

Watch out—here comes World War III

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"The United States military pushed the development of events in such a manner as to facilitate an attack on Cuba. We received information from Cuban comrades and from other sources on the morning of October 27 directly stating that this attack would be carried out in the next two or three days. We interpreted these cables as an extremely alarming warning signal. And the alarm was indeed justified. Immediate action was necessary to prevent an attack on Cuba and to preserve peace." This was Mr. Khrushchev's statement on December 12, 1962, when it became clear to Soviet authorities that the stakes involved in their emplacement in Cuba of 48 Medium Range Ballistic Missiles and 24 to 32 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles — all armed with nuclear weapons — had become too high. That statement led to the withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba on 5 November 1962 and thus to an aversion of what would have been a Third World War. Can't the Third World War be avoided in this way for ever?

In my approach to this problem, I shall consider the national interests of the military powers that are capable of igniting a Third World War. The term 'National Interest' has long been used by statesmen and scholars to define the foreign policy goals of nation states. There are changing and unchanging national interests. The national interest of the United States, the Soviet Union and China may be defined as follows: (1) defence; (2) economic; and (3) world order. The following factors determine the value that each of these powers attaches to an international issue: (a) location of threat (geographic factor); (b) nature of the threat (open aggression or insurgency); (c) economic stake; (d) effect on balance of power; (e) effect on its world wide credibility and prestige; (f) support of major allies and the United Nations; and (g) historical sentiment of its people.

Two main factors — economic and the effect on the balance of power — led to the outbreak of World War I. Tsarist diplomats would not have organized Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro into a Balkan League had Russia not hoped that the League would be a bulwark against Austro-Hungary. Russia would not have tried to prevent Austria and Germany from dominating the Turkish Straits had it not hoped to make some economic gains from such a prevention. Russia's allies, France and Britain, commenced hostilities against Germany, which declared war on August 1, 1914, not for any reason other than to make economic gains and tilt the balance of power in their own favour. Both Austria and Germany fought that war for the same reasons. Hitler's mad ambition to rule the world, which led to the outbreak of World War II, developed from his craving for world hegemony. Britain and France declared war against Hitler's Third Reich on September 3, 1939 and were later joined by the United States to prevent Germany from becoming the economic and military master of the world. Before the Soviet Union

was invaded by Nazi Germany on June 22, 1941, Stalin had planned to intervene later in the war (when both sides were exhausted) and share the spoils of victory.

Various factors have been responsible for the degree of interventions carried out by the United States, Soviet Union, and China in the wars that have been fought since the end of World War II. Closely allied to the balance of power is the ideological balance, a field in which the United States and the western world have been almost disarmed. Now these are the factors which can cause the outbreak of World War III: (1) Threat to the survival of the United States, the Soviet Union, or the People Republic of China. A careful look at the map of the world will show that the presence of any threat, be it ideological, military or economic, on the North American continent will not be tolerated by the United States. The large continent of Asia contains a sea of military activities and conflict. None of the major powers in this region — the Soviet Union and Communist China — will tolerate anything that threatens its authority in any part of its territory. Besides, the Soviet Union considers Eastern Europe as its bulwark against Western "imperialism" and so will do anything possible to halt an advance of capitalism in that area, real or imagined. The only threat to China's security in Asia is the Soviet Union with which it shares a long border. In order to deter Moscow in this area, however, Peking maintains a force of 715,000 men along their common border. The Soviet Union too stations a force of 440,000 on its side of the border.

(2) The nature of the threat. This will determine the kind of action each of these major powers will take. Open aggression threatens the immediate survival of any country more than insurgency. Whereas a country may actively aid insurgent troops fighting against the government of another country, as happened in South Vietnam, open aggression is committed only when a foreign power physically employs its own armed forces in a military campaign against another country or what belongs to that country. For any of these major powers to commit an open aggression against the other, it will have to attack with its own troops. But so far none of them has shown any inclination to do this.

(3) Economic Stake. This is the third factor to which these major powers attach a great value. Eastern Europe, Cuba and Indo-China are of much economic and political importance to the Soviet Union. Cuban indebtedness to the Soviet Union is estimated to have reached over \$4.3 billion in 1974. Without Soviet trade and economic link with Cuba, the communist dictatorship of the bearded Castro would have collapsed long before now. Of economic importance to the United States are Western Europe, Canada, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. China does not have much economic interest outside its own territory, though it gives economic assistance to Albania, Pakistan and Tanzania. Whereas the Soviet Union and the United States will do anything necessary to defend the status quo in their areas of economic interest, China will probably do nothing more than to give military aid to its economic allies in the

events of a military attack.

(4) The balance of power: This is the scale on which the two Super powers and China weigh the effect of any foreign military move. Outside the continental United States, Washington has established military bases in Europe, the Pacific, the Atlantic, Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has military bases in Central and Eastern Europe, the Pacific, and the Mediterranean. China does not show any interest in establishing military bases anywhere outside its own territory.

