

I am posing are fundamental ones: How do we approach an area where our interests are as complex -- and sometimes conflicting -- as in the Middle East and Southwest Asia? How do we order our priorities within an area like this?

These are not just abstract questions. The answers, in the end, can govern action in the most concrete ways. The answers can generate heated public debate -- sometimes over unspoken issues.

Today in the United States there is no consensus. There isn't even a common view of what the main problems are.

The policy-maker's job begins with an analysis of what the issues are -- an analysis of exactly what the problem is. This in itself can become the subject of intense public and policy debate. Think of how many answers you have heard to the implied question: What are the key issues for the U.S. in the Middle East? The following are just a few of many -- not mine but a collection from the current market of ideas:

A. One example: Our credibility and strength depend on showing friendly regimes we will stand by them and not let them down as we let the Shah down or as we have let our friends in Lebanon down.

Or: Our credibility depends on our standing up for those who seek social justice, human rights, release from the grip of poverty, and political self-determination.

B. Another example: Our first purpose is to form a "strategic consensus" among our friends in the Middle East. When we are all agreed that the overriding priority in the Middle East is checking the Soviet military thrust toward Persian Gulf oil, the countries of the area will cooperate in the strengthening of the U.S. military position on the ground and new impetus will be generated to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Or: The unresolved Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts are themselves a part of the security threat. The Soviets will exploit them to enhance the Soviet and radical positions in the area. Ordering social and economic change is part of maintaining the independence of the states in the area. The Soviets will exploit disorder as they are trying to do in Iran to improve their strategic position.

- C. Yet another example: Nothing would make a greater contribution to the reduction of conflict in the area or to securing the steady flow of oil than a resolution of the Palestinian issue.

Or: Conflict is widespread in the Middle East. The U.S. must support Israel as its strongest strategic asset in the Middle East. Pressing Israel to compromise with those who advocate Palestinian self-determination is to weaken that asset.

- D. Still another: The Free World depends on the steady flow of Middle East oil.

Or: Above all, we will not give in to "oil blackmail" as Europe has already done.

Clearly, there are divergent views on what our approach to the Middle East problem should be -- probably even different views about what the problem is -- certainly disagreement over whether and how the various elements of the problem relate to each other.

We can't resolve all these issues in this conference, but I would like to suggest one that we might concentrate on to begin with because I think it's the starting place for a lot of the argument that takes place about the Middle East and Southwest Asia today. In some ways it is the unspoken agenda underlying debate over issues ranging from AWACS to Palestinian self-determination.

The issue is this: Is there one interest we can put above the others because others can be expected to fall into place around it? Or are there interrelationships among those areas of interest that make it necessary to pursue at least several of them more or less simultaneously? If so, what strategy do those interrelationships suggest?

One legitimate approach is to acknowledge that there are indeed five or six significant sets of U.S. interests in the Middle East and Southwestern Asia but to decide that concentrating on one above others is justified and that other issues will fall into place around it.

-- In the mid-1970s, for instance, I think it was justifiable to explain how pursuit of an Arab-Israeli settlement could be the centerpiece of our strategy in the Middle East. Iran and the Persian Gulf were stable, and there seemed little likelihood of an immediate Soviet threat. In 1974 and 1975, as long as we were actively engaged in pursuing an Arab-Israeli settlement, we developed closer relations with both Israel and the key Arab governments. We succeeded in lifting the oil embargo imposed at the time of the 1973 War by moving toward the Israeli-Syrian disengagement agreement. We dominated the diplomatic stage, and the Soviets were left in second place on that stage. We did not neglect other interests, but they could be tended in the careful conduct of normal bilateral relations. This approach worked because our approach was responsive to priorities of the countries in the area as well as to our own priorities and because the situation in the area permitted it.

-- In the early 1980s after the collapse of the Persian Gulf security system following the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it was equally understandable that policy-makers would be drawn to concentrate on the security of Persian Gulf oil and the strategic threat to it. There are those today who hold the strong view that the way to approach the Middle East is to impress on our European and Japanese allies and our friends in the Middle East the dangers posed by the Soviet threat and then, against the background of this strategic consensus, to press for resolution of other issues as the Arab-Israeli conflict and oil production levels as essential to the preservation of the Free World strength and the independence of countries in this area.

