

THE REAGAN DOCTRINE AND THE THIRD WORLD

Larry Pratt

The one whose troops were then working part of Jingotega province across the border in Nicaragua, for instance, was called **Tigrillo**, little tiger, or wildcat. He had honey-coloured eyes, sensitive in the sun, penetrating in the dark. 'He is lively and quick,' said the Miami contra. 'I've seen him this side of the border and he plays the idiot. *Mi comandante* this and *mi comandante* that. But you cross the river with him and he *becomes* a tiger. He hangs people. He rapes. He shoots people who don't obey them. Whatever is necessary in the jungle. I once saw one of his soldiers challenge him and he pulled out his pistol and shot him. He doesn't have any doubts about killing. But he is also tender with his troops, caring for them and watching over them.'

'You know,' continued the Miami contra in the O. Henry Bar, leaving his drink untouched as his mind dwelled on all of this, 'there are people who learn to kill and who love it.'

Christopher Dickey, *With the Contras*.

I

International politics, like all politics, is still a struggle for power and advantage; but in an age of rival social systems and ideological warfare, the struggle is as much about the internal structure of states as it is about their international policies. 'However much the leading states do act or appear to act simply like great powers in the traditional mould, there is something more at stake in their competition. There are underlying reasons, inherent in their respective social orders, which dictate that they cannot permanently resolve their disagreements.'" It is this deeper conflict over rival social systems that has nurtured the vicious orthodoxies and dogmas of the new Cold War. Ours is an era of ideological delusions and abstract doctrines upon which the calculations of the great powers are increasingly dependent; notably in the capitalist camp. Today the policies of the West toward the Soviet Union and post-revolutionary states in the Third World are influenced by romantic, metaphysical assumptions and war fevers, and these, rather than considerations of self-interest or *raison d'etat*, shape the conceptions of those in high office. Doctrine has returned to the counsels of power in Washington, and as William Graham Sumner remarked, if you want war, nourish a doctrine.

Great power relations in the 1980s have been overlain by ideological strife to such a degree that they may be said to be in a condition of

international *stasis*: that is, a state of international civil war, revolution and counter-revolution marked by a blurring of the distinction between peace and war and the appearance of transnational doctrines which repudiate the legitimacy of certain states and the international system of states. When the object of a power's foreign policy turns from the pursuit of interest to a holy crusade to restructure the international order and the social structure of adversary powers, when world politics are characterised by ideological warfare, inter-systemic conflict and a breakdown of traditional diplomacy, law and morality, then international *stasis* prevails.

Stasis is the degradation of civil war or Cold War, a man-made plague first described by Thucydides in his commentaries on the civil strife which broke out in the cities of Greece during the Peloponnesian war. As the whole Hellenic world was convulsed with ideological struggles between democratic parties trying to bring in the Athenians and oligarchs trying to ally themselves with Sparta, revolutions introduced unheard-of atrocities into the city-states. Anticipating **Orwell** and many others, Thucydides deplored how ideological strife affected the manners and actions of men, and how it distorted their customary language. 'To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings':

What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character... Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man, and to plot against an enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defence.

The consequence of this condition of international *stasis*, remarked Thucydides, was a collapse of moderation and a general deterioration of human character throughout the Greek world. 'The simple way of looking at things, which is so much the mark of a noble nature, was regarded as a ridiculous quality and soon ceased to exist' in a society divided into ideologically hostile camps. As a rule, those leaders who were least remarkable for intelligence showed the greater powers of survival.' The great political realist, Martin Wight, a careful student of Thucydides, argued that where a horizontal or transnational doctrine acquires a territorial base, the doctrine becomes an 'armed doctrine', and the state where it is enthroned becomes, for its adherents abroad, 'an exemplar, an asylum, and perhaps a saviour'.³ Since the French Revolution virtually all important civil or international wars have been waged in the name of doctrines or counter-doctrines, asserting horizontal rights against national legitimacy and offering some power as a potential liberator. Hitler, to take the most grotesque case, adopted the Wilsonian language of national self-determination and brilliantly turned it into an armed doctrine in his bid

for hegemony over Eastern Europe. All hegemonic powers justify their aggrandisement with doctrines which are designed to have a universal appeal, and the coalitions that seek to defeat such powers also cast their struggles in terms of liberty rather than the old-fashioned, illiberal balance of power.

