

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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March 28, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI *ZB*
SUBJECT: NSC Weekly Report #134

1. Opinion

Afghanistan: An Aberration or a Symptom?

While there is genuinely solid unanimity in your Administration regarding the measures that you have adopted, and this unanimity has been strengthened by regular SCC meetings, you should be aware that in the background there still lurks a fundamental disagreement, which has potential policy implications. I can best summarize it in terms of two conflicting interpretations of what is basically involved in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: some see it as an aberration from, and others as symptomatic of, Soviet behavior.

Aberration

Those who see it as an aberration tend to feel that the primary motive for the Soviet action was defensive, that the Soviets do not have longer-term regional ambitions beyond Afghanistan, and that they are likely to consider seriously some mutually acceptable formula for a solution to the problem generated by their invasion of Afghanistan. Proponents of this school of thought do not deny that the Soviet Union occasionally acts aggressively, but see that largely as an expedient reaction to opportunities rather than as a manifestation of a more sustained trend. Because of that, one is entitled to nurture hopes of a relatively early return to more normal East-West relations, including genuine progress on some of the more important bilateral U.S.-Soviet issues.

Symptom

Those who argue otherwise feel that the Soviet Union is currently in an assertive phase of its history, with the acquisition of military power giving its foreign policy both greater scope and more frequent temptations to use its power to advance policy goals. Soviet behavior is still prudent, but it does involve a gradual shift from political encouragement of often geographically remote

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Review March 28, 1986

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ideological sympathizers, to more direct support of them through the use of Cuban proxies in the mid-'70s, to even more direct projection of Soviet military power itself currently. In other words, Soviet behavior is symptomatic of a long-term historical drive, with military power supplanting Marxist ideology as its basic dynamic source.

As you can probably anticipate, I lean to the second school of thought. I would also argue additionally that there are certain constants in Soviet foreign policy, and the drive toward the Persian Gulf is one of them. I am struck by the fact that the draft agreement between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, which was being negotiated secretly between Molotov and Ribbentrop in 1940, including the following passage: "The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations center south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean." Moreover, the German Ambassador reported on November 25, 1940, that Molotov told him that the Soviet Union would associate itself with the Axis powers, "provided that the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union."

The argument between those who think that Afghanistan is an aberration and those who think it is a symptom is not merely an intellectual exercise. Though we are all in agreement with what needed to be done, I suspect that there are potential differences among us about the future (and these differences could complicate planning for the NATO Summit): how long should the present policy be maintained; to what extent should the Allies be pressed to recognize the wider and strategic character of the Soviet challenge; how energetically should we try to reinforce the Western presence in the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean area; how important is it to beef up Pakistan; what is the strategic urgency of moving more rapidly on the Palestinian problem; and, finally, how fruitful are likely to be any early efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union?

On that last point, my view is that in a quiet but persistent way we need to replicate in this new third central strategic zone (southwest Asia) what we have done earlier in Western Europe and the Far East: create a sense of security, and halt Soviet expansionism. Once our efforts are credible, I think we have a very good chance to return to detente and to seek the humane and morally imperative goals with which I hope history will identify you.

2. Vance-Brown-Brzezinski Meeting

The following decisions were reached at my meeting with Cy and Harold this week:

-- Saudi Arabian Military Relations: A mini-PRC will be scheduled so that John West can attend when he returns from vacation. Then Cy, Harold and I, along with Stan Turner, Charles

Duncan and Bill Miller will meet with John to review the relationship and address specific issues.

-- Military Contacts with Argentina: Following up on General Goodpaster's talks with the Argentines, we will begin by inviting Major General Vacero to visit the U.S. Later, if appropriate, a U.S. military officer may accept an invitation to visit Argentina.

-- Logistics Support: In our discussions to find ways to respond rapidly to political crises in the Persian Gulf region,

[REDACTED] Harold will prepare a paper for Cy and ^{me} I to review.

3. Implementing Your Instructions

March 19

-- In response to reports from Mexico as well as Cy's evening notes, you have made several comments over the past week to the effect that we should retain a tough negotiating position with Mexico on trade negotiations.

o Ambassador Kruegar will visit Mexico next week. When he returns, he will meet with Governor Askew to develop an issues paper for you on these negotiations.

4. National Security Affairs Calendar (attached)