A second approach is to take the following view: The U.S. cannot deal with the Middle East problem piecemeal in the 1980s when there are so many aspects of our interests in flux at the same time -- or, as one analyst put it, where there are so many independent variables. We have to absorb the dramatic change that has taken place since the mid-1970s. Today all of our interests are under active challenge in the same period. We could concentrate on one issue in the 1970s because Iran and the Persian Gulf were stable and Afghanistan was still intact as a buffer between the Soviet Union and South Asia. In today's situation, the challenge is to conduct a policy that deals with all of our interests at the same time in conditions of profound social, economic, and political change. We do not have the luxury of addressing one part of the Middle East problem at a time. And we cannot deal with each issue separately, even though we want to avoid specific linkages among them. Part of the reason for this is that they are all parts of one world view when seen from the Middle East.

There is nothing inherently right or wrong with one approach or the other. Let me say quite directly I felt the first approach was appropriate in the mid-1970s but I feel the second approach is far better suited to the changed situation of the 1980s. Whatever may be my view, the issue for discussion is: What approach gives us the greatest opportunity for pursuing the full range of American interests in the present situation and how does one decide?

I have one rather simple thought to offer as an initial response to my own question: As we decide on our approach we need to take into account the interests and perceptions of the Middle Eastern parties. Our power will be greatest and our field for maneuver will be widest if we select an approach which not only enables us to pursue our own interests and to demonstrate our ability to shape events which also enhances the ability of responsible Middle Easterners to pursue their legitimate goals where we share common purposes.

That may be so obvious that it is not worth saying, but I don't think so. Of course, we often think about other nations' interests when we calculate whether or not it is feasible to achieve our own goals. I am saying more than that.

I am talking about a systematic effort to determine exactly where the common ground lies between our interests and theirs. I am emphatically not talking about an indiscriminate endorsement of their goals. I am talking about defining common interests rather than setting our course mainly in terms of our perceptions of the world.

This point is more than academic. There has been over the years within the foreign affairs policy-making community of our government a distinct difference between those who see the world first in terms of U.S.-Soviet relations or, more specifically, nuclear relations and the regional specialists who

emphasize forces at work within a particular region. The global strategist sees the regional specialists missing the big picture; the regional specialist sees the global strategist operating from an unreal picture of the causes of a given conflict. The present Administration is no different from others.

What I am suggesting is an analytical approach for bringing these two schools of thought together. Neither approach by itself is realistic, and the time has come in making policy toward this critical area when we can no longer afford simplistic slogans or bickering between two sets of gut instincts. We need consensus based on reasoned and consistent analysis.

Consider the following analysis:

A U.S. view of the Soviet threat to this area starts from concern about Soviet control over the flow of oil to the Free World. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan underscores that threat, partly because the turmoil in neighboring Iran tempts Moscow to set up a similar military position in Iran on the the Persian Gulf. Because of its global responsibilities, the United States must also be concerned about the affect on the global strategic balance of a successful Soviet move to suppress the independence of a neighboring country by military force and political and administrative takeover. U.S. military planners must consider how they could respond to a direct Soviet military thrust, even though that may be the threat least likely to materialize.

The people of the Middle East, for their part, are keenly aware of Soviet military aggression. But the threat to independence and stability in the area looks different through moderate Arab eyes or through Israeli eyes. In their view:

- The independence, stability, and political orientation of key states in the area are not jeopardized only or even primarily by Soviet military aggression. They may be far more sharply affected by internally generated social, political, and economic forces as in Iran. While keenly aware of the threat of direct Soviet aggression, the people of the area are more immediately concerned about the Soviets exploiting local instability by working through proxies in the area, either radical parties within countries or states allied with the U.S.S.R.
- The unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict is also a threat to stability and security in the area. In Arab eyes, it is both an entering wedge for the Soviets to exploit and an issue that radicals can use in attacks on moderate regimes. In the Arab world, the Palestinians themselves might play an influential role in political change. The immediate security threat, as Israelis see it, is from Arab states which they believe reject Israel's existence. Israel sees Moscow backing some of those Arab states to improve its own position.
- The flow of oil is more immediately vulnerable both to political pressures related to the unresolved Palestinian issue and to regional violence, whether it be internal revolution, war between states, or sabotage.
- In that regional environment, many of the traditional Arab regimes will say that those who would weaken their regimes would be strengthened by too close a strategic relationship with the United States if the U.S. is not seen to be dealing with issues that are of political

and security concern to them. They also believe that the world community will have to deal with direct Soviet aggression diplomatically -- successfully or unsuccessfully -- as in Afghanistan, since it is unlikely that any power will feel able to confront the Soviet Union militarily on its own back doorstep. In any case, they have no interest in becoming a Vietnam-style battleground.

