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U.S. Militarism in the New World Order

Samir Amin

I

HEGEMONY FOLLOWS HEGEMONY, BUT NO TWO ARE ALIKE. THE ONE THE BUSH administration has chosen to assert by the Gulf War (January through February 1991) is based essentially on the deployment of military capabilities, although it is well known that, economically, the United States no longer occupies the same position regarding its chief competitors (mainly Japan and Germany) that it did in the period immediately following World War II.

In an article entitled “The Real Stakes in the Gulf War” published in *The Monthly Review* (1991), I attempted to show that the Gulf War is not an occurrence of secondary importance nor of merely regional impact. On the contrary, it is a major event of our time, a sign that the “postwar” period marked by East-West conflict (that is to say, military and ideological bipolarity, making the two superpowers equal on these levels, if not on the level of economic power) is indeed finished and that a new period in history is beginning.

How can one characterize this new period, which begins in 1989–1991, with the double collapse of the “socialist” systems of Eastern Europe and the end of national independence aspirations in countries of the South, closing the “era of Bandung” (1955–1975)? As far as I am concerned, it can be characterized, in a first phase at least, as an attempt to impose unification on the world through and based on “market” economy. This so-called liberal utopia is, in fact, essentially reactionary in the sense that it can only produce a worsening of global polarization; it entails necessarily the deployment of “unrestrained” capitalism in all the peripheries in the global system taken as a whole — countries of the East, semi-industrialized countries of the South, the fourth world — which, despite specific forms within the diverse components of the periphery, will always be intolerable and unacceptable to the majority of these areas’ working classes. It has never been possible to really establish this

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reactionary utopia, except for very brief periods, because it inevitably produces an increase in revolts by its victims, most of humanity. Generally associated with the central power's aspiration to impose "global" hegemony, this utopia also involves an increase in intercenter conflicts. I disagree with the arguments put forth by defenders of hegemony, like the American liberal Robert Keohane, for whom hegemony creates stability through respect of a body of rules. It is a matter here of an ideological legitimacy that obviously pays no attention to the fact that the rules in question are acceptable only to those who benefit from them. Moreover, history proves on the contrary that hegemony is always short lived, precisely because it generates permanent instability.

Those persons responsible for political decisions in the United States have proved, by their acts, that they were perfectly aware of the nature and importance of the opposition that their plan for global unification through market economies under their leadership would encounter. Contrary to the beautiful rhetoric of defenders of the "new world order," founded on law and justice, the American Establishment decided to inaugurate this new period with war. For the United States, it was a question of showing that:

1. The new order would be imposed on the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America by violence pure and simple, with the threat of genocide for good measure;
2. The USSR had lost its military credibility, the United States having demonstrated the superiority of its weapons; and
3. Europe and Japan were, despite certain advances in economic and financial competition, in the last resort vulnerable and dependent upon American armed forces.

In this sense, the Gulf War was a world war — the North, led by the United States, with Europe and Japan consequently in subordinate roles, against the South — waged on a regional scale. The United States waged a war "for oil and Israel," to the detriment of the Third World (primarily Arab nations), the USSR, Europe, and Japan.

In this article I wish to extend the debate beyond the sudden change of fortune that the Gulf War represented and reflect on the militarist dimension of the "new world order" in question. I will thus emphasize the military dimension of America's global vision, dominant since 1945, and the nightmare that a "Eurasian" *entente* (i.e., a modern day "rapprochement" between Europe and the USSR) represents for this country.

II

The United States has a global conception of its worldwide economic, political, and military hegemony. It is the only one to have organized its military command on a global scale (encircling the Sino-Soviet bloc). The USSR does

not have — nor has it ever had — a similar ambition, only defensive counter-plans, including satellites.

The geopolitics of America's global military command is truly geopolitical and not only geostrategic. That is to say that the areas assigned to different regional commands are defined according to specific notions of the political nature of their threat, which changes from one region to another.

The Home Command (United States–Canada–Mexico) with its extension into the Caribbean and Central America must be capable of massive intervention if necessary, because the United States' backyard (Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean) must remain, politically, absolutely dependent on Washington. In this way of thinking, Cuba is tolerated only for the time being because of the current balance of Soviet–American power (which could evolve in a direction favorable to the United States). The interventions in Grenada, Panama, and Nicaragua demonstrate America's concept of "security" in the region, even if the intervention required in these cases was modest. For Mexico, and South America as a whole, American strategy is based on the hypothesis of a solid and durable alliance with the ruling classes; no "revolution" is foreseen in the region. Consequently, the Southern Command, which is responsible for South America, has minimal capabilities for intervention. This does not mean that the United States does not contemplate intervention on the continent, which since the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 is "hers." On the contrary, the United States takes it upon itself to interfere permanently in the politics of the region. Yet "political" means — organization of *coups d'état*, political assassinations, etc. — seem to be sufficient. Even in the time of Guevarist guerrilla fighters of the 1960s and 1970s (still going on today in Peru), the United States never seemed to be unduly worried. As to the form of power most adequate for the exercise of its domination, the United States has no *a priori* systematization. Despite the present talk, (perhaps only the result of the current economic situation) in favor of "democracy," the United States has expressed no regrets for past support of military dictatorships (and President Bush himself, today the apostle of democracy, held important responsibilities in the CIA when Chile's Allende was overthrown and assassinated in 1973). Whether democracy or dictatorship is preferred depends on whichever form best serves the interests of North American capital in expanding south of the Rio Grande. In addition, the United States claims the "right" to intervene militarily should the occasion arise. The new pretext invented to legitimize potential future interventions is the "struggle against the drug traffic" (as if this traffic were not supported by internal demand from within the United States and the struggle against drugs could be carried on efficiently by anything short of a domestic battle against this evil).

