



Background



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CRAFTING A U.S. RESPONSE TO GORBACHEV'S "PEACE" INITIATIVES IN ASIA

INTRODUCTION

After decades of posing the major political and military threat to Asia, the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev is now conducting a political campaign to gain greater respect in Asia. In major speeches at Vladivostok in 1986, at Krasnoyarsk in September 1988, and last December at the United Nations, Gorbachev has promised to make unilateral arms cuts and has made arms control proposals. George Bush should treat Gorbachev's "peace" proposals for Asia with appropriate caution. Some Soviet moves, like unilateral arms cuts, should be encouraged by Bush. But other proposals, like naval arms control negotiations, should be ignored, as they might seriously erode the U.S. ability to defend its allies. Overall Bush should challenge the Soviets to make further military cuts, while exposing Soviet attempts to undermine U.S. alliances.

Suspicious Moves. Gorbachev's moves that should please the United States include: destroying intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Asia as required by the December 1987 INF Treaty, unilaterally reducing troops along the Sino-Soviet border, and encouraging the impending withdrawal of Vietnam's troops from Cambodia. Washington should be suspicious, however, of Gorbachev's proposals to delimit areas for antisubmarine warfare activity in the Pacific Ocean, to establish nuclear free zones in Asia, to withdraw Soviet forces in Vietnam if the U.S. eliminates its Philippine bases, and to begin multilateral negotiations on the Korean Peninsula.

Gorbachev makes these moves following the massive Soviet military expansion in Asia begun in the early 1970s. Moscow's Asian troop strength is

about 500,000, and the Pacific Fleet is the largest in the Soviet Navy. Soviet forces in Asia even now are being upgraded with new aircraft, submarines, warships, and nuclear missiles.

Some Soviet activities contradict Gorbachev's stated peaceful intentions. Moscow continues to supply North Korea with advanced weapons while calling for reduced tensions on the Korean peninsula. Moscow's significantly improved relations with the Communist Party of the Philippines and its cultivation of anti-U.S. peace groups in the South Pacific are intended to undermine U.S. military alliances with the Philippines and Australia. Gorbachev says he wants a rapid settlement in Cambodia, but he just recently has increased arms shipments to the government in Phnom Penh.

Safeguarding U.S. Commitments. In formulating a response to Gorbachev's Asian offensive, the Bush Administration can start by commending such positive Soviet trends as unilateral arms reductions. Washington should not respond, however, with its own unilateral arms reductions because of the asymmetry in U.S. and Soviet power in Asia. As a continental power, the Soviet Union can afford to reduce troop strength. By contrast, the U.S. in Asia is a naval power and depends on bilateral military relationships that provide naval access. Loss of even one relationship, be it South Korea, the Philippines, or Japan, would diminish severely Washington's ability to protect American friends and its own security interests in the region. Since 1945, the U.S. strategic commitment to Asia has contributed enormously to noncommunist Asia's economic success and political stability.

To insure that the U.S. can continue playing its key role in the Far East, the Bush Administration should craft a response to Gorbachev's "peace" initiatives in Asia that should include:

- ◆ ◆ Commending Gorbachev for his steps that have reduced tension, such as pledging to remove troops from along the Sino-Soviet border and Afghanistan and pressing Vietnam to leave Cambodia.

- ◆ ◆ Declaring that the U.S. regards the Soviet nuclear and conventional military build-up in Asia far in excess of Soviet defensive needs.

- ◆ ◆ Refusing to participate in Gorbachev's arms control proposals that would result in constraints on the U.S. Navy's ability to meet U.S. political commitments, such as naval arms control talks or imposing limitations on antisubmarine warfare.

- ◆ ◆ Refusing to accept a U.S. role in Gorbachev's proposed multilateral negotiations for the Korean Peninsula, which would put pressure on Seoul, and instead, urging North and South Korea to continue bilateral talks to settle their differences peacefully.

- ◆ ◆ Providing greater military assistance to the noncommunist Cambodian resistance and refusing to accept Gorbachev's and Vietnam's plans for a "rapid" settlement in Cambodia that would preserve Hanoi's political domination.

- ◆ ◆ Cooperating with the Philippine government to expose Moscow's developing relationship with the Communist Party of the Philippines and Soviet ties to trade unions and peace groups in Asia.

