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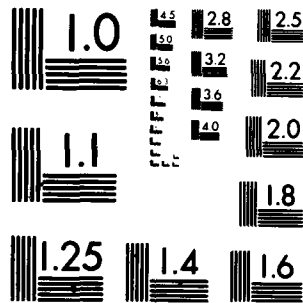
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

US COMMITMENT TO SOUTHWEST ASIA: INTERESTS, CONSTRAINTS AND OPTIONS



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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

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**US COMMITMENT TO SOUTHWEST ASIA:
INTERESTS, CONSTRAINTS AND OPTIONS**

by

Shirin Tahir-Kheli

1 December 1981



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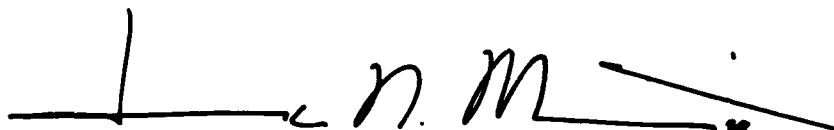
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FOREWORD

This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium on "US Strategic Interests in Southwest Asia: A Long Term Commitment?" which was sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute in October 1981. During the Symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy. This memorandum provides a summary report of the Symposium.

The Strategic Issues Research Memoranda program of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, provides a means for timely dissemination of analytical papers which are not constrained by format or conformity with institutional policy. These memoranda are prepared on subjects of current importance in areas related to the author's professional work.

This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. N. Merritt", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

JACK N. MERRITT
Major General, USA
Commandant

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. SHIRIN TAHIR-KHELI is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University. A graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University, she received her master's degree and doctorate in international relations from the University of Pennsylvania. Her publications include books on *Soviet Moves in Asia* (1976), *United States and Pakistan: The Evolution of an Influence Relationship* (forthcoming), and a study on "Nuclear Decision-Making in Pakistan" in James Katz and Onkar Marwah, eds., *Nuclear Decision-Making in Developing Countries* (1981), and several articles on South and Southwest Asia. She is editor of the forthcoming book, *The Gulf War: Old Conflicts, New Weapons*. Dr. Tahir-Kheli was the Visiting Research Professor with the Strategic Studies Institute from September 1980 until September 1981.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

US COMMITMENT TO SOUTHWEST ASIA: INTERESTS, CONSTRAINTS AND OPTIONS

The American commitment to Southwest Asia was pledged anew by the Presidential declaration of January 23, 1980 which stated that, henceforth, the Persian Gulf area is of vital interest to the United States where any attempt by an outside force to gain control would be met by all necessary means at the US disposal. Following the Carter declaration, the United States moved forward to implement its policy on military as well as diplomatic fronts. The purpose of the 1981 Military Policy Symposium was to examine the nature of the US commitment to Southwest Asia, to analyze constraints on US policy, and to offer options for American decisionmakers.

The Symposium grappled with the complexities of the American commitment. It focused on US desires and objectives,¹ but recognized that the United States is not operating in a vacuum. No measure of success can be forthcoming if the regional dynamic is ignored.² US policy in Southwest Asia impinges not only on foes, but also on friends and allies who inhabit other regions.³ Finally,

the Symposium participants recognized that not only must Washington take into consideration its main challenger's (the USSR) interests and objectives⁴ but also that neither superpower is without constraints which circumscribe its options in Southwest Asia.⁵

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

The Symposium participants agreed that there are two basic problems with US policy. First, there is an absence of consensus among the US policymakers on what the US national interest really is and how it can best be achieved given the existence of powerful pressure group constituencies with narrow regional interests whose goals are often in conflict with what would appear to be the broader national interest of the United States. This shortcoming impinges negatively on the American capacity to formulate appropriate responses to external stimuli. Lacking a strategic as well as a coherent internal consensus, US policy thus appears disjointed, halting and disconnected. Second, US strategy appears too fatalistic and its responses forever fit the description of being "too little and too late." Clearly, the first order of business for the United States is to arrive at a clear understanding of what constitutes its national interest. Once that is achieved, Washington can begin to make coherent and rational decisions regarding what policies ought to be followed so that its national interest is appropriately furthered, both in peacetime and in times of international conflict.