The Atlantic Command is itself divided between the North Atlantic and the South Atlantic. In the first region is located the United States' greatest military

concentration. It covers, in effect, Western Europe and its two extensions: the Maghreb and the Turkey–Israel–Syria/Lebanon region. Here the United States confronted the Soviet concentration, which was reenforced by the Warsaw Pact until its dissolution in April 1991. The instrument of the United States was NATO, which as we know was legitimized by the “specter” of communism. The ideological strategy of the Cold War was mobilized to that end. Yet it must be recalled that the Cold War was initiated by the United States and not, as Western propaganda would have us believe, by Stalin. What remains of it now? It is difficult to continue believing that the USSR pursues aggressive intentions with respect to Europe. Yet there is no talk of dissolving NATO, but on the contrary, new military and political functions are envisaged for it (interventions in the Arab, Iranian, and African Third World). In NATO, the American presence is reenforced by impressive continental bases that are the subject of the famous question of “sharing” (sharing the burden). In this framework the debate about the extension of “Sea Power” by a continental military force also assumes full importance.

There is no similar debate concerning the South Atlantic shield, which depends upon the Atlantic Command, with its exclusive reliance on techniques of “Sea Power.” Sub-Saharan Africa (except for the Cape of Africa) comes under this command. As with South America, no “danger” is considered capable of arising in the region. The United States has not even developed a rapid intervention force specifically concerned with this region. It figures that two allies, France and South Africa, can fill this function. The interventions of French parachutists restoring a dictator in trouble (Mobutu, for example), or checking “Arab expansionism” (Libya in Chad), are in this category. More dangerous, in appearance, was the radicalization, over the entirety of the last 15 years spanning 1975 to 1990, of the regimes in Angola and Mozambique (more moderately in Zimbabwe and Madagascar) and the military support the USSR and Cuba provided them. At the time, however, the United States contented itself with intervention in South Africa. The destabilization undertaken by these means bore fruit and the probable course that the regimes in the countries in question will take, following the Nkomati Accord for Mozambique in 1984, and the departure of Cuban troops from Angola (completed in 1991), is no longer a worry. Moreover, this victory permitted the United States to consider “releasing” the extremists of apartheid in South Africa so as to support a neocolonial compromise capable of stabilizing the whole region. The intelligence of the South African white National Party (de Klerk) was in understanding that they risked bearing the brunt of a new compromise and in making the first move, pulling the rug from under the feet of their associates, the “liberal” English-speaking whites of the country.

The Pacific Command covers the most considerable geographic and human area of all: not only the combined Pacific and Indian oceans, but also the sur-

rounding social and industrial concentrations in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Australia, and the Indian subcontinent. Here we find the debate concerning the eventual extension of "Sea Power" by continental forces. The United States can count on "England of the antipodes" (Australia and New Zealand) and on the loyalties of Japan (until when?), Korea and Taiwan (with the problems caused by the recognition of Beijing), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose members (the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia) share the American credo, each strengthened by powerful American bases (Okinawa, the Philippines, Diego Garcia), logistic support to possible intervention — whether by rapid deployment or by a long-term military strategy. Under these conditions, Indian neutralism is not a bothersome "hole" in America's safety net. Of course, the geopolitics of the region are no less complex than that of Europe and cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional view as is the case for South America and Black Africa. Japan, the United States' foremost economic and financial competitor, is capable of rebuilding a military force in the twinkling of an eye and has developed its own sphere of influence in Southeast Asia. American political strategy, however, is founded on the plausible hypothesis that Japan has no choice but to submit to the American alliance: it is squeezed between the USSR (even if the Soviets are no longer considered a real danger, with the question of the Kuril Islands thus taking on real importance), Korea (which has no sympathy for the Japanese and is increasingly a potential competitor, even if a secondary one), and China (whom it is difficult to see accepting Japanese leadership and could always become reconciled with Moscow). Under these conditions, the United States thinks that in case of "need" — that is to say, the development of a revolutionary situation in Southeast Asia — it could intervene, counting on the support of Japan. American strategy is more vulnerable here than elsewhere given the masses of populations that revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia could mobilize. In the Philippines, where it has nevertheless bestowed on itself the "right" of permanent intervention, the United States has been content until now to support the successive regimes of Marcos and Aquino. Yet what would happen if the people, like those in Indonesia, Thailand, or India, were to rise up against the system?

The Central Command covers an extremely sensitive region: the Middle East to Pakistan, the Nile valley, and the Horn of Africa. Without doubt, the very concept of this command was spawned with a maritime view (the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, areas locked in by Suez, Aden, and Hormuz), and the overlapping problems in the region imply close cooperation with the European Command (and thus NATO) since Israel comes under the latter. With its vital oil riches, the instability of its regimes, and the potential virulence of Arab and Iranian nationalism, the region is declared to be of "vital" importance to the United States — as are Central America, the Caribbean, and

Europe itself. Here, the ally considered unconditional is Israel, which entered an alliance with the United States in the early 1980s following a model of multidimensional integration. All the others, even the more traditionally subdued (Saudi Arabia), are only conjunctural allies (Washington will long remember how the Shah of Iran, considered an unshakable ally, lost his throne). The Gulf War showed America's readiness to consider employing its vast capabilities in this region.

