

Southeast and Offshore Asia

During phase II, the Southeast Asian peninsula and the western portions of offshore Asia emerged as the third shatterbelt. Communist control of North Vietnam had been affirmed in the 1954 partition of Vietnam. This partition served as the initial stage of the war that would then engulf all of Indochina and divide the region between the Communist world and the West. The United States failed to contain the spread of Communist power, although it spent over \$150 billion in more than a decade of combat.⁵

Despite the rift between the Soviet Union and China, both provided massive military and economic aid to North Vietnam. In 1978, three years after the war's end, China broke with Vietnam over the latter's invasion of Cambodia in support of a Communist faction, led by Hun Sen, that had ousted China-backed Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge regime. In China's stead, the Soviet Union became Vietnam's chief ally and source of aid, receiving in return a long-term lease for the Cam Ranh Bay naval base overlooking the South China Sea.

Not only had much of the northern half of the Indochinese portion of the Southeast Asian peninsula fallen to the Communists during phase II, but the southern half of the peninsula and Indonesia were also drawn into the East-West conflict.

In Malaysia, a Communist insurrection that lasted through the 1950s ended with the forced resettlement of nearly five hundred thousand Chinese and the emergence of a strongly Western-supported state that had gained its independence as a member of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1957. Thailand, threatened by its proximity to China and Communist gains in Vietnam, had used SEATO early on for protection. During and following the Vietnam War, it received considerable military and economic aid from the United States. While Communist insurgencies in several parts of the country, especially in the northeast, plagued the Thai regime in the early 1970s, they were eventually put down. The Philippines, though wracked by intermittent uprisings, remained resolutely anti-Communist. The Communist-led Hukbalahaps rose up again in the late 1960s and fought intermittently before being finally quashed in 1979. Since that time, the major rebel groups have been the Muslim Moros of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

During this phase, Indonesia veered from neutralist to pro-Communist to pro-Western stances. The shift toward the West took place in 1966 as a result of an attempted Communist coup, which was repressed by the army, led by General Suharto. Up to three-quarters of a million, many of them ethnic Chinese, were killed in Java and Bali. General Suharto took advantage of the turmoil to strip President Sukarno of his powers and put him under house arrest. He assumed the presidency himself the following year. Suharto then developed close ties with the United States and helped to found ASEAN. This regional bloc of anti-Communist countries included Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. (Today, ASEAN also includes Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Brunei.)

OTHER GEOPOLITICAL REGIONS*South Asia*

While not of the same strategic imperative to the USSR as the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia, South Asia nevertheless became more deeply drawn into the Cold War during this phase. It was China, rather than the Soviet Union, that represented a threat to India. While New Delhi continued its policy of nonalignment, its fears of China were

increased as Tibet became more tightly controlled by Beijing, with the settlement there of hundreds of thousands of Chinese.

The ongoing border disputes between India and China erupted into border clashes in Ladakh and Assam in 1959 and a limited war in 1962, whereby China gained some territory in Ladakh. As India's relations with Beijing worsened, its ties with Moscow improved. In 1966, for example, the USSR brokered a troop withdrawal between India and Pakistan that took their forces back to the lines that had been held prior to their war of 1965.

Five years later, Soviet political support and an airlift of military equipment was of assistance to India in its third war with Pakistan, this one over Bangladesh. A new economic assistance plan was subsequently concluded between Moscow and New Delhi. At the same time, India's relations with the United States became increasingly strained over the latter's continuing military and economic support of Pakistan. In spite of all of this, India maintained its posture of neutrality, and ties with the United States gradually improved.

Burma (Myanmar) was not only physically and historically identified with the Indian subcontinent, but it also shared India's commitment to neutrality. In addition to Burma's distrust of Britain, its neutrality had been influenced by its fears of China. Communist rebels and tribal groups, such as the Karens, rose up against the Burmese government shortly after independence and continued their insurgencies over the next two decades with support from Beijing. The military junta that seized power in 1962 increasingly shifted the orientation of the country from its earlier contacts with the nonaligned world to complete isolation.

Latin America

Latin America was another focus for Soviet penetration efforts during phase II. Extending the Cold War to the Caribbean, which lay within the immediate tactical and strategic reach of the United States, represented a daring and costly challenge. Cuba, which overlooks the Straits of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico, provided the USSR with the opportunity to challenge the United States on its own doorstep. When Fidel Castro overthrew Fulgencio Batista in 1959, he nationalized American landholdings and financial and industrial companies, breaking relations with Washington and declaring allegiance with the Eastern bloc. The subsequent failure of the US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 emboldened Nikita Khrushchev to strengthen the Cuban armed forces significantly and to build Soviet missile bases on the island.

The immediate response of President John Kennedy was to demand that the Soviets dismantle their missiles and to impose a naval blockade, forcing the USSR to back down. In addition, the naval base at Guantánamo remained in US hands, thus allowing the United States control of the Windward Passage and the lanes between the Atlantic and the Caribbean as well as securing the Panama Canal from the north. While Cuba continued to be a base for Soviet naval and surveillance activities until the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the 1962 missile crisis was a lesson to both superpowers. To avoid similar nuclear confrontations, both adopted strategies of relying upon surrogates in their competition wherever possible. It was Cuba that then took on the mantle of spreading the revolution to other parts of Latin America. However, while Castro became completely dependent upon Soviet arms, economic aid, and fuel and on the sugar market of the Communist bloc, he was by no means a puppet in the sense that the Eastern European regimes were. Indeed, geographical distance, which was such a considerable liability to the USSR in its efforts to sustain Cuba and spread the revolution within the Western hemisphere, proved to be a political asset to Castro in pursuing some of his domestic

and foreign initiatives. This freedom of action was unavailable to Eastern European satellites because of the presence of Soviet forces on their doorsteps or within their territories.