There are clusters of political, economic, and strategic concerns in Southwest Asia that constitute US national interest and therefore are of fundamental importance. These are: "the survival of the United States and defense of US territory, the maintenance or enhancement of the US standard of living, and the promotion of a stable world sympathetic to contemporary American values."⁶ Southwest Asia has become a potential arena where the United States might face a threat to its very survival through the collapse of the policy of conflict avoidance with the USSR. In specific terms, the US objective in Southwest Asia is to walk a tightrope between deterrence and, should deterrence fail, policies and practices to "win" a conflict against the Soviet Union short of a nuclear war with all of its concomitant dangers of escalation.

Under such conditions, it is imperative that conflict termination conditions be carefully and precisely defined. While there may be virtue in vagueness in terms of keeping the Soviets guessing at US responses, there are certain disadvantages of such a policy when dealing with allies. More important, there is no merit in vagueness to oneself.

The national interest of maintenance or enhancement of the US standard of living cannot realistically be divorced from the economic well-being of America's European allies and Japan. It is precisely because of the close interconnection between the two that so much of the US treasure and energy has been expended in the last three and a half decades on ensuring the economic viability of US allies. For this reason, the US national objective in Southwest Asia must address the need to assure access to oil. An American strategy whose primary focus is the continued flow of oil will necessarily differ from one where the objective is different. Because of continued allied dependence on Southwest Asian oil, US commitment to Southwest Asia will obviously be of longer term irrespective of domestic US need.

The US national interest of promoting a stable world in sympathy with US values is a recognition of the fact that the United States cannot prosper, nay, survive, as an island in a hostile world. The objective for American policy in Southwest Asia is to continue to win friends and ensure the stability of friendly nations in the region, which is easier said than done. For example, in the long-term interest of stability, should the United States pursue the short run interest of strengthening Khomeini's Iran so that Iran survives? Can such a policy be carried out since it may be a case of one national interest in conflict with another?

SOVIET MOTIVATIONS

Current US strategy in Southwest Asia stems from the panic surrounding the twin shocks of the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The underlying assumption (and assumptions are critical in formulating any response)⁷ in US policy towards Southwest Asia is that the Soviets are in Afghanistan to stay (at least in the near future). The best the United States can then do is to keep up the pressure on the Soviet Union to see if the USSR will at least withdraw militarily and to extract the highest possible cost in Afghanistan (if Moscow refuses to withdraw its army) in

order to prevent the Soviets from undertaking similar actions elsewhere. Yet, the United States faces a dilemma in its Afghan policy. If it actively (and militarily, however indirect and limited) supports the Afghan insurgency, it makes Afghanistan an East-West issue and globalizes the problem. On the other hand, if the United States does not support the Afghan Mujahadeen militarily but limits its support to diplomatically chastizing the Soviet Union, the morale of those Afghans who are fighting for the freedom of their country from Soviet occupation may be severely and negatively affected.

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has had a major impact on US policy, Soviet concerns are worth exploring in order to understand whether this is an isolated act or reflects an emerging pattern of behavior. Afghanistan may be a geostrategic prize, in that it permits Moscow to take advantage of future instability in Iran and Pakistan and serves as a psychological reminder to Persian Gulf countries that the Soviet Union is nominally only 350 miles away. Afghanistan is certainly not an economic prize. Moscow now has exclusive rights over important exports such as natural gas. However, the Soviets did not have to invade in order to stabilize their access to Afghan natural gas. For all intents and purposes, the USSR had economic preeminence in Afghanistan even before the invasion. Neither was the Soviet Union motivated by the fear of potential unrest in Central Asia. While such a fear would have been genuine in the decade after World War II, today Moscow understands well that instability in as marginal an actor as Afghanistan is not synonymous with Soviet insecurity. Perhaps Moscow confused control of Afghanistan with stability, taking the April 1978 coup in Kabul as the ultimate guarantor of a totally stable (Soviet-controlled) regime. The post-Tarakki problems have the potential of resulting in a less friendly government in Afghanistan. From a Soviet perspective, this is instability it could not tolerate: the loss of a Soviet state on its border. The Soviet Union will withdraw from Afghanistan only after it secures the survival of the Marxist regime, an act hard to ensure without a direct Soviet presence. The Soviets have so far been willing to accept the fact that their position has suffered from the constant assassinations of Afghan officials, that major Soviet lines of communication are under attack and that there is "a high level of harassment" by the rebels. Moscow's Afghan operations have also been hurt by the constant feuding between the Parcham and Khalq