III

American military strategy evidently serves a political purpose. As with all hegemonic powers, the United States favors the status quo. On this level, the American Establishment as a whole accepts the idea that the status quo consists in essence in guaranteeing a "climate favorable to free enterprise" (read foreign). By definition, this freedom did not exist in eastern countries; hence, their "satanic" labels, since by their effective dislocation they violated this "natural" order.

The diverse opinions at the core of the American Establishment are in the cluster defined by this common consensual base. In mass literature, popularized by the media, the United States' traditional "isolationist" tendency is easily and frequently contrasted with the tendency that is nourished by the quasi-religious notion of America's "universal vocation." This is nonsense. The United States is no longer isolationist and is not about to become so again. On the contrary, since 1945 it has been the only power to declare that it has global interests to defend. Its new awareness of certain global ecological problems serves as an added pretext for affirming its vocation of playing a role in keeping with its technological (and military) capacities, which, in effect, are of global import. With this attitude, the American Establishment sees no strategic inconvenience in the development of a "green conscience." Of course, any consideration that global polarization — the material misery that capitalism implies for three-quarters of humanity — could form *the* main problem of our time is out of the question. It is also unthinkable that these three-quarters of humanity should be permitted to consume (or waste) that which is the right of the top one-quarter, composed of Westerners. Where would we go? Where would the planet Earth go?

The American debate is thus more modest. All are "interventionists" (on a global scale), but some are "unilateralists," others "coalitionists," to repeat the jargon of the American political experts themselves. Each side holds the view that the only real danger threatening the United States is the lack of protection against Soviet weapons. However, unilateralists believe, perhaps with some arrogance, that the United States can and should meet the challenge alone, that "protecting" the Europeans (and still less, the Japanese) is not America's problem and that European survival should be sacrificed, if necessary, to avoid

the destruction of North America. Coalitionists believe that the confrontation calls for solidly mobilizing Europe (and eventually Japan) on America's side. It is here that things begin to get fuzzy. If the Europeans have something to offer — for the defense of the West — shouldn't they share with America a common hegemony over the planet, especially over the "savages" of the Third World? Here America's universalist discourse finds a place again.

Yet since the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) partners are considered associates and no longer subordinate allies, and since their own interests are recognized as legitimate, we move from a static Manichean view to a dynamic strategy that must be adapted to the evolving world. If the subordinate allies have become adults capable of competing with the United States on the very level of free enterprise, isn't it time to revise the terms of the alliance and the objectives of the status quo to be defended? While continuous progress characterized European and Japanese recovery since 1945, the Soviet military challenge seems to have made a complete U-turn. Inferior to the United States in 1945, the USSR first accelerated its nuclear conversion and then engaged in a race to catch up militarily (I say "catch up" and not "assure superiority"), which it achieved in the 1950s and 1960s. Following Stalin, the craftsman of this catching up, Khrushchev, inflated with self-satisfaction, paved the way for Brezhnev's "social imperialist" ambitions before reality made it clear that the USSR would, alas, run out of steam in its race with the United States. Today, the overwhelming evidence is that we have reached this point. Under these conditions, with Europe and Japan strengthened (at least on an economic level), and with the Soviet military threat having lost all credibility, what is it that prevented the conflicting interests of the United States, Europe, and Japan in the post-World War II period from regaining the importance they potentially could have? U.S. strategy assigned itself a fundamental major objective: to prevent the unification of Europe and Asia — in other words, to eliminate the possibility of "rapprochement" between Western Europe, the USSR, and China — a nightmare for the U.S. Overcoming just such a nightmare will be the principal objective of American strategy for the years to come.

The United States inherited an ancient geopolitical conception from England, one that found protection in insularity so long as the balance of power neutralized all pretensions to domination on the European continent. Applying this model on a global scale, the United States believes that the American "island" can only be defended if Eurasia remains divided among competing powers. The danger of a Eurasian block could be sidestepped if the social systems of capitalist Europe on the one hand, and of the USSR and China on the other, viewed themselves as mutually exclusive. The Sino-Soviet rupture in the 1960s removed the danger even further. At the time, America's political (and military) strategy took as its objective the prevention of the po-

tential conquest of Western Europe by Soviet armies. Still, it is difficult to believe that governments in North America and Western Europe truly feared Soviet aggression.