The Bay of Pigs incident stimulated the United States to take an aggressive stance against the Marxist rebellions that began to sweep Latin America. While Cuban influence in Jamaica and Guyana was not negligible, Castro failed to convert the socialist governments there to overt allies. In Venezuela, where two Communist-inspired naval revolts in 1962 and subsequent hit-and-run terrorist actions threatened the Social Democratic government, Washington provided support to suppress the threats.

Elsewhere, the United States had intervened in Guatemala as early as 1954 to topple a Communist-influenced government. Guatemalan bases were then established with US assistance to train anti-Castro guerrillas in the early 1960s. When left-wing terrorism broke out within the country in the mid-1960s and continued in the following years, American support of its military strongly shaped Guatemalan politics.

Only at the very end of phase II, in 1979, did two radical left-wing governments emerge in the Caribbean that were to become closely allied to Cuba and the Soviet Union during phase III. The Sandinistas gained control of Nicaragua after the lengthy Somoza rule, while a leftist coup supported by Cuban troops seized power in Grenada, to be ousted by US and Caribbean troops four years later.

In South America, Soviet penetration efforts were singularly unsuccessful. In Bolivia, the United States aided the rightist military junta in the struggle against Communist guerrillas led by Castro's chief lieutenant, Che Guevara, who in 1967 was killed in the fighting. Three years later, a leftist coup resulted in the attempt to develop ties with the Soviet Union, but that government was toppled by a rightist countercoup the following year.

In Chile in 1970, Salvador Allende became the first popularly elected Marxist president in Latin America. He sought close ties with the Communist bloc only to be overthrown and murdered after three years by the Chilean military with covert US support. The Marxist revolution spread to Uruguay in 1967 with the establishment of a terrorist group there. Ultimately, the campaign of the Tupamaros urban guerrilla movement was put down by a repressive regime installed by the military.

In Argentina, Communist as well as Peronista parties were banned in the 1963 elections by the right-wing regimes that took power. In Brazil, leftist guerrillas were ruthlessly suppressed during the 1960s and early 1970s.

The failure of the Soviet Union to expand its influence in Latin America outside of Cuba (and later Nicaragua) was due, to a considerable extent, to the vigorous countermeasures taken by Washington. Military and police leaders trained by the United States in the Panama Canal Zone's School of the Americas were significant forces in providing security support for the right-wing regimes that dominated most of the countries of the region. An example of the impact of this training was "Operation Condor," a system developed to share in intelligence and antileftist security actions among Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia. The security establishments of these countries and their Washington backers often made little distinction between real and imagined security threats in the effort to stop the spread of Soviet and Cuban-supported Communist movements.

THE ARMS RACE

It was in phase II that the Soviet Union achieved parity with the United States in its military and nuclear buildup. While US arms expenditures had escalated rapidly during the Korean

War, they were then scaled back, as President Dwight Eisenhower sought to rein in the “military-industrial complex.” By 1961, Soviet military expenditures had nearly caught up with those of the United States. During the 1960s, the two powers kept pace with one another. From 1956 through 1970, for example, Washington’s defense outlay totaled \$861.7 billion and Moscow’s \$812.8 billion.⁶ The United States forged substantially ahead only during the administration of President Ronald Reagan. US foreign arms sales, mainly to the Middle East, increased exponentially during the 1970s, exceeding those of the USSR.

While the largest portion of Soviet increases in military expenditures was in missiles and air power, and while nuclear parity had been achieved, the buildup of the Soviet fleet also required substantial outlays. The price of this buildup placed a heavy strain on the Soviet economy and society. The price of this buildup placed a heavy strain on the Soviet economy and society. With a reported gross domestic product that was half that of the United States and a per capita income that in real terms was probably only one-third that of its rival, the USSR succeeded in matching the United States in military expenditures during phase II. Increasingly plagued by food and consumer goods shortages and lagging in high technology, the Soviet Union was ill prepared to compete under the further strains that would result from the arms buildup of the Reagan administration.

Phase III: 1980–89

COMMUNIST POWER RETREAT FROM THE MARITIME REALM

In the 1980s the world geopolitical map again underwent major restructuring. Most significantly, China broke away from the Eurasian continental world to establish a separate East Asian geostrategic realm. Other hallmarks of phase III were the hard-line stance taken against the Soviet Union and other Communist states by the Reagan administration and the rapid decline of Soviet influence in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America.

This phase followed upon the period of détente between the United States and the USSR during the 1970s, which resulted in SALT I and SALT II—accords that banned new ICBMs and launchers. The détente ended in early 1980 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the US boycott of the Moscow Summer Olympics.

If phase II marked the apogee of Soviet penetration of the maritime world, phase III was its nadir. The USSR’s bloody and ultimately unsuccessful war in Afghanistan left it with little surplus energy to devote to its other Cold War pursuits. Considerable pressure was put on Moscow by the decision of the Reagan administration to scrap détente and greatly increase US military expenditures, for it triggered an arms race that the Soviet Union could neither afford nor win.⁷ By 1989, the end of phase III, the annual defense expenditures of the United States were \$275 billion. The Soviet figure was \$190 billion—significantly higher than its average annual expenditures during the previous phase but inadequate to prevent the arms gap from widening. The United States had extended its lead, particularly in the application of high technology and telecommunications to modern warfare, as it would demonstrate in the Gulf War.

Economically, the situation was worsening in the Soviet Union, as living standards dropped, consumer goods were in short supply, and Soviet agriculture failed to meet the needs of the nation. While the defense budget of the USSR was two-thirds that of the United States, its gross national product had dropped to one-sixth that of the United States. By the end of the decade, it had become evident to Soviet leadership that the costly and uneven arms race could not be sustained, that the country would not have both “guns and butter.”