The armed doctrine under consideration in this essay is the Reagan Doctrine, an aggressive strategy of counter-revolution whose purpose is not merely the containment of Marxism, but the 'bleeding' and overthrow of radical anti-imperialist regimes in the Third World through economic pressure, the arming of right-wing proxies and insurgencies, and the use of force in so-called low-intensity conflicts. Couched in the rhetoric of support for 'democracy' and 'freedom-fighters', the Reagan Doctrine aligns the United States with mercenaries, death squads, and in the words of Christopher Dickey's *Miami contra*, those who learn to kill and love it. The Reagan Doctrine is not about democracy. It is not about freedom. It is about war and counter-revolution. Safely removed from the central strategic fulcrum of the Cold War, the targets of the Reagan Doctrine are Third World socialist states whose revolutions are of recent vintage and can plausibly be destabilised: for example, Nicaragua which has been subjected to externally-supported insurgent warfare since the beginnings of the CIA-Argentine 'war without frontiers' against Central American revolutionaries in the early Eighties. It was the decision of Congress to cut off military assistance to the *contras* in 1984 that prompted the elaboration of what has come to be known as the Reagan Doctrine of support to anti-Marxist rebels. However, this policy is global and not merely regional, in its intent. Its fundamental goal is to demonstrate that Marxist revolutions in the Third World can be overturned without a costly, protracted intervention by American combat forces. 'The aim of the Reagan Administration', as Fred Halliday rightly noted in *The Making of the Second Cold War*, 'has not been just to contain the advance of revolutionary sources, but in some degree to reverse it'.⁴ But the reversals in this war without frontiers are to be brought about without the losses in American lives and the domestic divisions inflicted by the intervention in Vietnam: as with its discredited precursor, the Nixon Doctrine, which lies buried in the rubble of the streets of Teheran, America will supply everything but the corpses.

The new doctrine of US intervention bears much of the heavy ideological baggage of Wilsonian liberalism. Reagan has used—as many Presidents before him have used—the popular rhetoric of anticolonialism, applying it to the Soviet Union and its 'empire' and its 'clients' and 'proxies'. He has embraced the Wilsonian mission to force the world to become safe for American democracy and capital, and he has revived the concept of America 'as the moral exception in a world of power-brokering states'. Reagan's de-emphasis on Europe and the Atlantic alliance springs

from an ideological distrust of Old World compromises with Soviet communism and a conviction of the New Right that global power realities dictate a shift in strategic priorities away from nuclear deterrence and European defence to an offensive against the peripheries of the Soviet 'empire'. Persuaded that the Soviets are over-extended and facing serious internal crises, the Reagan administration has sought to wage low-intensity wars against revolutionary Third World states as a way of gaining leverage over US-Soviet relations. Support for the *contras*, the *mujabdeen* of Afghanistan, together with US-Chinese backing of the Khmer opposition forces in Kampuchea and US-South African underwriting of UNITA rebels in Angola, are regional aspects of a wider strategy whose intent is to destabilise Soviet allies and dependencies and to present Moscow with the choice between a costly defence of its external commitments and giving up its support for Third World revolutions.

It is not however the Soviet system that is threatened by America's new doctrine of intervention: ironically, the neoconservative ideology of the New Right has given rise to a foreign policy agenda heavily based on doctrine rather than material interests, and this has deepened the crisis of American imperialism. Reagan's global unilateralism and his holy war against communism have alienated America's allies, isolated the United States from much of the world community of states, and even threatened the interests of American capital. The Reagan Doctrine asserts the right of the United States to define certain sovereign and duly constituted states as totalitarian and illegitimate; such states cannot be reformed and must therefore be subverted, if necessary with outside support from the US. Although the doctrine has only been applied to socialist states such as Nicaragua and Angola, in principle it could be used to justify the overthrow of virtually any power whose internal social and political order did not have the White House seal of approval. The Reagan Doctrine is thus profoundly destructive of world order and, as the World Court ruled in the case of the US and the Nicaraguan counter-revolution, it also violates basic international law. As I shall argue, Reagan's ideological approach leads the US, rather than Russia, into the trap of over-extending itself by offering broad commitments to weak, unpopular regimes and even weaker insurgent groups in areas of the world where America has few vital interests. As Stanley Hoffman has noted, this is 'a perfect recipe for becoming, in effect, the dependent of a reluctant client, whom we must keep helping so that he remains obliged to us'.⁶

Does the Reagan Doctrine advance the interests of property and American capital? It is hard to see how it can. Ideology can under certain circumstances lead to a prosecution of imperial interests which on the whole is counterproductive to the stability and expansion of the empire. The destruction of the Nicaraguan revolution, for example, would eliminate one revolutionary model which threatens the capitalist order in America's

sphere of influence; yet it could also radicalise much of the rest of Central and South America, putting in jeopardy American economic and political interests which are far more significant than those at stake in Nicaragua and its neighbours. Ideology is to some extent in conflict with, rather than being shaped by, the interests of capital and the American state. The truth is that much of the American New Right believes that big business is far too willing to make accommodations with Marxist-oriented regimes. Angola, which is one of the targets of the Reagan Doctrine, is a case in point:

Here is a 'Marxist' government disposed to a realistic policy of cooperation with multinational corporations and, by implication, with the United States. Yet despite its willingness to play by the rules of global capitalism, Angola is understood by the US right primarily as an ideological challenge. Neoconservative intellectuals and politicians are exerting extremely strong pressure on the Reagan administration to support the insurgents in Angola. Such a policy would jeopardize perfectly reasonable 'realistic' relations and instead contribute to an unstable civil war, alienation from allies, and America's isolation and identification with South Africa. . . No clearer example exists of how an ideological understanding of a primarily economic situation could easily undermine, rather than strengthen, the US national interest.'