Under these conditions, American strategy owes its success to the ambiguities that it fostered, seen from the European standpoint. It is not too much to imagine here that, more so than the Americans, the Europeans were and still are nostalgic for the former Europe of nations (even if they were adversaries of one another), strongly integrated by a common (capitalist) economy and by the system of nation-states in force since 1648, renewed in 1815 and again in 1919 (all the while reluctantly accepting Russia's exit from the system). In other respects, the European ruling classes needed U.S. support to rebuild their war-devastated economies; for this reason the Marshall Plan was greeted positively everywhere at the time. Notably, in this period it was Washington that imposed a European "rapprochement" from which would come the Coal and Steel Community, and then, with the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the European Economic Community (EEC) that had not yet matured in all minds. Alignment with U.S. strategy was to permit, among other things, the rebuilding and modernization of European armies, natural objectives for countries that until recently had been world powers. The ambiguity extended further. At first, the old colonial powers (England, France, and, to a lesser degree, Belgium, Holland, and Portugal) had wished to use the American alliance to obtain support for efforts to reconquer their now dissolving empires. Yet Washington maintained an ambiguous attitude, refusing to fully accept as its own colonial wars that it viewed as lost — first in Indonesia, Indochina, and even Malaysia, later in Algeria and the Belgian Congo, and finally, in the Portuguese colonies of Africa. Evidence of the limits to Western solidarity is President Eisenhower's firm position *vis-à-vis* the French–British–Israeli coalition at the time of the Suez crisis in 1956, despite its acceptance of the risk of facilitating penetration of Soviet influence in the Middle East (which Khrushchev would skillfully exploit). The United States wished to rebuild an integrated capitalist world, incorporating the former European colonies; but it also wished to exercise unlimited hegemony without sharing it with the Europeans.

NATO, which was the vehicle of the United States–Europe alliance, remained the never clearly defined theater of an internal clash of American ideals. On the one hand, the reconstruction of substantial armies in Europe (including Germany) and the presence of significant numbers of American troops on the continent involved, *de facto*, a "coalitionist" concept of military strategy supporting the political strategy of American hegemony. Control of the seas was extended by a powerful arm on the land. Yet each time the opportunity has arisen — as during the debates on "burden sharing" and on missiles in Europe — the U.S. Establishment has refused to declare itself unanimously and without reservations in favor of this option. Supporters of a

stricter application of "Sea Power" declared incessantly that Europe's defense was the responsibility of the Europeans — and they were heard. As to the United States, it should devote its forces strictly to protection of the American "island," an implicit indication that the destruction of Europe would be tolerated if conflict were to break out. The conflict between these two concepts would have been fatal to the survival of NATO if the threat of war with the USSR had been real. Since it did not exist, however, the conflict was limited to the theoretical debate between military commanders. Its financial dimension (the question of sharing the burden) is perhaps more fragile.

The success of economic and social reconstruction in Europe, which had again become a real competitor in the global market, had begun a certain rapprochement between Western and Eastern Europe, the USSR included, in the 1960s and 1970s. This rapprochement illustrates that there was no genuine fear of communist "expansionism," which was officially held up as a danger by Western media. Yet it was an erratic and always cautious rapprochement. Only De Gaulle seemed convinced that one could go further on this level. The social and economic collapse of the Soviet system in the second half of the 1980s, and the acceleration of developments in this direction in Eastern Europe in 1989, theoretically removed (or continued the process of removing) the last obstacles to the establishment of a "European block" from the Atlantic to Vladivostok. Certainly, the potential establishment of this block, in whatever form, would represent the emergence of an industrial, financial, and military entity so abundantly endowed with natural resources that the continued success of American hegemony would be inconceivable. This nightmare haunts Washington.

I believe that Washington's decision to go to war in the Gulf was a deliberate means of thwarting the formation of this "European block." The action weakened Europe (by the control of oil, more or less unilaterally assured by the U.S.), called attention to the fragility of the European political structure itself (by publicizing its divergent views), neutralized Moscow (constrained in the face of European weakness to rally to Washington, although, had an alternate, independent European attitude existed, it is probable — perhaps even certain — that the USSR would have sided with the Europeans), and replaced the old worn-out scarecrow of a "communist danger" with a new one of danger "from the South."

In the short term, the American counteroffensive produced the results desired by Washington. The danger of a Euro-Soviet block was averted and Europe displayed its own internal divisions more than ever. The Gulf War was in effect an occasion for Great Britain to recall a fundamental role that it had assumed in 1945, that of the United States' faithful and unconditional ally in all circumstances. Germany awoke from the political half-sleep in which the collapse of the Nazi dream had locked it. Reunified since 1989, it is rediscov-

ering its vocation of "Mittel Europa." The low profile it assumed in the Gulf crisis is thus not a sign of weakness, but on the contrary one of strength. Germany appears to be aligned with Washington, but in fact only does so because it is completely engaged in laying the foundations for its own expansion into Central Europe, and having begun with the assimilation of the former GDR (East Germany), now has an eye fixed on Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary (Austria is already on its own track with the silhouettes of Croatia and Slovenia behind). This choice means that Germany no longer has a strong desire to play a "European card"; she will certainly not proclaim this, and even less will she leave the EEC. Yet she does not care about the European Community; she will follow her own path with or without "Europe." Suddenly, France will find herself isolated, seeking all alone to "build Europe." Having abandoned the Gaullist vision of a "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals" to rally (since the presidencies of Giscard d'Estaing and Mitterand) to pure Atlanticism, France no longer has the means to weigh heavily in global strategy.

"Eurasia" — under present circumstances the "common house of Europe" proposed by Gorbachev — is not the order of the day. Consequently, American hegemony still has many more sunny days ahead. Even more so, since the other continental "blocks" that could threaten the U.S. are hardly the order of the day either. A restored Soviet–Chinese block, a Japanese–Chinese–East Asian and Southeast Asian block (Japan's imperialist Co-Prosperity Sphere) eventually extended to India? One can imagine everything on paper and indulge in the futile exercise of creating scenarios. Actually, the obstacles to the establishment of these blocks are such that there is still no real probability that they will exist. The American "island" continues to benefit from the balance of power in the Eastern Hemisphere (the Europes, the USSR, China, Japan, and India).