GORBACHEV'S PEACE OFFENSIVE IN ASIA

Moscow's emphasis on establishing better relations in Asia is unprecedented. Since the early 1920s, Moscow's priority has been to promote revolution. Most early Asian communist parties were formed with help from Josef Stalin's Comintern, and Soviet assistance was critical to the creation of communist regimes in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Gorbachev's interest in Asia surely is prompted by the region's growing political and economic clout. Moscow would like to attract substantial Asian investment and trade. In 1987, total Soviet trade with Asia, including India, was only \$12.8 billion (U.S. trade with the region in 1988 totaled \$280 billion). The Soviets have sought new business ties in South Korea, the Republic of China, the Philippines, and Thailand. They have sought greater Japanese investment by creating "special economic zones" in Siberia, and they have proposed their membership in regional economic groups like the Asian Development Bank and Pacific Basin Economic Cooperation Council.¹

Moscow would also like to reduce the economic burden of supporting its North Korean and Indochinese clients by attracting Western trade and investments to those countries. Between 1978 and 1986, the Soviets gave \$17 billion in economic and military aid to Vietnam alone.²

Gaining the Political Initiative. Since becoming Soviet leader in 1985, Gorbachev has sought to transform Moscow's public image in Asia from hostile expansionism to peaceful political and economic engagement. Since 1985, most Asian leaders either have visited Moscow or have been visited by such high-level officials as Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze.

Gorbachev has sought to gain the political initiative in Asia by making numerous, progressively bolder proposals to reduce armaments and political tensions. At Vladivostok in July 1986, he made many proposals for reducing military tensions, but his speech was full of stock ideological phrases, such as referring to the U.S. as the "the imperialists." He made vague proposals for "radical reduction" in military forces, "reducing the activity" of naval fleets by such measures as limiting antisubmarine warfare activities to certain areas. Gorbachev also hinted at reducing Soviet forces in Vietnam in exchange for a U.S. military withdrawal from the Philippines.³

1 Peter Gumbel, "Moscow Opens Its Far East To Foreigners," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 1989, p. A 14.

2 *Soviet Military Power, 1987* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), p. 124.

3 "Gorbachev 28 July Speech in Vladivostok," *FBIS Asia-Pacific*, July 29, 1986, p. R1.

One year later, in an Indonesian newspaper interview, Gorbachev broke a deadlock in the U.S.-Soviet Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty negotiations by saying he was willing to destroy the intermediate-range nuclear missiles based in Asia as well as in Europe.⁴

Then last September, in a speech in Krasnoyarsk, Gorbachev made more specific proposals on Asian nuclear and naval arms control, on reducing military activity in Northeast Asia, and on Philippine and Vietnamese bases.⁵ And at the United Nations in December, he stated that the Soviets would reduce overall Soviet troop strength unilaterally by 500,000 over two years, including troops in Asia.⁶

ARMS CONTROL OR ARMS BUILD-UP?

Gorbachev's arms reductions for Asia to date include a unilateral commitment to reduce troop strength by 200,000, including 120,000 from the Far East Region. As of last May, the Soviets commenced withdrawal from Mongolia of 50,000 troops and associated equipment. These troops will be redeployed to other regions, not as yet known. These initiatives are aimed at reducing tensions with China. Already reduced tensions between China and the Soviet Union have led Moscow to disband its Central Asian Military District along the Sino-Soviet border.⁷ Major General Batenin of the Soviet Army recently speculated about the formation of a demilitarized zone along the Sino-Soviet border.⁸ As part of the December 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Soviets are slated to destroy about 170 SS-20 intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Asia.

Formidable Soviet Forces. These cuts should be viewed in terms of overall Soviet military strength in Asia. Despite these cuts, Moscow maintains formidable ground, air, and naval forces in Asia, which have been increasing since the early 1970s. Ground troop strength grew from 43 divisions in 1978 to 56 in 1988, including about 500,000 troops, 13,900 tanks, and 13,500 artillery pieces.⁹ Supporting the troops are about 1,640 fighter and tactical attack aircraft.¹⁰ These now include the latest types such as the Sukhoi SU-24 *Fencer* long-range attack aircraft, the Sukhoi SU-25 *Frogfoot* close support aircraft, the Mikoyan MIG-29 *Fulcrum* fighter, the Mikoyan MIG-31

4 *Merdeka* (Jakarta), July 21, 1987.