The Cuban Missile Crisis which I mentioned at the beginning of this article occurred because the United States felt that Cuba was too near its doorsteps, therefore, any Soviet missiles installed in Havana would clearly put the existence of Washington under Moscow's mercy. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, hoped that the placement of nuclear weapons and delivery systems in Cuba, if accomplished, would yield a number of concrete benefits in the strategic military and political fields. In the event of a war; its MRBMs with a range of 1100 miles would have been able to burn out Washington D.C., Houston, New Orleans and the whole of Florida within 12 minutes of their launching. The Soviet IRBMs, with a range of 2200 miles, would have been able to obliterate most of the United States within 17 minutes except places like San Francisco, Seattle, and a small part of Washington State! During this crisis, the military balance was in favour of the United States and its western allies.

Today, there are outcries going on about the formidable strength of the Soviet navy. Some experts, however, say that the ships that are being built by the Soviet Union are small compared to the large NATO warships. The Soviets are very much disturbed by the technological superiority of the United States. Peking is not as technologically advanced and militarily strong as any of the two Super powers. It has been able to offset this inferiority by its numerical superiority over both of the super powers. China's regular forces total up to about 3,525,000, the Soviet Union is said to have about 3,650,000 people under arms, and experts put the strength of the United States armed forces at 2,086,700.

Turning to the weapons systems, I will only mention a few of the most advanced weapons in the military powers arsenals. The most modern American weapons include the Minuteman 3 ICBM, the 4,600-mile-range Trident 1 Submarine Launched Ballistic

Missile, the B1 bomber, the F-14 fighter, and the Safeguard Anti-Ballistic Missile. Among the new Soviet weapons are the controversial Backfire bomber, the Mig 25 Foxbat, and the 4,800-mile-range SS-N-8 (Nuclear Submarine). The most sophisticated Chinese weapons include the 3,500-mile-range ICBM, Mig 19, F6 and F9 fighters. The United States defence expenditure for 1976-77 amounts to \$100.1 bn, Soviet defence expenditure for 1975 has been estimated to total up to \$135 billion, and Chinese defence expenditure for 1974 has been estimated at \$17 billion.

The most powerful concentration of military power that the world has ever known is in Europe where NATO and the Warsaw Pact confront each other. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is composed of Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United States, Greece, Turkey and West Germany. The Warsaw Pact, under the leadership of the Soviet Union, is made up of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union. In Europe, NATO (excluding France) has 1,110,000 soldiers and the Warsaw Pact stations 1,350,000 men. It will suffice here to mention NATO's 8100 main battle tanks and 2,850 Tactical aircraft in operational service, and the Warsaw Pact's 21,200 tanks and 5110 Tactical aircraft.

Khrushchev was once reported to have said that "if the United States wants to unleash aggression, we shall be compelled to fire rockets that will explode bombs on the aggressor's territory at the very first minute." Will the United States ever want to unleash aggression? No. Will the U.S.S.R. ever be compelled to fire rockets into the United States? Not likely as long as the U.S. does not commit aggression against the U.S.S.R. Whereas the two super powers may not commit aggression against each other in the nearest future, war can break out between China and the Soviet

Union at any time. This is because they share a common border. But I do not think that China and the United States will ever go to war. Since China freed itself from Soviet domination, it has more and more depended on the U.S., Japan and the E.E.C. for much of its imports. Besides, Washington is too remote from Peking that war between the two countries seems almost impossible.

Out of all the arenas of conflict, Europe is the most explosive. War will break out in Europe if the Russians try to push NATO troops out of West Berlin. What the Soviets really want is an undivided communist Germany in order to complete the communication of the old German State. If the Warsaw Pact forces ever succeed in crossing into West Germany, within a few days they will mix up with the German population that to 'siff' that country clean of communists will cost millions of civilian lives. And unless NATO forces fight harder than American troops did in Vietnam, the Warsaw Pact forces would win.

The Third World War will continue to be avoided as long as the Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, East Germans, Bulgarians and hundreds of minorities in the Soviet Union continue to resent Russian occupation and domination. If the Soviet Union goes to an all-out war with either the U.S. or China, neither the morale of the Soviet people nor the continued security of Eastern Europe could be guaranteed; and if such a conflict causes China to seize the advantage of the eastern front, political collapse of the Soviet Union would be almost certain. Soviet leaders know that modern war does not leave in absolute power those who unleash it. Although the Chinese have dug tunnels into which they hope to burrow in the event of an all-out nuclear war, that war will continue to be avoided until the Soviet Union feels secure. After all, the Soviet Union is the most aggressive of the three military powers and it is the most likely to ignite a World War. Isn't that true?

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