IV

The hegemony of the United States necessarily implies domination of the entire Third World. Undoubtedly, for 40 years the East–West conflict partially hid the basic conflict that drives the people of the Third World to revolt regularly against the peripheralization imposed by capitalism and consequently to come into conflict with the metropolises of the center, and, above all, inevitably with hegemonic power. The USSR has constituted (and remains) the only military challenge to the United States; further, "actual living socialism," despite the social content and limits that caused its collapse, seemed to offer a real alternative for the peoples of the Third World. Moscow's political (and sometimes military) support for national liberation movements reenforced this opinion. According to the people of the periphery, all developed capitalist centers are "natural" adversaries. Competition between these centers, in the

world marketplace, fundamentally pits their alliance against all “dangerous” revolts in the periphery, because they question the capitalist order. Moreover, the East-West conflict united Western Europe and Japan behind the United States.

For the United States, the Third World is a “storm zone.” Storms that are clearly temporary may break out together, but pose an almost constant threat to the world capitalist order of which the United States considers itself the supreme guarantor. In the final analysis, Europe and Japan are allies that share the same concern for defending the capitalist order. Their conflict with the United States thus remains circumscribed by the narrow limits of commercial competition. On the other hand, North-South conflicts always take on a political dimension that is often violent. That is why Washington’s interventions in the Third World no longer matter. There is not one region, or even a single country in the Americas, Africa, or Asia where the United States has not intervened by subversion, *coup d’état*, economic and financial pressure (carried out by the “international” institutions it directs — the World Bank and the IMF), or by direct or indirect military means. To date, the Europeans and Japanese have never dared to go against these interventions overtly; they have usually associated themselves with them and, notably, have never used their votes in the IMF or the World Bank to oppose Washington’s wishes. They have even aligned EEC policies with those of these institutions in Africa.

Nevertheless, it is said that the Third World is becoming “increasingly marginal” in the global system, both as a supplier of raw materials and as an export and investment market for the center. There is no doubt that both technological developments and the importance of mineral resources in North America and Australia have temporarily reduced the importance of Third World contributions. Yet it cannot be inferred from this that the Third World is “marginal.” This is a fashionable idea, but it is simply false. The relative reduction in Third World contributions (to the global system) is largely due to the depressed economic situation that has prevailed since 1970, but, assuming a new expansion that is long and sustained, it should recover a position of unquestioned importance. Moreover, although massive strategic reserves of raw materials have been stockpiled by the United States, among other things, eliminating the danger of grave shortages resulting from a localized conflict, it is hardly certain that this situation can be maintained once a strong new expansion has begun. The race for raw materials will probably resume with all its viciousness. The likelihood of this is heightened because these materials risk being made scarce, not only by the exponential “cancer” of waste in Western consumption, but also by new industrialization in peripheral countries. Conflicts over access to resources are thus far from having lost their importance.

Concerning the global control of the Earth's raw materials, the United States has a decisive advantage over Europe and Japan. This advantage rests not only on its position as the only global military power — no strong intervention in the Third World can occur without the U.S. — but also perhaps more importantly because Europe (excluding the USSR) and Japan lack the resources essential to their economic survival. Their energy dependency, for example, especially their dependence on oil from the Gulf, will remain considerable for a long time, even if it should decrease in relative terms. In taking military control of this region, through the Gulf War, the United States proved that it was perfectly aware of the usefulness of this means of applying pressure as far as its competitive allies are concerned. The Soviets also understood Europe and Japan's vulnerability, and it is not out of the question to think — as I have argued in previous writings — that certain Soviet interventions in the Third World were meant to remind them of their vulnerability, thus inducing them to enter negotiations about other situations. Obviously Europe and Japan's deficiencies could be hypothetically resolved with a serious *rapprochement* between Europe and the USSR (the “common house” mentioned everywhere). That is why Washington views the possibility of a Eurasia bloc as a nightmare.

In contrast to current newspaper articles, U.S. strategy emphasizes the vital importance of maintaining and reinforcing a “political climate favorable to free enterprise” throughout the Third World, suggesting a keen awareness that the Third World is in no way marginal. As the East-West conflict tones down (concerning the military danger at least), and as long as intra-West conflict is waged only through economic competition — according to the “rules of the game” (honestly at least) — and doesn't risk sliding into violent political confrontations (excluding military encounter, as was the case during the whole history of capitalism until 1945), the U.S.-Third World conflict becomes quite the priority. Inevitable changes in this area should even increase the grounds for confrontation, not only because of the industrializing taking place in the Third World, but also more so because medium powers can become dangerous, that is, capable of threatening air and sea lines of communication that assure America's world hegemony. It seems that Iraq had reached that stage. This is the argument that, well before the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, convinced the Pentagon that Iraq's military and industrial potential had to be destroyed. What will the United States do in the future with regard to Iran, for example, and the many other Third World countries in similar situations?