factions of People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

Given the difficulties it faces in Afghanistan, there are a number of options open to Moscow in the long term. First, the current situation could continue because the Soviets find they can bear the present level of conflict in Afghanistan and feel that the costs of a withdrawal would be too high. Second, Afghanistan could be incorporated into a Soviet Central Asian Republic. Third, Afghanistan could become a future Mongolia, occupied for a long time but enjoying considerable local autonomy. Fourth, Moscow might move towards a political solution under which it could withdraw from most areas of control. Under such a solution, a dialogue (perhaps at unofficial levels) may be opened with Pakistan paving the way for the return of the over two million Afghan refugees currently residing in Pakistan. Fifth, the Soviets could seek an international solution which would provide for an Afghan government oriented to the Soviet Union, but one in which the PDPA and the KGB are not involved.

AMERICAN RESOLVE

Prior to December 1979 the United States had been criticized for its policy of neglect, which gave the Soviets the feeling that Washington was uninterested in the future of Afghanistan. Under President Carter, US activity in Southwest Asia was curtailed, just as the Soviet Union was escalating its involvement. US preoccupation with Iran afforded Moscow the opportunity to assert itself in Kabul.

In response to the above criticism, the United States has made it abundantly clear that no further Soviet moves will go unchallenged in Southwest Asia. Washington perceives regional security as closely intertwined and sees the development of a "strategic consensus" as an essential corollary of direct American presence. Washington sees its presence in Southwest Asia as reinforcement of friendly nations who face a direct Soviet or an indirect Soviet (i.e., a Soviet proxy) threat. In addition, the United States is, selectively, underwriting the capability of states to defend themselves. But the bottom line on defense of the area against a Soviet incursion is the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). The RDJTF is a tripwire force which signals US willingness to go to war. It is contemplated as a force large enough so as to give the Soviets a real pause before moving in Southwest Asia. A mere token force would

not do because it would simply be swept away by the Soviet Union, leaving the United States with the temptation to cut its losses.

Southwest Asia is characterized as "an area with no rules." The dangers to peace and stability are many; there is little dialogue between the superpowers and regional actors further complicating the US response. Were there to be a contingency in Southwest Asia alone, the United States does have the necessary force even if it is distant in location. If problems in Southwest Asia occur in conjunction with difficulties elsewhere, then the United States may not be able to react unilaterally with any measure of success.

CONSTRAINTS ON US POLICY

Whether or not the US commitment to Southwest Asia is long term is dependent on the American ability to understand local as well as regional constraints and to deal with them effectively. The Symposium discussed a variety of factors which impinge on US policy and restrict its ability to act.

The first major constraint on US policy deals with perceptions of threat. There is an enormous mismatch in perceptions as US focus is primarily on the Soviet threat and regional actors focus on the Israeli threat and other inter and intraregional threats. Furthermore, while the United States is getting more deeply involved in Southwest Asia, most Southwest Asian countries perceive too close an identification with Washington itself as constituting a threat to the stability of the regime.

The nonspecific problems originating from varied notions of threat are best illustrated in the US-Pakistan relationship. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan turned Pakistan into a front line state. It also resuscitated US interest in Pakistani security. Washington fully subscribes to the notion of serious external challenges to Pakistan and has put together a \$3.2 billion package of assistance to Pakistan in order to underline its concern. Yet, it is necessary to recognize that the United States has overlapping but not identical perceptions of threat with Pakistan. There is a common US-Pakistani fear of Soviet or Soviet-assisted inroads into Pakistan. However, Islamabad's focus on India is not shared by Washington. Thus, while the United States and Pakistan agree that the latter is vulnerable, they do not agree on all aspects of the external sources of the vulnerability.

A second constraint on US policy stems from the inability of regional countries to fully subscribe to the notion that the United States is willing and able to accept regional autonomy. The Gulf States are, in particular, suspicious that the United States is after their oil and see the RDJTF as a tool which will help the United States control the oil fields.