Given the perceptions of the regional states, the kind of cooperation we can expect from states in the area in dealing with issues of concern to us will depend in part on how we deal with security issues of concern to them such as their own internal or national security or the Arab-Israeli conflict. For instance:

- The judgment by Middle Eastern states of external power is most likely to be affected by which world power can concretely turn the course of events in the Middle East. That judgment is at least as likely to be influenced by who can help bring about an honorable and secure Palestinian settlement or by ability to ward off internal enemies as it is by the balance of nuclear power which is beyond their competence. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict deserves solution in its own right, but how it is resolved and who resolves it will affect the international and domestic orientation of key states, their stability and their relationships with the superpowers. Although we may disagree over certain specific objectives, we share a common interest in a negotiated settlement that all key states can accept.
- Power may also be measured by ability to provide what these societies need economically and technologically to transform themselves



into modern nations. How they will use their economic power will reflect their relations with the superpowers, their views of efforts to deal with issues of concern to them, and even superpower roles in the North-South dialogue. We have a common interest in contributing to constructive growth and orderly change.

Given the diversity of American interests in this area, we must expect that they will, from time to time, confront us with conflicting demands. The challenge to those who make our foreign policy is to find ways to minimize those conflicts -- to conduct a policy in this area that will permit us to pursue all of our interests without being forced to make choices among them.

The clearest example of the kind of choice I am talking about stems from the fact that our unchanging support for Israel's security sometimes puts us on a course opposed by even the moderate Arab nations, as was the case when they imposed the embargo on oil shipments following the October 1973 War. Another less obvious example is that we share with most of the moderate nations in this area recognition of a need for an American military capability in the area, but many of the governments there feel that too obvious American presence on the ground could produce the very instability that outside influences could exploit and that we are trying to prevent.

There are two ways to approach choice of this kind. One is to choose one interest over another. The other is to look for ways of enlarging the field for finding mutually satisfactory solutions. Some theorists describe two ways of looking at a situation like this:

-- One is to think in terms of a "constant sum" or "zero sum" situation where there is, for instance, a finite sum of American support or

cooperation with the regional states to be divided. If one party gets more, the other party must arithmetically get that amount less.

-- The other perception is that of a "variable sum" situation where changing the ingredients slightly can increase the total resources to be divided.

It is worth considering whether taking the legitimate interests of responsible parties in the Middle East into account will not significantly increase our field of maneuver and enable us to find resolutions that avoid choosing among our interests.

I would also suggest as a starting point for discussion that the U.S. in the 1980s will need a policy that will permit it to pursue each of its principal interests actively and simultaneously.

#### Alternative Strategies

Against the background of this analysis, it may be useful -- even if somewhat artificially -- to crystallize two possible strategies as a starting point for discussion. Many refinements and variations will develop in the course of discussion. My purpose here is mainly to pose alternatives that represent real differences in approach and will therefore surface issues.

(A policy which aims at <sup>creating an anti-Soviet</sup> Strategy #1 -- ~~Strategic Consensus~~. This approach starts with the ~~pre-~~ <sup>directive</sup> ~~mise~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~that we can~~ <sup>uniting</sup> our European and Japanese allies and our key moderate friends in the Middle East and Southwest Asia around recognition that continued Soviet advancement into this area is the primary threat to the global strategic balance, to the steady flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, and to <sup>independence and</sup> the internal stability of key friends in the area. Once there is a consensus

-- and none exists today --

on the primary threat, the countries of the area will cooperate in strengthening the U.S. military position in this area and will <sup>then</sup> see the need to get to the bottom of the Arab-Israeli dispute to prevent the U.S.S.R. from exploiting it to enhance the Soviet position.

