



Wide World Photo

A three-cornered handshake on September 18, 1978, followed the announcement of the agreement that had been reached at Camp David.

Hoffmann, to be neither accurate as description nor desirable as a vision. President Carter drew heavily on the ideas of the Trilateral Commission, but these too have been shown to be inadequate. The metaphor of a triangle uniting the United States, Europe and Japan is doubly impaired by the absence of a side connecting Europe and Japan and by the absence of European unity. Moreover, trilateralism leaves out the "Second" and "Third Worlds." While it has become commonplace to invoke the notion of interdependence, no analytical construct has emerged that would accurately describe the system structure in terms that would command widespread understanding. None of these candidates for a general description of the international system structure even attempts to account for the agitating issue of Cuban intervention in Africa. Moreover, Carter himself demonstrated considerable ineptitude last summer in claiming Cuban intervention in Shaba Province, Zaire, without being able to provide conclusive evidence in response to sceptics in the United States and to Fidel Castro's denials.

Economic disarray

Added to the difficulties of conceptually grasping the structure of the international system is the disarray in international economics — huge trade imbalances, monetary chaos exemplified by the fall of the dollar, and the uncertainties in the bargaining over a new international economic order. The economic "summit" conferences of the "trilateral" countries have demonstrated a style of collaboration but

not a co-ordination of substantive policies to deal with "stagflation". The real decline in the price of oil for the United States resulting from the decline in the value the dollar appears to be an unintended consequence, whose advantages are offset by continuing international economic disarray and dwindling confidence in the ability of the U.S. to manage its own economy.

If the fluidity of the international system itself is an obstacle to the development of a foreign-policy consensus, there are also domestic American barriers that present difficulties. The debate over the Panama Canal treaties has shown not only the emotional fracturing of the American people in dealing with the rest of the world but also the obstacles to the conduct of a coherent foreign policy caused by the structure of the American Government. With Congress intent upon sharing in foreign-policy decision-making, foreign policy becomes an instrument of domestic politics.

Moreover, there appear to be deeper and more persistent cleavages in public opinion concerning American foreign policy. In the summer 1977 issue of *International Journal*, James N. Rosenau and Ole R. Holsti reported the results of their survey of the "attentive public". Their study showed the persistence of the cleavage in opinion that had opened up during the Vietnam war. This cleavage is particularly likely to be manifested during the Senate's consideration of a new SALT accord.

In such circumstances, the President himself is an important influence. Pres-