Third, Washington is constrained because locals perceive the American commitment as being to specific governments and not to the country or area. Furthermore, the United States is seen as vacillating in its support even with those governments it supports (e.g., the Shah in Iran and Sadat in Egypt). The dilemma posed by the twin problems of credibility and reliability often translate themselves into general difficulty in acquiring reliable friends and allies for the United States.

While the United States is perceived as lacking resolve to sustain a commitment over the long term, the Soviets are viewed as being more reliable in supporting friends (e.g., India, Afghanistan). Because of the fundamental differences in the American and regional perceptions of the primary threat, Southwest Asian countries question US resolve. They recognize that, in the absence of the sort of convergence of interest which ties the United States to Europe, US commitment to Southwest Asia may be shaky even in the face of strategic warning of an impending Soviet move.

Fourth, US policy is constrained by what one participant in the Symposium termed: "the disconnect in US policy in Southwest Asia" (i.e., the American commitment to Israel and US/allied need for Persian Gulf oil). The practical impact of the above dichotomy is that the need for oil is increasing the American commitment to an area where in the long run it cannot operate effectively without moving to resolve the Arab-Israeli problem (although it was recognized that resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem does not mean that the oil problem is also solved).

A fifth constraint in the formulation and execution of US policy towards Southwest Asia is the failure to understand and appreciate Islamic fundamentalism. It is unfortunate that US policymakers have been unable to make a psychological and political analysis of the factors which contribute to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the motivating forces which drive it. While the focal point of Arab nationalism—which the United States is only just beginning to understand—is the Palestinian problem, that of Islamic fundamentalism is non-Westernization. It is extremely difficult for

Americans to comprehend that anyone could seriously challenge the very notion of development. The United States has not emphasized the view that the breakdown of traditional societies that tends to accompany modernization is undesirable. Progress through development is a Western notion which is being directly challenged in Southwest Asia. Many Southwest Asian countries, who have the money to "buy" development, are consciously slowing down their pace. They also tend to reject the notion that modernization is synonymous with Westernization. The United States is often seen as being in the vanguard of policies that bring about the breakdown of traditional values because of heavy US involvement in development schemes. Modernization, in turn, is viewed as creating the requirement for managers and bureaucrats who, with their Western (American) training, begin to drift away from a traditional Islamic lifestyle. When these individuals get discredited, as happened in Iran, the United States also shares the blame.

The Symposium felt that it was critical for US policymakers to seek ways of understanding fundamentalism even if the people who espouse it are (both physically and intellectually) a breed apart from those with whom traditionally American contacts have been made and sustained. In addition, Washington needs to make the point that the United States is not against Islamic fundamentalism. The absence of a dialogue greatly restricts US policy since Islamic fundamentalism does not appear to be a passing phenomenon.

Finally, the United States is constrained by the fact that, despite its commitment to regional stability, there are so many scenarios of instability facing regional countries which Washington can do virtually nothing to alleviate. The problems of rising expectations, distribution of wealth, political participation, succession and corruption are vitally important and can only be resolved by the regional leaders themselves.

Yet, despite the complexities confronting conscious choices, the fact remains that these problems are not those of the United States alone. So far, superpower competition in Southwest Asia is not a zero sum game with the Soviet Union holding all the trump cards. At least in the near term, the Soviets are constrained by their present force structure and, more importantly, by a general dislike and distrust of the USSR among most states in the region. The last factor translates itself into a lack of friends and allies and a lack of assured access.

US OPTIONS

The importance of the Persian Gulf was examined by the Symposium. Ambassador Van Hollen, in his evening speech, raised the questions: "Is the Persian Gulf past its prime? Does the United States have allies in the Persian Gulf? Can there be a 'strategic consensus'?" The problems facing the United States in the region were debated and the Symposium concluded that because of allied dependence on Southwest Asian oil, the American commitment to the Persian Gulf will remain in place despite declining US need. Furthermore, because of the area's proximity to the Soviet Union, its trade patterns with the West and its location straddling lines of communications, US policy will continue to emphasize Southwest Asia. Given the commitment, what are the best ways of ensuring the success of US policy in four key countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia?

