

as an analytical prism, but also as a guide to action. To the extent that the prescriptive component of Marxism-Leninism is taken seriously, it favours a systematic global assault on Western interests. There is, however, sufficient empirical evidence, as noted above, to cause one to question just how significant the Soviet commitment to global revolution is per se as a source of Soviet behaviour. It may be of greater importance as a means of establishing the legitimacy of the Soviet regime and the authority of its leaders. The regime justifies its rule over the Soviet Union, the political and economic privation it imposes on the country's population, and its position of leadership among the communist parties and other "progressive forces", in terms of its possession of a scientific theory of human development and of a revolutionary commitment to promote the advance of history towards its pre-determined conclusion. Failure to support revolutionary causes undermines this source of legitimacy among the regime's various constituencies. Lack of progress towards the millenium calls in question the theoretical basis of the party's rule.

The same could be said *a fortiori* for reversals in the fortunes of revolutionary actors to whom the Soviet Union has committed itself. The erosion of authority in this manner not only undermines the basis of the political system, but renders individual leaders vulnerable to ideological criticism from rivals within the party oligarchy. Thus, all other things being equal, considerations of internal legitimacy favour Soviet support of anti-Western radicalism in the Third World and render Soviet leaders highly sensitive to reversals of fortune there. It is significant in this regard that where Soviet forces have been deployed in actual or potential combat situations in the Third World, for example, Egypt in the War of Attrition (1969-70), Afghanistan since 1979, and Syria since 1982, this has been in defence of established positions that were jeopardized, rather than in fresh challenges to Western positions. To the extent that ideology is significant in establishing the legitimacy of the Soviet regime, it favours competition with the West in the Third World.

Many writers have suggested, however, that the role of ideology in this context has been declining, as few in the Soviet Union take seriously the commitments which it prescribes. Thomas Wolfe, for example, points to its replacement by nationalism.¹¹ But Russian nationalism, both as a fundamental commitment of the leadership

¹¹ T. Wolfe, "Soviet Global Strategy", in K. London, ed., *The Soviet Impact on World Politics* (New York: Hawthorne, 1974), p. 238.