5 "Gorbachev Speech to Workers," *FBIS-Soviet Union*, September 19, 1988, p. 58.

6 "M.S. Gorbachev United Nations Address," *FBIS-Soviet Union*, December 8, 1989, p. 17.

7 "General explains Asian District disbandment," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, July 8, 1989, p. 36.

8 "Soviet General Views Far East Troop Reductions," *FBIS-Soviet Union*, May 25, 1989, p. 25.

9 *The Military Balance 1977-1978* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1977), p. 9; *The Military Balance 1988-1989*, p. 43.

10 *Ibid.*

Foxhound long-range interceptor, and the Sukhoi SU-27 *Flanker*, a fighter that may be superior in some respects to the U.S. F-16 *Falcon* and F-15 *Eagle*.

Caught in a Lie. Last September at Krasnoyarsk, Gorbachev said "The Soviet Union will not increase the number of nuclear weapons in this region... and it calls upon the United States and other nuclear powers not to deploy here additionally." Yet, soon after this speech, the Soviets deployed a new *Delta*-class nuclear ballistic missile submarine, increasing from 16 to 17 the Pacific Fleet's *Deltas*.¹¹ There already are over 440 Soviet nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in Asia and 366 submarine-launched missiles (SLBM) on about 31 ballistic missile submarines.¹² The intermediate-range missiles that are slated to be destroyed, like the mobile SS-20, are being replaced by SS-25 mobile ICBMs.¹³

These nuclear systems are supplemented by 260 nuclear capable long-range, Asia-based bombers, including Tupolev TU-95 *Bears*, TU-16 *Badgers*, and TU-26 *Backfires*.¹⁴ To these will soon be added the TU-160 *Blackjack*, which is larger and faster than the U.S. B-1. It is expected that *Blackjack* bombers escorted by SU-27 *Flanker* fighters will place an even greater burden on the U.S. Alaskan Air Defense Command, which now intercepts only unescorted subsonic TU-95 *Bear* bombers probing U.S. defenses.¹⁵ Over a four-day period in June 1988, this command intercepted a record ten TU-95 *Bear* bombers, compared to eighteen such intercepts for the first five months of 1988. The Soviets were believed to be conducting an exercise for launching cruise missiles against the U.S.¹⁶

Limiting U.S. Naval Forces. Gorbachev wants naval arms control talks with the U.S., urging in his Vladivostok speech "limitation on competition in the sphere of antisubmarine weapons," perhaps limiting antisubmarine activity from "certain zones of the Pacific." And at Krasnoyarsk, he proposed "consultations" on "not increasing naval forces" in Asia. Moscow has stressed that about 50 Soviet warships have been withdrawn from the Pacific and has invited several Asian countries to observe naval exercises in the Sea of Japan scheduled for mid-July.¹⁷

Gorbachev can afford to make naval arms control proposals because the Soviet Union is a continental power. He does not need to depend on the sea

11 Admiral David E. Jeremiah, "Comment and Discussion," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 1989, p. 14.

12 *Military Balance*, *op. cit.*

13 Statement of Admiral Huntington Hardisty, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, April 19, 1989, p. 6.

14 *Military Balance*, *op. cit.*

15 "New Soviet Bombers, Fighters Heighten Alaska's Strategic Role," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, May 9, 1988, p. 43.

16 "Alaskan F-15 Fighters Make Record Intercepts Of Soviet Bear Bombers, IL-20 Intelligence Flights," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, June 27, 1988, p. 27.

17 "Soviets 'to cut Pacific Fleet'," *Jane's Defense Review*, April 29, 1989, p. 728; *Malaya* (Manila), June 8, 1989, p. 2, in *FBIS-Soviet Union*, June 16, 1989, p. 9.

lanes to reinforce his Asian allies in wartime as does the U.S. Gorbachev's antisubmarine warfare proposal capitalizes on a Soviet naval strength; the Soviet Navy is designed to operate in closed areas, like the Sea of Okhotsk, to protect Soviet ballistic missile submarines. The U.S. has no similar protected sea for its nuclear missile-launching submarines.