The Symposium debated a number of options in the diplomatic, political, economic, psychological, and military categories. Obviously, the options available are dependent on the goals of US policy. Two general caveats have to be inserted here: first, that the United States must integrate all elements of its national strategy (political, economic, diplomatic, military, and technological) in order to ensure success; second, that the various categories of options are not mutually exclusive.

Afghanistan: While the United States may eventually accept the notion of Afghanistan being within the Soviet sphere of political influence, it is unlikely to condone the USSR's military occupation of that country. Given the US objective of removing the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan, the following options need to be pursued by the United States:

I. Diplomatic Options.

- Continue to withhold diplomatic recognition and isolate the PDPA government as a "puppet regime."
- Declare open support for the insurgency and advertise the fact that the USSR opposes national liberation movements.
- Explore the UN peace initiative to see whether an agreement for Soviet withdrawal can be reached.
- Explore alternative diplomatic channels (e.g., bilateral or the EEC plan).

- Integrate US policy in Afghanistan with policy towards Pakistan, India, and even Iran because the lack of unity in US policy undermines chances of its success.

II. Political Options.

- Become more open and flexible in search of alternative solutions.

- Advertise the Afghan refugee problem as an obvious embarrassment to the Soviets and support assistance to refugees.

- Support the tribal elements and structure in Afghanistan and use them for channeling aid.

- Maintain a dialogue on Soviet withdrawal while demonstrating the high costs to the USSR of continued military occupation.

- Convince US allies that the United States is prepared to be reasonable but that the Soviet Union is not.

III. Economic Options.

- Deny trade to PDPA.

- Coordinate overall Afghan trade with European allies in order to avoid isolation of US policy.

- Look for regional support of US policy towards the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, in particular, from the Islamic Conference.

IV. Psychological Options.

- Boost morale of the Mujahadeen by continued recognition of their role and through continued support.

- Increase propaganda targeted at Muslims in Soviet Central Asia regarding Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Aid in exporting Islamic fundamentalism into the southern Soviet Union.

V. Military Options.

- Support Mujahadeen (freedom fighters) with continued aid through third parties.

- Support mountain defense of the Durand Line in order to prevent the war from spilling over into Pakistani territory.

- Supply critically needed military capability against Soviet helicopter gunships.

- Maintain active military aid while seeking political resolution in order to demonstrate to the Soviets the increasing costs of occupation.

- Increase the number of countries supporting military effort against Soviets in Afghanistan to include Iran and China.

According to some of the Symposium participants, pursuit of the above options may not get the Soviets out of Afghanistan militarily. While this possibility remains a real one, on balance, it

seems that in the near future, the Soviets are unlikely to leave anyway because the chances of PDPA collapse following a Soviet withdrawal are considerable.

Pakistan: The goal of US policy continues to be the territorial integrity of Pakistan, its stability, its involvement in the creation of a strategic consensus and the nondemonstration (if not the nondevelopment) of a nuclear option. Although the United States may wish for a more successful political solution to Pakistani problems, it recognizes that the policymakers must deal with what is available. And, at present, there are no political leaders who could ensure the continued stability of Pakistan and keep that nation receptive to the West.

There are a variety of options open to the United States in pursuit of its objectives in Pakistan.

I. Diplomatic Options.

- Reduce pressure of Indian displeasure with Pakistan through the opening of a US-India dialogue that aims to convince the Indians that the US-Pakistani relationship is not targeted against India.

- Encourage an Indo-Pakistani dialogue to resuscitate the "Spirit of Simla" (the bilateral agreement that improved Indo-Pakistani relations after the 1971 war).

- Make it clear to the Pakistanis that while the United States understands Pakistani concerns for security, in the US view, the demonstration of a nuclear capability will militate against an improved security posture for Pakistan and against closer US-Pakistani relations.

- Support Pakistan's ties to the Islamic movement in recognition of many shared US-Islamic objectives.

II. Political Options.

- Announce that the United States has overlapping but not necessarily identical interests with Pakistan.

- Distinguish between US goals in Afghanistan and in other parts of South and Southwest Asia (i.e., that Pakistan is a critical front line state regarding Afghanistan but elsewhere the United States has many other concerns not necessarily involving Pakistan).

- Incorporate Pakistan into US Southwest Asia strategy.