Pursuing this strategy would produce a policy with the following specific elements and priorities:

- Public presentation. The President and Secretary of State would describe the "Middle East problem" to the American people and to foreign friends alike as principally a problem of containing the spread of Communism and Soviet expansionism. They would seek understanding that this is the arena -- apart from the U.S.-Soviet arms race -- in which the relative geopolitical positions of the superpowers will be tested and established for the 1990s.
- High policy priorities. In our exchanges with key friends in the region and in Washington planning, we would give highest priority to:
  - Development of U.S. capability and of Middle Eastern facilities to enhance the capacity of U.S. forces to conduct military operations in the Gulf area. This would involve further negotiations on the fullest possible rights of access, improvement or "overbuilding" of indigenous facilities, and agreement on prepositioning equipment and supplies.
  - Backing U.S. friends in any confrontation with nations normally supported by the U.S.S.R. to demonstrate their military pre-eminence. This would involve careful attention to our military supply and training programs to bolster the military

effectiveness of our friends, as well as a diplomatic posture which would allow room for our friends to demonstrate their military superiority rather than intervening diplomatically at an early stage to prevent conflict.

- Maintaining the steady flow of oil at prices as restrained as possible, largely by establishing the equation that the U.S. contribution to the security and well-being of these nations is preservation of a security umbrella against Soviet aggression.

-- Secondary priorities. Our interests would require that we deal with the following issues, but they would not be given the <sup>earliest or</sup> highest priority either in public description of our purposes or in our diplomacy:

- We would give important attention to averting crises such as the crisis between Israel and Syria over the Syrian missiles in Lebanon, but in doing so we would mainly be reacting to events rather than trying to address their causes.
- Recognizing the need for some progress toward an Arab-Israeli settlement, we would attempt to reach an understanding that could lead to further negotiation. We would not put heavy pressure on the parties but rather try to create an atmosphere in which their recognition that the U.S. is not going to solve their problem for them might evoke some initiative or crystallization of position from them that would help break the present impasse. (Note: It is the assumption of this paper that Arab-Israeli negotiations could resume in one of two ways: (1) the talks on autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza agreed at Camp

David could pick up where they left off in 1980 without Palestinian or other Arab support; (2) without terminating the post Camp David negotiations, discussions could begin with Jordanians, Saudis, Syrians, and Palestinians in a new effort to develop a basis for negotiation which would enable them to participate.)

- We would continue the necessary security assistance and make our contribution to economic development as effective as possible, but we would leave decision-making in this field fully to the governments involved.
- We would continue efforts at the level of the past four years to slow the proliferation of nuclear explosive devices.

Sub-strategy #1-A: In connection with our own military buildup, we would begin a major effort to develop capability within the shortest period of time to introduce a force of several divisions into the Gulf area. We would also have to press for the necessary land facilities to support such operations.

Sub-strategy #1-B: In pursuing our own military buildup, we would aim along present lines to fill out our ability to maintain a continuous naval presence in the Indian Ocean and to airlift 2 to 3 divisions to the area over the next 3 to 5 years. We would develop our dialogue steadily with host countries on strategic cooperation and extension of our network of usable facilities.

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~~Strategy #2 --~~ ~~Peace and Stability~~. This approach starts with the premise

that the highest level of ~~strategic~~ cooperation with our allies in connection with this area and with states in the area will be possible only if the U.S. builds a strategy on common interests of preserving the security and independence. ~~is seen to be engaged in trying to move toward~~ resolution of one of the area's principal conflicts -- the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the related conflict between Israel and the Arab states other than Egypt. The key Arab countries see the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict as part of the threat to ~~stabil-~~ ~~ity in the area~~ and see instability as an opportunity for the Soviet Union to exploit the conflict to enhance its position in the area. The U.S. would give major attention to reducing the level of potential conflict in the area.

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Pursuing this strategy would produce a policy with the following specific elements and priorities:

- Public presentation. The President and Secretary of State would describe the "Middle East problem" to the American people and to foreign friends alike as principally a problem of helping to bring peace and ~~stability~~ <sup>security</sup> ~~to the area~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~as~~ <sup>of conflict</sup> an important step in curbing Soviet expansion and enabling us to pursue the full range of our interests in the area. They would seek understanding that more important U.S. interests come together in this area than in any other area of the developing world, that the threat to our interests comes both from Soviet aggression ~~or~~ <sup>and from</sup> subversion ~~and from~~ <sup>exploiting</sup> local forces of disruptive change, and that a major U.S. effort to help reduce levels of tension and conflict there is critical to our role in the world.
- High policy priorities. In our exchanges with key friends in the region and in Washington planning, we would give co-equal priority to:

- Continuing to develop our own military forces for possible deployment to trouble spots in the region and our cooperation in strategic functional areas with the key states in the region. We would not overload the circuits by pressing for bases but would press the strategic dialogue in tandem with cooperation on non-military issues. Continuing U.S. military supply and security assistance would be a central part of the strategic dialogue. This approach would differ from that in Strategy #1 in (a) not pressing this issue in isolation, (b) moving at a pace set more by local political ability to absorb than by our perceptions of requirements, and (c) probably setting a more modest expectation of the actual U.S. military presence in the area and ability to conduct operations there in the near term.
- Resuming Arab-Israeli peace negotiations with determination to achieve progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian and then an Arab-Israeli settlement. While working closely with our Camp David partners, we would actively seek to develop a basis for cooperation with Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the Palestinians and a basis for their participation in peace negotiations with Israel. This approach would differ from that under Strategy #1 in (a) providing more aggressive U.S. leadership, (b) working from a sense of greater urgency, and (c) recognizing the need to involve one way or another all those with an interest and readiness to make peace rather than dividing the parties between friends and others.

Sub-strategy #2-A: The high sub-option in this case would be to develop a broad American diplomatic effort under the full-time supervision of a very senior American with the full personal commitment of the President and Secretary of State. This effort would aim at the involvement, one way or another, of all interested parties. Its objective would be to develop a basis for negotiation beyond -- not instead of -- the Camp David Framework for Peace.

Sub-strategy #2-B: The more modest sub-option would be to resume the autonomy talks between Egypt and Israel while more gradually developing a dialogue with the other parties on the "Eastern front."

- Maintaining steady oil flow and pricing as well as other global economic issues would be dealt with on the agenda of issues for cooperation rather than on the basis of an oil-for-security equation.

-- Secondary priorities. Under this strategy, these issues would be regarded as secondary not necessarily in importance but only in the amount of attention they could receive in the real world, given the amount of time and energy that senior officials would have to devote to the high-priority issues:

- Crisis aversion would require continuing readiness to engage, but with the broader and more active diplomacy envisioned in this strategy there would be greater likelihood that the crisis-related issues would become woven into the broader diplomacy. Under Strategy #2, however, there would be greater readiness to move beyond defusing an immediate crisis -- for



example, the Israeli-Syrian tension over Syrian missiles in Lebanon -- to stimulate movement on resolution of underlying causes of conflict, such as those causing instability in Lebanon and creating conditions for the Syrian presence.

- Added to the agenda of developmental cooperation under this strategy would be a directive to the U.S. diplomatic and analytical establishment to focus on the potential causes of instability and revolution with the purpose of engaging the U.S. as actively as is feasible in searching out and encouraging host countries to address those causes.

-- A specific point on U.S.-Soviet competition. Whereas under Strategy #1 it is self-evident that the competition with the U.S.S.R. in this region would be seen first in military terms, under Strategy #2 that competition would be seen as a competition in which diplomatic and economic advantage would be seen as elements of national power alongside the obvious importance of military strength because on a number of occasions we may have greater capacity to shape the course of events by using these non-military tools with the knowledge of military strength always in the background. Strategy #2 does, therefore, give rise to a further choice in determining how the competition -- or confrontation -- with the Soviet Union is played out in this region.

Sub-strategy #2-C: One approach, essentially that followed since the early months of 1974 (with one exception in 1977 when we tried to resume the Geneva Conference for Middle East Peace), has been to pursue an active

diplomatic, economic, and security strategy which has set the U.S. up as the main outside mover of events in the area. The arguments for this approach are that the U.S. has many assets to work with in this competition, while it is not at all certain that the Soviet Union is prepared to participate constructively in building a structure of peace and stability in the Middle East; it is better to build that structure with the moderate states and later let the Soviets accommodate to it.

Sub-strategy #2-D begins with the premise that there are both global and regional reasons for some kind of dialogue with the U.S.S.R. on our respective interests and roles in the area, perhaps even on common approaches to such regional problems as Arab-Israeli negotiations, naval presence in the Indian Ocean, or the Soviet military and administrative withdrawal from Afghanistan. While there would be no illusions about quick progress toward a negotiated understanding or about Soviet willingness to implement any understanding scrupulously, there would be a feeling that it is important to open a dialogue to provide some alternative to a competition or confrontation without any effort to define its limits.

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From this analysis of the U.S. interests and possible approaches to the Middle East and Southwest Asia, I hope detailed discussion and refinement of American options may be possible.