This underlying antagonism between the ideological roots of the Reagan Doctrine and the realities and interests of the American empire is one of the central themes of this essay. The origins of the Reagan Doctrine, we shall argue, are to be found in the fears and anxieties of the New Right over the loss of American hegemony and the spread of Marxism in the Third World, and in the tensions in American politics between those who wish to reassert US superiority and others who fear Vietnam-type involvements. The Reagan Doctrine offers imperialism on the cheap by promising both intervention against revolutions and the avoidance of new Vietnams.

Seen in this light, the new American doctrine of anti-communist intervention and the illusions on which it is based are simply the latest instance of what may be called the strategic dilemma of imperialism. That dilemma, sharply raised for the United States by its costly, futile intervention in Indochina, is how to reconcile the drives of imperial expansionism with the limits of power, and especially with the limited efficacy of military force. In the longer run, every imperial state must confront the limits of its power and the relationship between the burden of its strategic liabilities and its available military and economic resources. The object of strategy, broadly defined, is to provide security for the imperial state and its allies without weakening its economic base or compromising its underlying social order. It demands prudent statecraft, an economy of force, and an awareness of the all-pervading role of uncertainty in international affairs.

Since the end of World War Two, American policy makers and strategists have engaged in broad debate over the nature of the Soviet

Union and the appropriate strategy to adopt toward this state. As noted above, the debate is not simply one about the management of a traditional great power; it is also over rival social orders and ideologies. The Reagan Doctrine has evolved from that older debate and in some ways is a restatement of an ideological position that was popular in the Fifties: that is, the commitment to 'liberate' or roll back Marxist-controlled regimes and to foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system. In both periods the strategy of containment was deemed to be both immoral and inadequate. Short of atomic war, the West must take the offensive and bring about the fragmentation of the Soviet bloc and reform of the internal social and political order of the USSR itself. But whereas the Eisenhower-Dulles rhetoric about 'liberation' was aimed primarily to the communist states of Eastern Europe, the Reagan Doctrine is about the rolling back of socialist revolutions in the Third World. The United States has evolved a military doctrine plus a much stronger operational capability for supporting low-intensity warfare against anti-imperialist Third World states; and to some extent, this has involved a restructuring of US strategic priorities away from Europe and NATO. American military strategy is based on a growing awareness that many threats to US interests lie not in the traditional theatre of Europe but in the Third World. The belief that the defeat of a socialist revolution in say, Angola would somehow destabilise the Soviet system itself is almost as deluded as Dulles' conviction that America could 'liberate' Eastern Europe in the Fifties without detonating a world war. But delusions can be dangerous, and there can be little doubt that the Reagan administration (with the backing of the Congress) is intent upon carrying out its project of rolling back socialist revolutions in Nicaragua and elsewhere.

Much of this essay is devoted to an exegesis or commentary on the ideology that gave rise to the Reagan Doctrine. In presenting the concepts and terms employed by American neoconservatism, I do not imply approval or acceptance of them; for to accept Reagan's definition of 'freedom' or 'democracy' (as many Democrats have done) is also to accept much of the Reagan Doctrine, and also to accept that the death squads of El Salvador or Guatemala (representing 'authoritarianism') are morally preferable to the Sandinistas of Nicaragua (representing 'totalitarianism'). Recall Thucydides on what happens to language when it becomes part of ideological warfare: to fit in with the change of events, words too, must change their usual meaning. What used to be described as an act of thoughtless aggression is now to be regarded as courageous and manly. The ideological contamination of language—represented, to take one example, in the appellatives 'proxy' and 'client-state' as applied to states such as Cuba and Nicaragua—is a part of the struggle by the Right to impose its grotesque view of world politics, and to win the war through propagandist and disinformation. Far from accepting the terminology of

the Right, this essay seeks to lay bare the ideological assumptions of a doctrine which is a rationale for illegality, disorder and the fomenting of civil wars. To defeat a dangerous idea one must first understand it.

