillingness to endorse the war against Algerian independence.

Taken as a whole, the record indicates that for a significant period the USA did more to avoid being drawn into the Third World entanglements of its allies than it did to involve the allies in its own entanglements. Clearly things have changed considerably since the early post-war decades. European interests in the Third World have shrunk relative to those of the USA while the US military reach has expanded considerably. As a consequence, the past may prove a very imperfect guide to the future—particularly if current trends in US strategic and foreign policy are taken into account. In order to place the situation in its new context, two developments must be fully considered: (a) the deterioration of US-Soviet relations in recent years; and (b) the new military doctrines and deployments that have accompanied this deterioration.

The new political setting

Both the scope of US-Soviet rivalry and its intensity have increased since the demise of detente in the late 1970s.

The growing scope of rivalry has meant that it has spread to regions that were previously considered peripheral to the external interests of the superpowers. Apart from Cuba, the USSR had previously restricted its forays into the Third World to contiguous Asian areas and to the Middle East. But during the past decade it has shown a greater readiness to seek advantages, albeit at low military risk, in more distant parts of the developing world. For the USA, virtually all parts of the globe now seem relevant to the nation's geostrategic objectives. Rivalry has also come to encompass an increasing number of contentious matters as new economic and political issues have been added to what was already a substantial inventory.

The heightened intensity of the rivalry is reflected in the unusually pugnacious posturing and the flaccid efforts to seek co-operative solutions to common problems. Rhetoric has not quite attained the frenzied pitch of the late 1940s and early 1950s, but it stands in sharp contrast to the constructive moderation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the new hostility encourages each side to place as predatory an explanation as possible on the activities of the other.

Certain implications of these trends suggest themselves. The widening scope, both geographical and substantive, of the rivalry increases the range of European interests that could be caught up in the resulting conflicts. The heightened animosity could make ensuing crises difficult to manage, and their spread and costs may thus be more devastating.

The following chapters will deal with specific geographic areas, the stakes involved in the conflict and scenarios of European involvement. The military conceptions which have recently been applied to East-West relations should be outlined at the outset.
The new military context

Different phases in US–Soviet relations have typically been characterized by shifting force postures and strategic doctrines. Such shifts have been particularly evident on the US side. Perhaps the most novel and significant strands of current military thinking concern the increasing range of contingencies to which armed force is considered appropriate and the expanding role that is attributed to nuclear weaponry. These two strands are, moreover, mutually entangled.

The functions currently assigned to nuclear arms are more extensive and varied than ever before. They go far beyond the ‘massive retaliation’ advocated in the Eisenhower years, Kennedy’s ‘flexible response’ and McNamara’s ‘mutual assured destruction’ or the countervailing and counterforce doctrine of the Ford and Carter incumbencies. Indeed, a major complaint of the Reagan Administration against former policies is that "Although U.S. military strategy has deterred direct Soviet attack for many years, it has not prevented indirect incursions within the less developed world". And since "Conflict involving the Soviet Union could occur anywhere on the globe, U.S. military strategy must concern itself with contingencies in all regions of the world".

As a consequence, armed force, including nuclear weaponry, must be able to perform a much greater variety of missions than had previously been thought appropriate since deterrence must obtain “at all points along the spectrum of violence and be integrated from region to region”.

Much of this thinking was initially incorporated into the US five-year Defense Guidance Plan in 1982. The plan anticipated the possibility of a ‘protracted’ nuclear or conventional conflict in which the United States must be sure to “prevail” and “be able to seek earliest termination of hostilities on terms favorable to the United States”.

The metaphor behind the strategy is that of a ‘continuum’ or ‘seamless web’ between levels of violence and geographical areas. This necessitates a US capacity for ‘escalation dominance’, that is, an ability to respond in all circumstances with a slightly greater level of violence than the adversary. Above all, gaps in levels of possible response must be avoided, for if the Kremlin thought that a provocation could only be met with a disproportionately more destructive countermove, it might consider such a response unlikely and hence not be deterred. Moreover, this capacity must be global in extent. “United States forces might be required simultaneously in geographically separate theaters” such as Europe, south-west Asia and east Asia. In each case the USA must be able to confront the USSR with the prospect of as destructive a conflict as it may choose to impose.

The desired continuum in levels of violence in turn implies the integration of various forms of weaponry. Integrated plans for using long-, medium- and short-range nuclear arms have been developed and the procurement of new ‘dual-capable’ (conventional and nuclear) weaponry has been emphasized.
Stress has also been put upon improved conventional and chemical weapons and there has been focus on the highly mobile and flexible sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM) which can be mounted with nuclear warheads on either submarines or surface ships and which can have land-attack missions (making them well suited for regional conflicts).  

The doctrine of the USA on these matters is quite explicit. That of the USSR, because of the closed nature of the society, is highly secret. Beyond a professed disbelief in the possibility of controlling levels of nuclear destruction, little has been published or said within the Soviet Union to illuminate the role, if any, assigned to nuclear weapons in local conflicts. It is nevertheless evident, as will be discussed in chapter 2, that the Soviet military presence in the Third World has expanded in recent years. It can also be inferred that several theatre nuclear systems, and specifically the SS-20 missiles and Backfire bombers deployed in the southern part of the USSR, may be intended to preserve nuclear options in portions of the Third World. 