Even with the withdrawal of 50 ships, the Soviet Pacific Fleet remains the largest in the Soviet Navy with two *Kiev* class antisubmarine aircraft carriers, 12 cruisers, 14 destroyers and 82 submarines, 50 of which are nuclear-powered, and it continues to be modernized. Recent additions include advanced *Akula* class attack submarines, the nuclear-powered cruiser *Frunze*, and new *Soveremenny* and *Udaloy* class destroyers. By the mid-1990s the Pacific Fleet will receive a 60,000-ton aircraft carrier. Another carrier is being built, and the Soviets indicate that it will carry aircraft like the SU-27 *Flanker*.¹⁸

Powerful Leverage. Last September at Krasnoyarsk, Gorbachev also proposed an "international conference to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace." However, in that speech, he failed to mention that, since the late 1970s, Moscow has built up a network of facilities to support Soviet naval deployments in the Indian Ocean. The Soviets have constructed a naval base at Ethiopia's Dalek Island, which has a dry dock, and they have naval access to South Yemen's port of Aden. In 1987 and 1988, these Indian Ocean facilities supported Soviet Navy ships and aircraft escorting merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf.¹⁹ Moscow's leverage in the Indian Ocean is increased by arms sales to India, including *Kashin* class destroyers, *Kresta II* class cruisers, *Charlie* class nuclear powered submarines, and TU-95 *Bear* long-range reconnaissance aircraft.

Since 1979, Moscow has turned the former U.S. base in Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay into the largest Soviet overseas base. New docks, fuel storage tanks, and electronic intelligence equipment have been installed. On the average, about 25 Soviet ships at a time use Cam Ranh Bay. Cam Ranh Bay also hosts about 40 Soviet aircraft, including a squadron of MIG-23 fighters, TU-16 *Badger* bombers, and TU-95 *Bear* reconnaissance aircraft.²⁰

SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR A CAMBODIAN SETTLEMENT

Moscow clinched its strategic relationship with Hanoi by shipping the additional weapons North Vietnam needed to invade Cambodia in December 1978. Hanoi installed the government now led by former Khmer Rouge member Hun Sen and has protected this regime with as many as 170,000

18 "More details of new Soviet Carrier," *Jane's Defense Week*, June 17, 1989, p. 1272; "Interview with Admiral of the Fleet Vladimir Nikolayevich Chernavin," *Danas* (Zagreb), May 30, 1989.

19 "Growing interest in Asian sea areas," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, January 14, 1989, p. 62.

20 *Soviet Military Power, 1988* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 124.

troops. The price that Hanoi pays for its occupation of Cambodia is international isolation and denial of most foreign trade and technology. Hanoi has had to rely on Moscow which, from 1978 to 1986, provided \$17 billion in economic and military assistance.²¹ Moscow apparently has now decided, however, that Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia is too expensive to support and that it has been preventing better relations with Beijing and the noncommunist states of Southeast Asia. Moscow accordingly seems to want Hanoi to end its occupation of Cambodia.

Preserving Hanoi's Control. The Soviets have used this new stance toward Cambodia to convince the noncommunist states of Southeast Asia of their sincerity about wanting better relations. At Krasnoyarsk last September, Gorbachev said he would press for a very rapid settlement in Cambodia. Hanoi's and Moscow's idea of an eventual settlement, however, may not mean freedom for Cambodians. Washington thus proposes an internationally supervised plebiscite in which Cambodians can freely chose their government.

In recent weeks, Moscow has strengthened the Phnom Penh government by shipping tanks and heavy artillery and by training Cambodian pilots for MIG-21 aircraft.²² Phnom Penh, meanwhile, has stated its allegiance to Hanoi. And Hanoi's recent suppression of internal dissent does not auger well for its acceptance of a noncommunist government in Cambodia.²³ Apparently, Hanoi and Moscow want a Cambodian settlement that preserves Hanoi's control, but also has the approval of noncommunist Cambodians. Hanoi hopes such a settlement will then lead to increased Western trade and investment.²⁴

MOSCOW'S TWO-TIERED POLICY FOR THE PHILIPPINES

Since 1986, Moscow has mounted a major diplomatic offensive in the Philippines. This campaign has included the appointment of younger, savvy diplomats to serve in Manila, where they have improved Moscow's public image and promoted trade ties. This March, Philippine Trade Minister Jose Conception led a delegation of 20 leading Philippine businessmen to Moscow, and he believes Soviet-Philippines trade could increase five-fold, from \$40 million a year to \$200 million a year by 1992.²⁵ By contrast, U.S. trade with the Philippines was \$4.6 billion last year.