II

The enlargement of American power and economic wealth entails an enlargement of freedom and democracy for the world's peoples; America's mission as a great power is not to provide order or to rule prudently over others, but to bring liberal reforms and improvements to those (and they are legion) who fail to come up to American standards. These are the metaphysical fevers of American empire which, presently reflected in the Reagan Doctrine, have accompanied each great wave of US expansionism. Theodore Roosevelt integrated his demand for American commercial supremacy with America's 'duty toward the people living in barbarism to see that they are freed from their chains, and we can free them only by destroying barbarism itself'. Woodrow Wilson, who wanted independence for the Philippines just as soon as the Filipinos adopted American democratic ways, was ready to use force if required. 'When men take up arms to set other men free, there is something sacred and holy in the warfare. I will not cry "peace" as long as there is sin and wrong in the world.' On the occasion of his forcible intervention in Mexico, Wilson informed a British diplomat that, 'I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men'.⁸

Conceived in a similarly militant spirit, the Reagan Doctrine calls for the roll back of 'Soviet acquisitions' at the periphery, where there is little threat of general war. And according to The *New Republic's* Charles Krauthammer, one of the Reagan Doctrine's true believers, it is part of a larger, 'neo-internationalist vision of America's role in the world. The elements are simple: Anticommunist revolution as a tactic. Containment as a strategy. And freedom as the rationale'.⁹ The Doctrine, according to Krauthammer, points to a new form of containment, 'a kind of ex post facto containment: harrassment of Soviet expansionism at the limits of empire'.¹⁰ Secretary of State George Shultz, who believes that democracy is an American invention that wants exporting into radical states in the Third World, said in a speech in San Francisco in February 1985 that popular insurgencies against communist states were everywhere on the rise and deserved the moral and material support of the United States. The Soviet empire was 'weakening under the strain of its own internal problems and external entanglements. And the United States has shown the will and the strength to defend its interests, to resist the spread of Soviet influence, and to protect freedom. Our actions, such as the rescue of Grenada, have again begun to offer inspiration and hope to others'. Notably, to the *contras* fighting to rid Nicaragua of Soviet-bloc totalitarian power through

the pressures of armed resistance. Shultz advocated support for anti-Marxist insurgents as a way of pressuring states such as Nicaragua to open up their systems to democratic pluralism, but also to promote the fragmentation of the Soviet empire.'

In his message to Congress of 14 March, 1986, titled 'Freedom, Regional Security and Global Peace' (a communication timed to influence Congressional votes on support for the *contras*), President Reagan outlined an ambitious Wilsonian programme for rolling back recent Soviet advances in the Third World and for extending 'the freedom tide' into states which underwent socialist revolutions in the 1970s—Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Kampuchea and so on. Calling upon Congress to support counter-revolutionary actions against Nicaragua and other leftist states, Reagan argued that there is 'no historical basis for thinking that Leninist regimes are the only ones that can indefinitely ignore armed insurgencies and the disintegration of their own political base. The conditions that a growing insurgency can create—high military desertion rates, general strikes, economic shortages, infrastructural breakdowns, to name just a few—can in turn create policy fissures even within a leadership that has had no change of heart'. The pledge not only to resist additional Communist expansion in the Third World but to support insurgents fighting against Soviet-supported regimes is linked in Reagan's message to an attack on 'the arrogant Soviet pretension known as the Brezhnev Doctrine: the claim that Soviet gains are irreversible; that once a Soviet client begins to oppress its people and threaten its neighbours it must be allowed to oppress and threaten them forever. This claim has no moral or political validity whatsoever. Regimes that cannot live in peace with either their own people or their neighbours forfeit their legitimacy in world affairs'.¹²

That Marxist revolutions and 'Soviet gains' are reversible is a fundamental tenet of the Reagan Doctrine. The Soviet Union and its client states are dangerous to their neighbours by definition, but they are also badly over-extended and preoccupied with internal problems; beset with economic crises and popular unrest, these regimes are threatened from without by the 'democratic revolution' or tide of freedom that is sweeping the globe. 'In recent years', Reagan informed Congress, 'Soviet ambitions in the developing world have run head-on into a new form of resistance. Peoples on every continent are insisting on their right to national independence and their right to choose their government free of coercion. The Soviets overreached in the 1970s, at a time when America weakened itself by its internal divisions. In the 1980s the Soviets and their clients are finding it difficult to consolidate these gains—in part because of the revival of American and Western self-confidence but mainly because of the courageous forces of indigenous resistance'. Particularly, but not exclusively in Nicaragua, which has been described as the litmus test of the Reagan Doctrine,¹³ Congress must support such indigenous forces and back

neighbouring US clients such as Honduras, Pakistan, Thailand and Zaire with increased security assistance and arms transfers. 'Our goal, in short—indeed our necessity—is to convince the Soviet Union that the policies on which it embarked in the '70s *cannot work*', wrote Reagan.¹⁴