There is certainly no short-range threat. This is precisely because American hegemony, and the capitalist center that backs it up, operate through political and social alliances with the ruling classes in the Third World. Under present circumstances, political “compradorization” is almost a general fea-

ture, and the states that resist it can be counted on one's fingers (Cuba, Vietnam, etc.).

In its grand vision, the United States believes that Latin America as a whole does not present a challenge to the world order because the region's middle classes are powerful enough to check potential popular uprisings and they have a keen sense of common interest with the capitalism dominating the world. Similarly, the U.S. considers the states of sub-Saharan Africa far too weak, given their instability, to operate at the possibly dangerous level of "medium powers." It does not appear that the judgment of the U.S. concerning post-apartheid South Africa has changed its general vision of the region.

On the other hand, the Arab countries and Iran are considered "extremely" dangerous due to the fervor of their anti-Western nationalism and the inability of the middle classes of the region — although friends — to overcome these popular sentiments. This forces them to either engage in permanent nationalist rhetoric or to slide inescapably toward demagogues. Only the Arabic peninsula's archaic regimes (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates) escape this rule. The fall of the Shah of Iran remains a major lesson in American political memory. American (and Western) opinion concerning the Arab states and Iran is not an artificial product, but rather corresponds to an actual reality. Further, without doubt Zionism fully exploits this situation by attempting to create in the West a climate of veritable hatred toward Arabs and Muslims in general.

The United States does not trust other "eastern" peoples, those of the Indian Subcontinent, and South and East Asia. Nevertheless, the local middle classes in these regions appear to be well in control of situations in the medium term, despite the setback in Sri Lanka, with its civil war, the emerging irredentism in India (the Sikh affair), the democratic uprising in South Korea, and the permanent partisan war in the Philippines. Despite its limits, economic success within the framework of peripheral capitalism gives the system in power a certain stability. Nonetheless, the U.S. has never placed full confidence in its regional allies, who are often suspected of remaining "anti-Western" nationalists at heart, particularly since Islam dominates certain countries in the region and all of the region's cultures are strong and resistant to Westernization. That is undoubtedly a cultural factor, but it would be wrong to neglect the important role it plays in strategic perceptions: Oriental peoples can always be treated as enemies. The United States is the heir to the old Eurocentric view of a "despotic and two-faced Orient."

The importance of the Third World in America's strategy for hegemony informs permanent military thinking concerning the "appropriate means of intervention." The U.S. now has 40 years of experience with continuous military intervention in a variety of forms. The results are mixed. Whenever it has been a question of organizing a *coup d'état* or a rapid military operation

against a small nation, intervention has been an undisputed success. The list of *coups d'état* is endless (the restoration of the Shah of Iran in 1952 and the overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954); among more recent military interventions of this type are those in Grenada (1983) and in Panama (1989). The success of *the coups d'état* was made especially easy by the fact that some of these regimes had either never enjoyed genuine popular support or they expired as the populism upon which they were founded exhausted its potential (Indonesia in 1966, Ghana in 1966, Egypt in 1970, etc.). The Gulf War proves that success is relatively easy (even if the operation becomes financially burdensome) as long as the conflict remains confined within the limits of "classic" warfare (army against army, without mass mobilization for combat). The interventions ended in a draw when the conflict was made part of the East-West confrontation. The case of the Korean War is an example. Whenever the ruling power in a Third World country subjected to American or, more generally, Western aggression has enjoyed popular and nationalist legitimacy, the results achieved by the U.S. were not brilliant. This is the case of Vietnam, which left such a profound mark on the American conscience that the term "Vietnam Syndrome" resulted and was the subject of Bush's first words the morning after his victory against Iraq ("We are finally liberated from the Vietnam Syndrome," he declared!). But there was also Cuba (the shameful retreat from the Bay of Pigs in 1961), the attempted rescue of hostages in Iran, and the intervention in Libya (both in 1979). It is equally the case in Afghanistan, where the regime — despite the withdrawal of Soviet support — proved itself capable of repelling CIA-trained Islamic Mujahedeen. To a certain point, it is even the case in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Angola, and Mozambique, despite the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas and the erosion of the MPLA and Frelimo, for these "enemies" (identified as such by Americans) were not definitively beaten and their reactionary adversaries in the pay of Washington (Savimbi and Renamo among others) have not gained a shred of legitimacy.

The United States is therefore not "invincible." Its Achilles heel is the resistance of Third World peoples to its hegemony.

Military thought in the United States has always been preoccupied by the problem of how to combat efficiently the revolt of the peoples of the periphery against a system that is necessarily unacceptable to them. The lesson of failures — in Vietnam above all, but also elsewhere — seems to have convinced political strategists that it is best to attack rather early, before an alternate popular sentiment has time to crystallize. Present political and ideological circumstances are certainly not threatening and the exhaustion of radical populist nationalism of the 1960s and the collapse of "actual living socialism" has not given way to a new popular national alternative corresponding to the challenges of our time; on the contrary, it has opened a path to backward move-