III. Economic Options.

- Provide infrastructure aid which Pakistan badly needs and would appreciate receiving from the United States.

- Provide PL480 support, economic support funds, development assistance.
- Provide debt rescheduling to help Pakistan with its chronic foreign exchange problems.
- Increase assistance through the Aid-to-Pakistan Consortium in recognition of the fact that multilateral aid is less buffeted by political storms.
- Seek greater economic assistance from European allies, Japan, and Gulf nations.

IV. Psychological Options.

- Sustain commitment to Pakistani security through the years in recognition of the fact that past misunderstandings have often stemmed from dramatic fluctuations in relations.
- Not make the commitment to Pakistan an annual confrontation (unless Pakistan explodes a nuclear device).
- Increase US credibility through sustained effort at improving relations and demonstrating that the quality of US commitment has improved along with the quantity of its aid.

V. Military Options.

- Provide credible military assistance that matches US perceptions of threats to Pakistani security.
- Resuscitate International Military Education Training (IMET) Programs. These are a valuable channel for contact with key Pakistani military officials and create ties with the United States.
- Build support in US Congress for weapons systems offered so that sales are approved without a bruising fight.

Iran: A recent definition of Iran carried the following description: "A Mid-East country between Iraq and a hard place"! Much the same can be said of US policy towards a country which until so recently was pivotal in US strategy towards Southwest Asia. Despite all of the problems associated in dealing with the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, the US objective is the continued survival of Iran as a nation-state and its denial to the USSR. Hence, the following options are open to the United States:

1. Diplomatic Options.

- Accept that the old order is over which means that Washington not engage in talk or actions which demonstrate that the United States thinks the past can be revived.
- Open a dialogue with Iran that tells Iranians the United States supports the territorial integrity of Iran.

- Remain neutral in Gulf war and resist temptation to support Iraq because the defeat of Iran could only increase threats to regional stability.

- Ensure that the USSR stays out of the Gulf war also by publicizing Soviet actions and sending a message to Moscow warning the Soviets of the consequence of interference.

- Support European contacts with Iran because such contacts increase Iranian dialogue with the West.

- Support UN and Islamic bloc peace initiatives to end the Gulf war and remove threats to peace.

- Subscribe to the development of Law of the Seas and the resolution of territorial disputes in the Gulf accordingly.

II. *Political Options.*

- Disengage from the image of United States as an "enemy of Iran." Reinforce this message even in the face of initial Iranian skepticism.

- Keep CIA hands off pro-Shah elements in Europe and the United States. Failure to do so could jeopardize US attempts to convince Iranians that the United States accepts their revolution.

- Defuse US/USSR polarization in Iran by not linking local Iranian developments to East-West issues.

- Remain wary of Soviet intentions but not panic-stricken over Soviet moves.

- Develop an understanding that US interest in continued Iranian territorial integrity remains in place despite changes in regimes.

III. *Economic Options.*

- Leave economic activity to Europe and Japan. Recognize that such activity is not antithetical to US objectives.

- Accept economic activity with Iran if and as it develops.

IV. *Psychological Options.*

- Work to erase identification in Iranian minds of anti-Western bias of modernization.

- Indicate that the United States is not anti-Islam and can understand and work with Islamic fundamentalism.

V. *Military Options.*

- Leave arms embargo in place for the present.

- Keep Straits of Hormuz open, militarily, if necessary.

Saudi Arabia: The US objective in Saudi Arabia is to maintain peace and stability. Access to Saudi oil is as important to the West as is its denial to the Soviet Union. Saudi Arabia is the most

important regional US ally and, as such, the United States would be loathe to lose its special link with that nation. The Symposium concluded that the best way of ensuring the attainment of the above objectives is to appreciate local sensitivities that have sprung from regional perceptions of US failures in Iran. As such, the options listed below reflect US understanding of regional dynamics.

I. Diplomatic Options.

- Keep a low profile, and avoid public statements that indicate the Saudi regime needs "propping up" by the United States.
- Recognize the difference between military presence and political influence.
- Understand Islamic fundamentalism and Arab nationalism and take advantage of them (throughout the entire region).