Under the universal banner of the global democratic revolution, self-determination, and support for 'freedom fighters', the Reagan Doctrine proclaims an unlimited right of American intervention in the Third World to bleed Soviet client states and to roll back the advance of Marxism; simultaneously it denies the legitimacy of Third World revolutions and sends a message to the Russians that they have no legitimate interests in the underdeveloped regions and that they must abandon their recently acquired positions. A reversal in Soviet fortunes on the periphery of its empire is expected to have far-reaching implications for the centre: once the myth of the irreversibility of Communist revolutions is shattered, the ground will shake under the Kremlin itself.¹⁵ Like the Strategic Defense Initiative, the Reagan Doctrine has been designed to seize the initiative from the Russians and is part of an aggressive strategy laid down in US national security documents and leaked to the press in May 1982: to undertake 'a campaign aimed at internal reform in the Soviet Union and shrinkage of the Soviet empire'.¹⁶ In December 1982, Reagan approved National Security Decision Directive-75, a document which represented a compromise between the ideologues and pragmatists within his policy-making circle and which laid down several long-range goals, including the containment of Soviet expansion and the encouragement of 'change in the Soviet system toward greater liberalism over time'.¹⁷

Some conservative supporters of Reagan's policy refer to it as 'containment plus', which is to say that it shifts American foreign and security policy from the Truman Doctrine of defending 'freedom' to an activist extension of it. The declared goal is no longer to *contain* Soviet-supported communism but to undermine it; initially, on the fringes of the Soviet system, and later at its centre. As we shall see, Reagan's policy is grounded in domestic politics as well, especially in the President's campaign to rid himself of legislative constraints on executive powers to assist overseas insurgencies and to intervene covertly. Like Truman in 1947, Reagan has understood that politically controversial policies to aid anti-Marxist forces in say, Greece or Nicaragua are more likely to gain public and Congressional support if justified on grounds of moral principle and cast in the universal language of democracy and national self-determination. Moreover, while disavowing the 'Vietnam Syndrome', Reagan and his Secretaries of State and Defense have prudently avoided any discussion of direct involvement by US combat forces, especially ground forces, in support of the tide of freedom. The Doctrine thus promises ambitious foreign policy conquests with relatively small costs or liabilities to the United States: we might call it imperialism without pain. Mrs Jeane

Kirkpatrick, former US Ambassador to the United Nations and a chief ideologue of the New Right, notes that the US is offering sympathy, solidarity and assistance—especially covert assistance—to anti-communist insurgencies, but not direct participation in combat. Grenada was an exception. Even so she adds, the biggest problem in implementing the Reagan approach 'is sustaining the popular support and discipline for the necessary expenditures. This requires recovering the terms and concepts necessary for understanding the policies of the Soviet Union and its associated states. Without such understanding, the popular support needed to deal with the military problem will not be available. Neither will there be the necessary support for appropriate policies of trade, aid, and support for resistance movements.'¹⁸

Mrs Kirkpatrick is correct. The recovery of 'the terms and concepts' needed to sustain support for a foreign policy as ambitious and dubious as the Reagan Doctrine is an ideological project, and the central concept of American ideology and American imperialism is 'freedom'. In his State of the Union Address of 6 February 1985, Reagan declared that freedom 'is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few; it is the universal right of all God's children. Look to where peace and prosperity flourish today. It is in homes that freedom built. Victories against poverty are greatest and peace most secure where people live by laws that ensure free press, free speech, and freedom to worship, vote, and create wealth.'¹⁹ A year later, he returned to the same ideological theme and linked it to his demand for support for anti-Marxist insurgents:

To those imprisoned in regimes held captive, to those beaten for daring to fight for freedom and democracy—for their right to worship, to speak, to live and prosper in the family of free nations—we say to you tonight: You are not alone Freedom Fighters. America will support you with moral and material assistance; your right not just to fight and die for freedom, but to fight and win freedom—in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and Nicaragua.²⁰

We have already suggested that the Reagan Doctrine is a part of a wider American strategy of maintaining external pressure on the USSR and thereby to weaken the capabilities and threaten the survival of the Soviet system itself. Through increased arms spending, a policy of technological and economic denial, and support for insurgencies within the Soviet alliance, it is argued, the West can foster the seeds of destruction within the communist system.²¹ In his speech to the British Parliament in June 1982, Reagan advocated the introduction of 'the infrastructure of democracy' into the Soviet system, leaving 'Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history',²² a close approximation of the views of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and other Soviet dissidents. In the main, these people believe that the Soviet regime is utterly lacking in support and maintains itself in power through the threat of war and internal police power. It can easily be

undermined *from without*. According to this radical camp, what is decisive about the Soviet Union is not what it says or does but what it is; and what it is, is totalitarian, aggressive and *evil*.²³ Until the system is reformed or overthrown there is no possibility of peace with Russia. Richard Pipes, the Harvard historian who worked for two years on Reagan's National Security Council staff, argues that the Communist regimes face a deepening economic and political crisis and that 'the West, in its own interest, ought to assist those economic and political forces which are at work inside the Communist Bloc undermining the system and pressuring its elites to turn their attention inward. Experience has shown time and again that attempts to restrain aggressiveness by a combination of rewards and punishments do not accomplish their purpose because they address the symptoms of the problem, namely aggression, instead of its cause, which is the system itself. . . . The Communist elites must be subjected to the maximal internal pressures which the system itself *generates*'.²⁴