ments (religious fundamentalism, chauvinistic ethnocentrism, etc.) that weaken potentialities of most of humanity, which the peoples of the Third World represent. Hence arises the impression of "marginalization" of their historic role in which anti-Third World ideologies are steeped. This is also the reasoning that led the Pentagon to formulate its theory of "low intensity" wars. It is a question of prolonging the Third World's present state of weakness by encouraging the backwards movements in question and by fueling regional conflicts where the U.S. can undertake to "let the situations deteriorate" as long as possible. The game of financing Islamic movements — presented in Western media as "fundamental" adversaries of the West — played by Saudi Arabia, Washington's faithful ally, is thus understandable. Western encouragement that supported Iraq's war against Iran should also be placed in this category. The strategy of managing low-intensity conflict has also been used to destabilize, to different degrees, progressive regimes in Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. Here the method was support of adversaries of these regimes: the *contras*, UNITA and Renamo, and the Eritrean and Tigré secessionists. It must be admitted that the strategy produced results and will continue to do so as long as popular national forces remain handicapped by the vagueness of their own programs and by ideological confusion. But what will happen when these limits are overcome here and there, especially in a respectably sized nation? Until now, the Pentagon has only contemplated the "technical" possibility of long-term military intervention for two countries: Mexico and the Philippines. Everywhere else the specter of a "dirty war," difficult to make politically acceptable, seems to paralyze American decisions. Still, conventional war — like the one in the Gulf — is no longer a "low intensity" conflict, and it proves that the United States can easily break out of the limits of this schematic in the direction in which its thinking led it. This option risks skidding rapidly toward genocide. As shown in the Gulf War, concern with avoiding land engagement of American troops leads directly to a concept of war that implies total destruction of the enemy's country and population, even if they are really incapable of threatening American security. From the balance of terror that nuclear deterrence established, we now move to the systematic activation of imbalance. It would be wrong for the Third World to underestimate this danger and exclude the possibility of genocide, of which, alas, Western history offers many examples. I would add that there are powerful lobbies operating in the United States in favor of "conventional wars," arguing for the renunciation of what they consider to be the illusion of waging "low intensity" wars. The financial and economic interests of the military-industrial complex require that priority be given to sophisticated weapons, while low-intensity war demands the buildup of simple armed forces.

In any case, as long as conflicts in the Third World remain as they are, certainly destabilizing, but not truly threatening, the hegemony of the United

States will not feel threatened from this direction. As American political experts say, “disorder is boring, it doesn’t constitute a threat.”

V

The uncertainties that characterize political and military strategic options with regard to the Third World refer to the permanent debate within the American Establishment between supporters of the “maritimidist” and “coalitionist” options. As we have seen, this distinction does not confirm the opposition of the two camps too quickly labeled either “isolationist” or “universalist.” Both, maritimidist and coalitionist, place themselves in the perspective of global hegemony. Yet the maritimidists hold that sea and air control is sufficient to assure hegemony and eliminate the danger of any challenge to it, either by uprisings in the Third World, or by the USSR, until recently the only global adversary.

The question of the allies’ role, in alliances devised by the United States to assure global hegemony, is raised in very different terms according to whether it concerns Western allies (Europeans and Japanese) or regimes in the Third World. Western allies are reliable and stable. In fact, global American hegemony could not have been achieved without their acquiescence. The imagined Soviet threat was the pretext that justified this alliance — the Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the Japanese-American Treaty. In reality, the threat never really existed. By 1945, Stalin had long since renounced any intention of exporting the “revolution” beyond its buffer zones, which, in the strategic view of the time, incorporated Eastern Europe, a zone negotiated and accepted, moreover, by the Western partners at Yalta; he never had the slightest thought of “engulfing” Western Europe or Japan. As we now know, the initiative for the Cold War came from Washington. Stalinist Soviet strategy remained strictly defensive, and Brezhnev (after the Khrushchev transition) followed the same general path, even if from then on the USSR would close the gap with the United States in the nuclear and ballistic arms race — rather late, perhaps, not until around 1970 — at the cost of its economic development. And even if, in responding to unwavering European Atlanticism despite everything, Brezhnev’s policies played the “pressure” card by entering into military alliances with certain Third World countries, thus making the Europeans aware of their own “vulnerability” and of the potential for their oil supplies from the Middle East to be cut off. After the failure of Khrushchev’s carrot, this policy always pursued the same goal: detach Europe from Atlanticism so as to break American hegemony. It involved nothing more — and certainly not a Kremlin desire to annex Western Europe. Admittedly, the goal was never achieved and the two Soviet attempts, whether by the carrot or the stick, failed. The question that remains is why this Atlanticism survived against all odds, and continues to do so, despite the return to the policy of the carrot initiated by Gorbachev.

The only way to explain it convincingly is to consider the ideological aberrations typical of the European middle classes — and the majority opinions it often fashions. Fear of the “Bolshevik with a knife in his teeth” has remained a vivid image, equaled only by the fear of the French Revolution, which lasted half a century despite the restoration of the monarchy.

The American–Euro–Japanese alliance that is the basis of American global hegemony will survive as long as Washington’s subordinate allies hold on to their prejudice against Moscow. The “Euro-Asian block” (Europe–USSR–China) is in effect a constant American nightmare. Wisely, the United States understood that if the USSR were to renounce its “socialist” rhetoric, this prejudice would erode over time. Consequently, the Americans had to replace it with another justification for the alliance, which they found in the threat that the Third World would represent. The themes of “democracy, the rights of the minority, etc.” — in the manipulated terms and circumstances of which they are the objects — filled this purpose, more or less successfully up to now.