II. Political Options.

- Assure the Gulf states that the US objective is not the military takeover of the region but rather its continued existence outside of any external sphere of control.
- Support regional attempts at security cooperation (e.g., the Gulf Cooperation Council) because increased interaction and cooperation among local states guarantees fewer opportunities for Soviet exploitation.
- Respond appropriately in region when requested.

III. Economic Options.

- Encourage economic collaboration between the government of Saudi Arabia and US firms because the United States can play an economic role in the modernization of the kingdom at whatever level Riyadh chooses.
- Establish a liaison with US firms doing business in Saudi Arabia to aid in sensitizing personnel that they are unofficial ambassadors of this country. Educate such personnel to display the desired patterns of behavior.
- Prohibit US companies from contributing to corruption through bribes, "kickbacks," etc. because of the adverse publicity such activities generate.

IV. Psychological Options.

- Encourage alleviation of problems in distribution of wealth.
- Understand that Saudi "rigidity" towards the Camp David peace process is a function of its vulnerability.

V. Military Options.

- Build Saudi Arabian internal defense through collaboration with both the national guard and military development.

- Cooperate, when asked, with bilateral attempts at defense (e.g., the Saudi-Pakistani relationship). Consider such attempts as complementary to US interests and objectives.
- Act with discretion in advertising the building-up of defense facilities because of local sensitivity to open US involvement.
- Encourage better protection of oil fields against any internal threat.
- Sustain US training programs until Saudis can operate US military equipment.
- Consider Saudi purchases of military equipment from US allies as helping achieve US objectives.

In sum, Southwest Asia will remain an area of US interest into the future. However, if the US commitment is going to be effective in the long term, a few general points are worth noting. First, US resolve is a critical element in US strategy. In order for the RDJTF to work as a deterrent, both the Soviet Union and the regional countries have to be convinced that the US commitment is backed by resolve in meeting threats to US interests. Should deterrence fail, resolve will be important in the formulation and execution of US responses.

Second, the United States must begin to build domestic consensus on its Southwest Asian strategy. A strategy that commits an American response to repel external powers in the Persian Gulf (as did the Carter Doctrine) cannot be credible without achieving agreement at home on the goals and responses. Similarly, a declining need for Southwest Asian oil must realistically be based on conservation methods within the United States and on alternate sources of supply for US allies.

Third, it behooves the United States to involve American allies to a greater extent in Southwest Asia than has been possible heretofore. Even token involvement in maintaining a physical presence can be useful in view of regional sensitivities to an exclusively American force.

Fourth, consistency is greatly needed, both within the various branches of the US Government and in projection of US foreign policy in Southwest Asia.

Fifth, the United States must act as a superpower and exercise patience and caution. While military preparedness is necessary in meeting future threats, the United States must maintain a larger vision based on its broader national interests. It must not jump

from periods of great indifference to periods of grave panic where each small perturbation is viewed as a disaster.

Sixth, US policy must be based on a realistic assessment of available assets. A mismatch between goals and assets destroys the credibility of American policy.

Finally, US policymakers must recognize that rhetoric is not a substitute for policy, for it fools neither friend nor foe.

ENDNOTES

1. Richard P. Cronin, "US Interests, Objectives, and Policy Options in Southwest Asia;" William O. Staudenmaier, "The Strategic Process: Considerations for Policy and Strategy in Southwest Asia."

2. Ann B. Radwan, "Iraq-Iran and the Gulf: The Regional Dynamic;" Francis Fukuyama, "Pakistan Since the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan;" Woolf Gross, "Twin Dilemmas: The Arabian Peninsula and American Security."

3. George E. Hudson, "Nonregional Impacts of Southwest Asian Policy: The US-Soviet-OECD Triangle."

4. Jiri Valenta and Shannon Butler, "Soviet Interests, Objectives, and Policy Options in Southwest Asia."

5. Richard Remnek, "Constraints on US Military Power in Southwest Asia;" Keith A. Dunn, "Soviet Constraints in Southwest Asia: A Military Analysis."

6. Staudenmaier.

7. Pointed out by Alvin Z. Rubinstein, Discussant, Panel on "US/Soviet Interests and Objectives," October 19, 1981.

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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium on "US Strategic Interests in Southwest Asia: A Long Term Commitment?" which was sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute in October 1981. During the Symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy. This memorandum provides a summary report of the Symposium.		

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