Now, this is a very old delusion which has its roots in the messianic interventionist liberalism of Mazzini and Wilson and in the clash between the rival social systems of the US and the USSR.²⁵ Whereas the conservative realists, such as Kennan and Morgenthau, approach the Soviet Union with a concept of rival state interests and the containment of adversary power, repudiating as *romantic* and dangerous all ideas of undermining or reforming the Soviet state, the descendants of Woodrow Wilson believe that 'a steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its *covenants*'.²⁶ The causes of war and strife between powers must be located in the domestic structures of undemocratic states rather than in the anarchical system of sovereign states. It follows that such states are a menace to peace and deserve to be reformed via pressure from without, or failing that to be overthrown. Reagan warned the Congress in March 1986 of 'the dangerous and destabilizing international impact that even unpopular Leninist regimes can have. None of these struggles is a purely internal affair':

Soviet-style dictatorships, in short, are an almost unique threat to peace, both before and after they consolidate their rule. *Before*, because the war they wage against their own people does not always stay within their own borders. And *after*, because the elimination of opposition at home frees their hand for subversion abroad.'

That the Soviet empire is over-extended and the communist system in a state of near-terminal crisis has been an article of faith among American neoconservatives and Reagan's inner policy-making circle since the early 1980s. Like the Ottoman empire of the late nineteenth century, the Soviet state is sick and rotten to the core; it persists only through repression and the threat of war. The leadership succession, the grave economic

difficulties, the war in Afghanistan and the crisis in Poland, the unrest among the nationalities and the alleged unpopularity of the Soviet regime itself: these have created an historic opportunity for the United States (and the West as a whole) to use its economic and military leverage to bring about reform or even the collapse of the Soviet system. Either the East must liberalise or it must be destroyed. As Lord Clarendon said of the Ottoman empire in **1865**, 'The only way to improve them, is to improve them off the face of the earth'.²⁸ The highest mission of the West is to bring civilisation to the decadent empires of the East; through threats, pressure and inducements to bring the internal decay and crisis to a head and to introduce liberal democratic reforms, self-determination and a market economy—in a word, freedom. After **1981**, despite strong opposition from Western Europe and Canada, the Reagan administration sought to exploit Soviet internal weaknesses through massive military spending, the denial of US-licensed technology and credits to the USSR and Poland, and support for anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The Reagan Doctrine, enunciated at the opening of Reagan's second term, is part of the same strategy of threats and pressure: US assistance to anti-communist insurgencies involves little risk of a general war, but it will force the Soviet Union to divert scarce resources into the defence of its overseas clients. The Doctrine is thus an instance of 'compellance' or coercive diplomacy. Professor Pipes, whose mission is to introduce American improvements and liberalisation to the communist system, has concluded that the regimes of the East must be coerced into adopting legal norms and procedures capable of producing a state of civil accord at home. 'To put it in different words: the Soviet Union will be a partner in peace only if and when it makes peace with its own people. Only then will the danger of nuclear war recede.'²⁹ The liberal or neoconservative approach to peace involves, not the construction of a balance of power or a strategy of *diplomatie*, but intervention in the domestic politics of totalitarian systems and their reconstruction upon democratic lines; for democracies alone are peaceful and willing to let their neighbours live in peace. If communist states are unwilling to reform, then democracies are entitled to use all measures, including force, to defend themselves: perpetual war for a lasting peace. Anything less would be immoral.

Such is the ideological framework that has produced the new American doctrine for offensive actions against radical Third World states. As Mike Davis and Fred Halliday have shown, the ideology of the New Right had its origins in southern California and still has its anchor in the Sunbelt states of the American South-West.³⁰ But its assumptions and concepts now exercise a hegemonic sway over both major parties and virtually all strata and regions of American society. Recall that during the **1984** Presidential campaign, Mondale's Democrats draped themselves in the cloth of fiscal conservatism and preached a nationalistic 'toughness' in

foreign and military policy: a quarantine of Nicaragua, increased support for Israel, retaliation against terrorism, support for new ICBMs and other weapon systems. In the Congressional debates of June–July 1985 on aid to insurgencies and the removal of restraints on Presidential war-making powers, it was the neo-liberal 'Rambo Democrats' who took the lead and out-ran Reagan in, for example, repealing the 1976 Clark Amendment on Angola. 'In a virtual declaration of war on the Third World', remarked Davis, "'liberals" fused with Southern Democrats and Republicans in authorizing terrorism against anti-imperialist Third World regimes, while at the same time voting for a new chemical arms race and the stockpiling of nerve gas. Neo-liberals have occupied the front row in criticising the Reagan administration for failing to live up to its promises of exemplary violence against "terrorists" and revolutionaries. By the summer of 1985, a bipartisan consensus was being forged in support of an invasion of Nicaragua and a global offensive against all revolutionary regimes.³¹ Buttressed by a popular culture that extols vigilantism and cultivates Rambo and Miami Vice cults, the Reagan Doctrine must be said to have a considerable measure of political support within the United States.

