

ence in Asia and Africa and are equally aspects of the U.S.S.R.'s own grand strategy of containing China. The possibility of Sino-American *entente* made it essential for it to consolidate its position, and so it came about that it negotiated the first genuine treaties of alliance with non-Communist states since the 1940s — with Egypt in May of 1971 and India in August. The countries of two of the great architects of non-alignment, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Pandit Nehru, are now part of the super-power system of alliances.

Heirs of Empire

As it happens, it is the Russians, not, as many people supposed for 20 years after the war, the Americans, who are the heirs of the old British Empire, because the Russians have an imperial conception of foreign policy and the Americans do not. And, as the British discovered a century ago, whoever is the prime mover in the affairs of the subcontinent must have a dominant position in Egypt. But I personally do not attribute the recent tragic conflict in the subcontinent to Russian manipulation. The process of events which led to a breakdown of civil order in East Pakistan started some time before the overt change in great power relations and it has not been a Russian interest to disturb the delicate balance of power within the subcontinent itself. But, since the balance has been destroyed, the Soviet Union, is, for the time being, the principal beneficiary among the external powers, though in the longer run one must expect China to have few scruples in exploiting the unrest to which an area as poor, proud and crowded as Bengal, both East and West, is always prone.

Berlin agreement

It would be wrong to suggest that there is a necessary connection between the increasing Soviet preoccupation with Asia and its more reasonable attitude on certain European questions. We must record as one of the significant events of a crowded year the Soviet initialling in September of the first Berlin agreement in 24 years, and Mr. Brezhnev's readiness to put pressure on East Germany to accede to the inter-German aspects of it. More likely this was an outcome of the skilful *ostpolitik* of Willy Brandt over the last two years, for, in general, developments last year in Western Europe have been antithetical to Soviet ambitions, moving as they apparently did towards greater unity and coherence when its interest has been to Balkanize and "Finlandize" the area.

I say "apparently" because it is too early to state with finality that Western Europe is acquiring this coherence, and if it is, just why it should be so. Is it because the American dollar ceased, with dramatic finality, on August 15 to be the linchpin of the Western monetary system? Or is it from a more general sense that European and American interests in the world at large may be beginning to diverge, as the United States defines its national interests more carefully and more sharply?

We shall not know until the archives of many governments are opened a generation hence, but, whatever the cause, one of the central developments of world politics in 1971 was the decision to enlarge the European Economic Community. The decision in principle was, of course, taken over two years ago at the summit meeting in The Hague of

The Six. But it was accelerated last year, first by the Heath-Pompidou conversations in May, when those two pragmatists found that their conceptions of the future organization of Europe were broadly similar; by the negotiation of terms that satisfy the British Government's essential requirements, notably the safeguarding of New Zealand and Caribbean markets in Europe; and by an overwhelming vote in favour of adherence in the House of Commons late in October, a vote which crossed party boundaries. It also appears probable that both Denmark and Norway will decide to adhere to the Community, although the answer will not be known for certain until their referenda in the fall. The question is politically and strategically significant because, if the one stays out, the other may; and, if either remains economically divorced from Western Europe, it is likely to drift into a form of Nordic neutralism.

Opportunity for the weak

Finally, I think one cannot appreciate the nature of the change in our political and strategic environment without noting last year's evidence of a growing phenomenon of our time, namely the ability of the weak to resist the strong. Just a year ago, at the Singapore Conference, the smaller Commonwealth countries, some of them with fewer resources than an English county, successfully thwarted Mr. Heath's expressed determination to protect the oil-routes of Western Europe by selling frigates to South Africa. In February, the oil-producing states of the free world, many of them rich but none of them strong, forced a 25 percent increase in oil royalties upon the great Western multinational oil companies. Throughout the whole year, Israel, which has made itself almost totally dependent on the United States for armaments, successfully resisted the strongest possible American diplomatic pressure to modify its negotiating position with the Arab states. In March, a number of external powers which are hostile to each other — the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, India and Pakistan — found themselves giving military assistance to the Government of Ceylon in suppressing a revolt which had been largely inspired by its new Prime Minister. Throughout the year Malta conducted a tough negotiation with Britain and its allies, which has led to an eventual settlement that triples the subsidy it receives. Last, but sadly not least, the UN Security Council has had virtually no influence upon the Indo-Pakistan conflict or its settlement.

The dividing-line between a polycentric world that provides increasing freedom of action for the middle and small powers and a disorderly world in which the standard of international behaviour deteriorates is not easy to draw. Peace, unfortunately, has become divisible; it is a sad fact that the conception of the UN as a keeper of the peace, as the expression of a common standard of world order, is for the time being moribund.

But, if last year registered a significant change in the nature of the international system, the salient features of the world that developed after 1945 are not going to disappear overnight. There will continue to be only two super-powers in the true sense; there will continue to be a higher degree of common aspirations and values as between North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australasia, than between any of them and the Soviet Union or China; the developing countries will continue to have quite different