Gorbachev has been trying to turn Filipino public opinion against the U.S. military forces stationed at Subic Bay and Clark Air Field. In 1986, at

21 *Soviet Military Power, 1987, op. cit.*, p. 137.

22 Robert Karniol, "Soviets resume arms to Cambodia," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, June 24, 1989, p. 1288; "Heng Samrin Welcomes Home MIG-21 Pilots," *FBIS Asia-Pacific*, June 21, 1989, p. 37.

23 Murray Hiebert, "One step backward," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 4, 1989, p. 15.

24 S. Rajaratman, "Riding the Vietnamese Tiger," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 4, 1989, p. 20.

25 Sophie Quinn-Judge, "Price of friendship," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 30, 1989, p. 48.

Vladivostok, he said, "If the United States were to renounce a military presence, say in the Philippines, we should not be found wanting of any response."

Sensational Proposal. This vague offer was sharpened last September at Krasnoyarsk when Gorbachev proposed, "If the United States eliminates its military bases in the Philippines, the USSR will be prepared, in agreement with the government of Vietnam, to give up the material and technical support point at Cam Ranh Bay." This proposal was made while Philippine Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus was in Washington negotiating about the future of U.S. use of Philippine bases. Gorbachev's proposal created a sensation, but it did not affect the negotiations. Recent Soviet propaganda radio broadcasts to the Philippines also seek to appeal to Philippine nationalism and increase resentment of the U.S. military presence.²⁶

Along with making these peaceful overtures to Manila, Moscow has greatly improved its ties with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Several Soviet leaders, including Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, deny that Moscow is dealing with the CPP.²⁷ But these denials are not true. For 20 years, the CPP has been trying to overthrow Philippine democracy, and it now contests control of about 20 percent of the Philippine countryside. The CPP was formerly pro-Beijing but, in the early 1980s, began expanding ties with the Soviet bloc.²⁸ In 1987 leaders of CPP-controlled front groups visited Moscow. Evidently, Soviet-CPP relations have advanced enough for the CPP to predict, as recorded in the minutes of a high-level CPP meeting captured in March 1988, by the Philippine government, "If ever Party to Party relations have been secured in the Soviet Union, this has great implications for diplomatic, material and financial support."²⁹ To date, there is little evidence that Moscow is supplying arms to the CPP. But this meddling in Philippine affairs contradicts Gorbachev's seeming desire to improve relations with Manila.

MOSCOW FUELS NORTH KOREA'S MILITARY THREAT

At Vladivostok in 1986, when Gorbachev hinted at helping solve the "national problem of the entire Korean people," he was referring to the emotionally charged issue of reunification between North and South Korea. And at Krasnoyarsk in 1988, he proposed "multilaterally based discussions"

26 Radio Moscow to Philippines, "Need for U.S. Bases in Philippines Questioned," *FBIS-Soviet Union*, June 7, 1989, p. 12; Radio Moscow to Philippines, "U.S. Sailors 'Patron' of Subic Child Prostitutes," *FBIS-Soviet Union*, May 25, 1989, p. 31.

27 Rodney Tasker, "Change in the air," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 5, 1989, p. 13.

28 See author's "Mr. Gorbachev's Philippine Initiative," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, December 13, 1988.

29 Document dated February 21, 1988, minutes of meeting of Executive Committee of CPP Central Committee.

to reduce military confrontation in Northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula. Moscow also has sought to improve its relations with Seoul, most visibly by participating in the 1988 Seoul Olympics and by seeking more trade with South Korea. The Soviets have allowed Koreans on Soviet-controlled Sakhalin Island to emigrate to South Korea. This June, when South Korean opposition leader Kim Young Sam visited Moscow, the Soviets arranged an unprecedented meeting between Kim and Ho Dam, a leading member of the North Korean Communist Party Politburo.³⁰

Despite these initiatives toward South Korea, Moscow has strengthened its North Korean military relationship. North Korea has received advanced Soviet weapons such as MIG-23 *Flogger* aircraft, to which have been added SU-25 *Frogfoot* close support jets, and beginning last year, advanced MIG-29 *Fulcrum* fighters.³¹ In return, the Soviets have been granted overflight rights over North Korea. This makes the detection of Soviet military flights to Vietnam more difficult from radar sites in South Korea and Japan. This January a group of ten Soviet reconnaissance aircraft used a North Korean air base for the first time to support a mission to spy on South Korea.