III

The competence and commitment of the American armed services to support the Reagan Doctrine of intervention require some reflection. Although it is making preparations and plans for interventions in so-called low-intensity conflicts in the Third World, it is certainly not the professional military that wishes to fight Vietnam again. In the wake of its massive defeats in the protracted war in Indochina, the US military has been reluctant to become involved in combat situations outside the central theatres of East–West conflict, especially where domestic political support for fighting is weak. In a much-discussed speech to the National Press Club in November 1984 on 'The Uses of Military Power', Defense Secretary Weinberger criticised the limited war theories of the 1950s and 1960s for their neglect of domestic political realities and set out a list of stringent conditions which must be met before US forces were committed to combat. In effect, he argued for an 'all or nothing' approach. Force must only be used as a last resort and in defence of vital interests; combat forces must be used in sufficient doses to win; military force must be used à la mode *clausewitzienne* in support of clear political objectives; and military intervention must be backed by strong domestic support from Congress and the population. 'We cannot fight a battle with Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas, or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops not to win but just to be there.' Weinberger and his Joint Chiefs of Staff are reluctant warriors, always prepared to fight for additional money yet cautious in the extreme about

using force if it entails the risk of another unpopular war of attrition in the Third World.³³ Other conservative critics of limited war strategy, such as Samuel Huntington, argue that the United States must 'play to win' if it becomes involved in another conflict such as Vietnam and 'aim for a first round knockout. Public opinion will not support a prolonged "slow bleed" of American blood':

US wars in the future may or may not be limited in goals, geographic scope, or material resources. They will inevitably be limited in time. This means that when the US applies force, it must be able to apply it expeditiously. Hence, high priority should be given to creating the transport capacity and support which will enable the US to deploy substantial numbers of troops to Third World trouble spots in very short periods of time. If we are going to win, we are going to have to win quickly.³⁴

Of course, precisely the same argument was made by the Right from the beginnings of US intervention in Vietnam: limited wars are futile and immoral; the United States should use its great superiority in technology and firepower to end the war decisively. It is however debatable whether the American military has either the capability or a strategy for 'playing to win' in the Third World. The failures of the 1970s and early 1980s suggest an institutional pattern. Reformers and critics of the Pentagon argue that the armed services are grossly over-staffed with bureaucrats and managers rather than officers, that they suffer from fragmentation 'with no real center of higher decision' or planning, and that the military's reliance upon high technology instead of strategy makes it an unreliable fighting force: the 'ancient and supreme military principle of simplicity is constantly violated; because everything is done by committee, bureaucratic compromises displace the tactical ingenuity, operational art, and sharp choices that strategy always demands'.³⁴ Bureaucratic over-planning and over-complication at the Pentagon were, according to this critique, responsible for the botched effort to rescue the hostages in Iran, for the breakdown in security in Beirut in October 1983 when 241 Marines on peacekeeping duty were killed, and for the near-fiasco of Operation 'Urgent Fury', the invasion of Grenada, in the same month. The lessons of America's defeat in Indochina remain unlearned; the structure of its sprawling defence establishment resists reform. The defects of structure distort and suppress operational strategy and tactics in favour of managerialism. Defence policies are deeply flawed through inter-service competition for costly new weapons systems and jurisdiction, and then the flawed choices are implemented by highly skilled bureaucratic operators. By this same sequence, notes Edward Luttwak, 'was the fatally incomplete Maginot Line built, as were all the Maginot Lines of history, each made no better by good management, technical talent, careful accounting, or sheer hard work'.³⁵

These deficiencies have some bearing on the military's capacity to wage low-intensity warfare in support of the Reagan Doctrine. Since the heady days of the Kennedy administration, civilian strategists have promoted concepts of counter-insurgency and a mobile intervention force—a 'fire brigade' reserve—for use in countering revolutionary movements in the Third World. The Special Forces were created by Kennedy to fight irregular wars against guerilla forces using assassination, sabotage and psychological warfare as weapons of covert warfare. Vietnam was the main laboratory for this type of intervention (much as Central America is today's testing ground for low-intensity conflict strategies), but counter-insurgency methods failed: the outcome was that the United States then fought and lost a major conventional war for 'credibility' in a region where it had no vital interests. The doctrines which had justified America's disastrous involvement in Indochina lost much of their glamour. As the US disengaged from Vietnam in 1975, it was evident that neither the American public nor the armed forces were inclined to engage in further military adventures in the Third World: thus the Vietnam Syndrome, the reluctance to become involved in new and protracted interventions overseas. Congress moved to restrict Presidential war-making powers and covert CIA operations, conscription was abolished and the pentagon's budget reduced, and further military involvement in Angola was prohibited under the 1976 Clark Amendment. US military planners, themselves under the influence of the mood of non-interventionism, returned to their traditional Cold War missions: nuclear deterrence and the defence of Western Europe.³⁶ Although Carter's hawkish national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, began in August 1977 to promote the concept of a mobile deployment force capable of intervening in regions such as the Persian Gulf,³⁷ until the early 1980s the United States military had neither a strategy nor the operational capability for large-scale Third World interventions.