These developments, in tandem with increased East-West tension, carry several implications. To begin with, the attempt to develop a military response for virtually every political or military contingency vastly expands the set of situations under which armed force might be used. It is reasonable to conclude that the probability of an armed conflict has increased—all the more so given the current level of US-Soviet tension. In addition, the built-in continuum from conventional to strategic nuclear warfare reduces the significance of military ‘firebreaks’ and psychological barriers to an all-out escalation of such conflicts as might occur.

The implications for most European nations are, in turn, not reassuring:

1. As the range of possible conflicts grows, the probability that the external interests of European countries will be involved in the superpowers’ Third World confrontations increases as well.

2. The possibility of rapidly escalating conflicts means that the destruction to which Europe might fall victim could be particularly severe.

In sum, the link between European security and US-Soviet rivalries in the Third World can no longer be viewed in terms that might have been appropriate a mere decade ago. The next two chapters will undertake a more detailed examination of this link by considering the major Third World arenas in which the interests of the superpowers may collide and by discussing various scenarios positing direct or indirect European involvement.
Notes and references


10. US Joint Chiefs of Staff (note 9), p. 5.


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15. Examples of this trend towards dual capabilities are numerous. F-4 Phantom aircraft in the Marine Air-Ground Task Force with a solely conventional capacity are being replaced by F-18 Hornets that are certified for the delivery of nuclear munitions. Nuclear-capable AV-8B jumbo jets are replacing non-nuclear AV-8As. Non-nuclear 105-mm howitzers are giving way to dual-capable 155-mm guns. Army and Marine 8-inch howitzers will be equipped to fire 'neutron' warheads, etc. See Paine, C., 'Reagatomics, or how to “prevail”', *The Nation*, 25 May 1983, pp. 423–31.


18. For example, the US Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the loss of Saudi Arabian oil alone for one year would cost the USA $272 billion and increase the inflation rate by 20 per cent. See Nye, J. S., 'Energy and security', *Energy and Security*, edited by D. A. Deese and J. S. Nye (Ballinger, Cambridge, 1981), p. 3.


26. These facilities are described in 'US to press for Oman, Kenya and Somalia outposts', *The New York Times*, 10 January 1980; 'U.S. experts to study new military


29. This information is given in Gormley (note 28), p. 274.


32. See note 31.


36. This information is given in US Department of Defense (note 25), p. 203.


38. This is discussed in Moodie and Cottrel (note 24), pp. 59–60.


41. See the discussions in Moodie and Cottrel (note 24), pp. 48–50.


47. Quoted in NATO Today: The Alliance in Evolution (note 42).


50. Wittman (note 49), p. 16.


52. NATO Today: The Alliance in Evolution (note 42), p. 38. See also Soviet Policy and
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56. The missions that could be served by military installations in the Azores are described in some detail in United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations, Congressional Research Service (US Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1979), pp. 52-53.

57. United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations (note 56), p. 54.


61. See note 58.


76. See Kaplan (note 70), p. 621.


80. Declaratory strategy on the use of conventional force is left rather open-ended. For example, the US Secretary of Defense has stated that:

> Regional internal instabilities and intraregional conflicts provide frequent opportunities for Soviet intervention through proxy state or Soviet backed sympathizers. In most cases, we would respond indirectly through economic, technical, political, or security assistance programs, depending on political conditions. U.S. military participation could range from the provision of training material, and security assistance to support for the employment of third-party assistance or the *tailored use of military force*, [emphasis added] as appropriate.


83. The Soviet Union has, indeed, twice attempted to install a pro-Soviet regime in Azerbaijan; once after World War I and the second time during World War II. The logistics of occupation may, furthermore, not be overly difficult. The recent electrification of the rail link between Dhzulfa in Soviet Azerbaijan and Tabriz (Iranian Azerbaijan), for example, will make transportation between the two Azerbaijans easier than between Tehran and Tabriz. See Eilts (note 78), p. 84.


88. We are assuming, perhaps optimistically, that if a new Berlin crisis had been engineered by the USSR in stage II, it would not have developed into warfare by this time.


90. See Roberts, S. S., 'Superpower naval confrontations', *Soviet Naval Diplomacy,*
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92. The USSR had pointedly threatened Israel in 1967, 1973 and 1982 but did nothing to back up these threats. Furthermore, as the USSR undertook a sealift and airlift of equipment to its Arab clients in 1973, several Soviet planes were damaged on the ground and the merchant ship *Ilya Mechnikov* was sunk while lying at anchor in the port of Tartus in Syria. No Soviet retaliation followed. Even when, in July 1982, the Israeli invading force in Lebanon briefly occupied a consulate building inside the Soviet embassy compound in Beirut, the USSR did not respond significantly.


94. For example, US success at inducing Israel to relax its pressure on Egypt’s Third Army facilitated the termination of the Six Day War.


97. Soviet land-based aircraft would probably not have much of a role in the pre-emptive strike. Large numbers of aircraft taking off from Black Sea bases would give NATO advance warning of the strike and, in any case, they might not get through Greek and Turkish air defences.


102. France has indeed been stressing its NATO bonds with more vigour than usual in recent years.

104. Parker (note 103), p. 14. The essay was awarded the Admiral Richard G. Colbert Memorial Prize.