In all events, the basic American–Euro–Japanese alliance implies a coalitionist strategy and sets aside maritime theory. The “experts” justify this choice by recalling lessons from history. British global hegemony had been naval in its basic conception, repugnant even to the idea of intervention by the English army on the European continent and content to use diplomatic means centered on “the European balance of power” to direct European affairs. History shows in retrospect that this maritime strategy without continental extensions produced results only so long as the European balance was maintained. As soon as the German Empire’s armies could threaten Russia and France, the balance was broken. The war of 1914–1918 would also prove that English maritime theory (“Britain rules the waves”) had lost its validity. Nonetheless, I think these arguments, valid though they might have been, were not decisive. Nostalgic for its past, Western Europe’s effort after 1945 to rebuild modernized armies played a part in the imposition of this coalitionist strategy. France and Great Britain, and then West Germany after overcoming its conquered-nation complex, succeeded one another in this effort.

The USSR constantly “adjusted” to these Atlanticist developments. In its first stage — in Stalin’s time — it restricted itself to withdrawal so as to concentrate on devising a reply to the new nuclear equipment in military art. In a second stage, the USSR believed itself capable of defying American hegemonic power with global military deployment that was essentially maritime, supported by fragile alliances here and there, where possible in the Third World. However, far from convincing Europe of the absurdity of the Atlantic option, the Soviet military plan perpetuated the image of a threat.

Internal to the alliance, this coalitionist decision involved an answer to the problem of “sharing,” to employ the term in use, in the defense of Europe,

which was not truly threatened. This “defense” implied financial participation by the allies, and participation was formally demanded often, but only in speeches. It was actually first requested in cash when the Gulf War hostilities began. This represents a weakness in the American position, which is a victim of the general crisis. Yet it also represents the intelligent exploitation of European Atlanticism, which rallied against the Third World as a possible adversary.

The problem of the political-military strategy supporting American hegemony regarding Third World countries is posed in different terms. Here the American option is more maritimid than coalitionist. Continental extensions of allied military forces certainly exist in the Third World and are even important at a formal level to the extent that most governments in these countries are faithful allies and as such receive support for their armament programs.

However, three limits reduce the range of these extensions, excluding Israel, Turkey, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The first limit resides in the fragility and instability of all Third World regimes. Once again, the collapse of the Shah’s regime in Iran, a first-rate military power in the Middle East, haunts Pentagon strategists. The second limit is created by regional conflicts to which governments give priority for various reasons: a perception of a real threat represented by a neighbor, a heritage of unsettled territorial claims, or nationalist demagoguery pure and simple, destined to offset the failures of development to the detriment of the logic of anti-Soviet and anti-Chinese solidarity. The Indo-Pakistani conflict is a good example of this type of situation. U.S. support of successive military regimes in Pakistan has never been lacking. It was even an important element in Western intervention in Afghanistan. Yet it did not prevent Pakistan from refusing to take part in encircling China, even in the days before the rapprochement between Washington and Beijing beginning in 1970. Pakistan gave priority to its conflict with India, which itself had been in conflict with China since the 1960s concerning Tibet and the Himalayan border. The third and most important reason was that public opinion in the Third World generally imposed a kind of more or less genuine and active “neutralism” toward the East-West conflict. Since the Bandung Conference of Nonaligned Nations (1955), the position of Asian and African states in this regard has hardly changed. The plans to encircle the USSR and China through a series of regional military treaties extending NATO — Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) for the Middle East (via the Baghdad Pact, the tripartite declaration sponsored by Eisenhower in 1950, etc.) and ASEAN for Southeast Asia — never produced the fruit that Washington expected. Some were abandoned altogether, notably plans concerning the Middle East, at least for a time, having regained their place in the plans of American political-military strategy only with the Gulf War. Similarly, the United States was forced to accept Indian neutralism. Other

projects, like ASEAN, have not taken on all the goals that Washington had hoped they would achieve. ASEAN served — and still serves — to support its members' reactionary internal order, contributed for a while to the encirclement of Vietnam (Thailand and the Philippines were important staging areas for the American intervention in Vietnam), but this did not stop the Americans from being defeated in Vietnam, and it did not even stop the spread of anti-imperialist revolution to Cambodia and Laos, nor even Vietnamese expansion into these two countries. After Hanoi's victory, ASEAN changed and, with the new conditions in the region, has assumed an uncertain and ambiguous character: Should it repel Kampuchea's Vietnam? Isolate Vietnam? Or absorb it into the regional system? Finally, ASEAN remains formally independent of Washington's unconditional allies in the region, Australia and New Zealand.

In the Third World, then, America's politico-military strategy remains based on a massive, mobile maritime presence, supported by a network of bases such as Diego Garcia, located far from densely populated zones. As we have already seen, this strategy, which is effective assuming "rapid intervention" (the Gulf War proved this), would not necessarily be equal to the demands of prolonged intervention. Since the Gulf War, the Pentagon has moved in this respect toward a concept of genocide by massive air bombardments without intervention on land.

The USSR had thus perfectly understood that the Third World represented a long chain of weak links for American hegemony. In response to the maritime strategy that so constrained the United States, the Soviets deployed an equally maritimidist counterstrategy, seeking to neutralize American sea presence by its own presence, also supported by bases or harbor facilities (Nha Trang in Vietnam, the bases in Ethiopia, Somalia, Madagascar, and Angola), obtained by diplomatic support of Third World nationalist states in conflict with the Western powers.

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