PEACE POLITICS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Gorbachev also has sought to expand Soviet political contacts and influence in the South Pacific by active diplomacy. In 1987 Foreign Minister Shevardnadze visited Australia. Moscow also has advanced its relations with the smaller South Pacific island states by establishing relations with Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, and offering trade proposals. This March, Moscow proposed an agreement with the fifteen-member-nation South Pacific Fishing Forum, which would give Soviet fishing ships access to the vast area of the South Pacific covered by these countries. This would be a boon to the Soviet Navy because Soviet fishing ships are integrated into the Soviet Navy's intelligence collection system, and these ships could monitor U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative testing and missile testing conducted at the Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Moscow also wants greater access to the South Pacific to defend its access to outer space; from current launch sites, Soviet space craft enter outer space over the South Pacific.³²

Perilous Peace Zone. Gorbachev seeks to undermine the U.S. position in the South Pacific by supporting so-called peace politics. In December 1986, Moscow rushed to sign an annex to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty signed by fifteen South Pacific countries including Australia and New

30 Don Oberdorfer, "Korean Opposition Leader Declines Visit to North," *The Washington Post*, June 15, 1989, p. A35.

31 "N Korea has 30 'Fulcrums', says Japan," *Jane's Defense Review*, October 1, 1988, p. 749.

32 Aadu Karemaa, "What Would Mahan Say About Space Power," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, April 1988, p. 48.

Zealand. The protocols call for the nuclear powers not to station, use, or test nuclear weapons within the zone. Washington refuses to sign the protocols because it rightly regards them as limiting strategic military options possibly needed to defend America's South Pacific allies. Moscow supports the treaty because it could block the redeployment of U.S. forces from the Philippines to Australia.³³

Moscow also has sought to undermine the 1951 Australia-New Zealand-U.S. (ANZUS) Treaty by wooing the labor unions in New Zealand, who played an important role in the development of the New Zealand Labor Party's antinuclear policies.³⁴ When the Labor Party took power in 1984, it adopted strict antinuclear policies that have forced the end of U.S.-New Zealand military cooperation.

HOW WASHINGTON CAN RESPOND TO GORBACHEV'S OFFENSIVE

In formulating a response to Gorbachev's peace offensive in Asia, the Bush Administration should remember that policies that may work in Europe in response to Soviet arms control initiatives may not be appropriate to Asia. In Europe, the NATO Alliance confronts a concentrated and direct land-based Soviet military challenge. The geographic proximity of most of the NATO Alliance partners reduces the importance of geography in determining the U.S. ability to meet its alliance commitments.

Asia, by contrast, is a maritime theater where the U.S. depends on a series of bilateral defense treaty relationships with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia to fulfill its political and military commitments. Since these countries are separated by oceans, maintaining U.S. naval access to them is critical to fulfilling U.S. security objectives. These objectives include protecting sea lines of communication to trade in Asia, bolstering Asian confidence in the U.S. as a trusted ally, serving as a friendly balance to growing regional powers such as China and India, and deterring Soviet aggression.³⁵

Critical U.S. Needs. The loss of military access to any one of the current U.S. treaty allies in Asia would seriously impair Washington's ability to meet commitments elsewhere in the region. Access to Japanese and Korean bases allows the U.S. to contain Soviet naval forces in Northeast Asia. The U.S. deployment of about 40,000 troops in South Korea demonstrates U.S. resolve to deter aggression by North Korea and helps to defend Japan. Access to Philippine bases helps support U.S. and allied naval deployments from

33 See the author's "Why The U.S. Must Oppose The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone," Heritage Foundation Asian Studies *Backgrounders* No. 55, December 23, 1986, p. 10.

34 See author's "Dealing With Wayward New Zealand," Heritage Foundation Asian Studies Center *Backgrounders*, No. 90, April 21, 1989, p. 5.

35 Hardisty, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11.

Northeast Asia to the Persian Gulf. The U.S. alliance with Australia helps deter Soviet expansion in the South Pacific.

The Soviet Union can afford to make numerous arms control proposals for Asia — that focus on naval arms control — because it is a continental power. Moscow does not depend on maritime access to fulfill its critical national security objectives. Washington does make unilateral naval arms cutbacks, but it does this when weapons are determined to have outlived their usefulness. For example, the U.S. Navy recently announced it would retire from service three types of tactical nuclear naval weapons, the nuclear armed *SubRoc* and *AsRoc* antisubmarine weapon, and the nuclear armed *Terrier* antiaircraft missile.³⁶

Answering Gorbachev. Washington should not allow Gorbachev's proposals to go unanswered. The Bush Administration therefore must craft a strategy to blunt Gorbachev's peace offensive in Asia. To do this, the Bush Administration should:

- ◆ ◆ Welcome the positive steps that Gorbachev has taken to reduce Soviet forces in the region — but publicly challenge Gorbachev to cut Soviet military forces in Asia even further. Washington should emphasize that the Soviet Pacific Fleet far exceeds Soviet defensive needs.

- ◆ ◆ Refuse to begin naval arms control negotiations with Moscow for the Asian region while the U.S. remains dependent upon naval power to meet its political commitments in Asia. U.S. naval forces must maintain control of sea lanes critical to Asian trade, while Soviet naval forces need only fulfill the more limited objective of attacking sea lanes. Gorbachev's proposal to limit antisubmarine warfare activity to specified areas is designed to prevent the U.S. from defending itself from Soviet ballistic missile submarines. As such, it is one-sided and should not be considered. Limitations on the flexibility of U.S. naval forces to respond to crises will diminish U.S. security far more than such restriction will reduce Soviet security in Asia.

- ◆ ◆ Participate in Gorbachev's proposed multilateral negotiations for reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula only if South Korea also participates and only if Moscow halts shipments of high-technology weapons to North Korea. To do otherwise would unfairly pressure Seoul, which must deter North Korean aggression while continuing its promising political transition to democracy. The Bush Administration should stress that bilateral negotiations between Seoul and Pyongyang, not multilateral talks, are the principal forum for reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

- ◆ ◆ Make clear to Gorbachev that any political settlement in Cambodia must provide for an internationally supervised plebiscite so that Cambodians can determine the government they prefer. To demonstrate U.S. resolve in this, Congress should approve the Bush Administration's impending request

36 "Subroc, AsRoc, and Terrier Retire," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, July 1989, p. 118.

impending request for military aid to the noncommunist Cambodian resistance factions led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Son Sann. This aid will help the noncommunist factions achieve a negotiated settlement with the Hanoi-backed Hun Sen regime. This will also make clear to Hanoi that its indirect control of Cambodia after a settlement is as unacceptable as its current occupation of Cambodia.

◆ ◆ In consultation with Philippine President Corazon Aquino, expose Moscow's developing relationship with the Communist Party of the Philippines. Washington must make clear that the Soviet-CPP relationship potentially threatens Philippine democracy and contradicts Gorbachev's stated peaceful intentions for Asia.

◆ ◆ Expose Soviet use of peace groups and trade unions in the South Pacific to undermine U.S. alliances. The Bush Administration should consider modestly increasing the funding for U.S. Information Agency public diplomacy programs that explain American policies in the South Pacific.

CONCLUSION

Mikhail Gorbachev's oft-stated peaceful intentions for Asia have attracted great attention there and must be countered by Washington. His arms control proposals are designed to reduce U.S. military strengths without significantly reducing the threat to the West of Soviet offensive military forces. In the meantime, Moscow continues to modernize its military forces in Asia. In Cambodia, the Soviets appear to be supporting a "peace" that would ensure the dominance of the Hanoi-backed regime in Phnom Penh. And in the Philippines, Soviet relations with the Communist Party of the Philippines are a potential threat to a critical U.S. ally.

Encouraging Positive Moves. In fashioning a response to Gorbachev's "peace" offensive, the Bush Administration must acknowledge clearly that its defense relationships with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia are an integral part of longstanding U.S. political commitments to Asia. While it must encourage Gorbachev's positive initiatives, the U.S. must not engage in Soviet "peace" plans that would endanger Washington's ability to fulfill these important commitments.

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