The New Right and elite opinion-making bodies such as the Committee on the Present Danger viewed this as an unacceptable retreat from the West's strategic interests in the Third World and blamed *détente* for fostering Soviet assertiveness. The fulcrum of superpower competition shifted to Angola, where the Soviet and Cuban-assisted MPLA won power in early 1976, and to the Horn of Africa, where Soviet arms and Cuban advisers arrived in May 1977 to support the new Ethiopian government's war against irredentist Somalia over the sands of the Ogaden desert. To the New Right this was evidence of a new offensive tendency in Soviet geopolitical strategy, abetted by a weak, indecisive Carter Administration, along the so-called arc of crisis from Western Asia to Africa. Even before the crises in Iran and Afghanistan in 1979, some conservative western strategists had concluded that far from merely reacting to threats and opportunities in the Third World, the USSR had longer-range plans to use proxy wars and their build-up of naval and

conventional armed forces to challenge western interests in strategic areas such as the Persian Gulf. The Soviets had serious internal weaknesses as noted earlier, but, the New Right argued, they compensated for these through a calculated strategy of military expansionism. Soviet imperialism was viewed as 'a **military** phenomenon par excellence, and in proportion as Soviet combat power grows, both absolutely and in relation to the West's, it tends to push into the background the political manipulation on which the regime has had heavily to rely earlier'.³⁸

Determined to revive intervention 'as a legitimate instrument of policy', the New Right raised the spectre of ceaseless Soviet global expansion as part of their campaign against the **Vietnam Syndrome**.³⁹ 'The Soviet Union', wrote the Committee on the Present Danger, in its founding policy statement, 'has not altered its long-held goal of a world dominated from a single center—Moscow. It continues, with notable persistence, to take advantage of every opportunity to expand its political and military influence throughout the world: in Europe; in the Middle East and Africa; in Asia; even in Latin America; in all the **seas**'.⁴⁰ US hegemony and world order, it was suggested, were collapsing in the face of the Soviet challenge to America's nuclear superiority, a breakdown of regional alliances, the rise of ideologically hostile powers in the Third World, and the growth of 'Soviet power projection outside of the Eurasian land mass'.⁴¹ To counter these trends, argued some strategists, the United States must renew its will and capacity to fight local wars against Soviet proxies and clients, 'for these wars—the dirty little imbroglios in the Third World—are inevitable if we wish to continue the US postwar **order**'.⁴² To win in the 'Gray Area' in the Third World, America must rid itself of its obsession with NATO and defence of Europe and build up a large central reserve trained to fight 'dirty wars' and 'to win the kind of war that we fumbled the last time around':

To win in the Gray Area, US forces must be trained for the unclassical. They must be indoctrinated for dirty combat, for what has been termed 'unconventional' warfare. The balance of post-Vietnam imagery in today's field manuals prepares US soldiers to do battle in clean German forests and half-timbered villages. Training must get away from its Euro-obsession, which is in itself a direct outgrowth of the aversion to Vietnam. . . Army manuals must cease to emphasize narrow US-Soviet tactical fantasies and begin to look at the less palatable but more probable operations that await in the future. Urban combat should emphasize the terrain of Lagos or Jakarta or Manila or Caracas, not simply manicured Bavarian towns.⁴³

Of course, it has long been a tenet of American and NATO planning that the manicured towns of Bavaria are worth defending because they reside within a region of vital interest to the West. But because the Soviets and their allies know this as well and also understand that any intrusion

could rapidly escalate to a nuclear war, fighting on the central European front is most improbable. However, the New Right wishes to fight dirty wars where men die—for 'democracy and freedom', and not for mere power; and since the late 1970s its Sunbelt spokesmen have argued that many threats to American interests lie not in the European theatre but in Lagos, Jakarta, Manila or Caracas—the Third World. Europe is an encumbrance to American globalism; the Right argues for a strategy of unilateralism rather than multilateralism and a restructuring of US forces away from the European theatre. If the Europeans will not support American policies in Poland, Afghanistan, Central America and Libya, and will not join the crusade for freedom outside Europe, then the United States should go it alone. For the US cannot confront the global Soviet threat when the bulk of its forces is allocated to the defence of Europe.

The unwillingness of a fully reconstructed and prosperous Europe to join the United States in a policy of global defense, its political and military parochialism, have been the principal cause of the discords troubling the alliance during the past twenty years.⁴⁴

The military strategy that has been evolved by the Reagan Administration to implement its policy of Third World intervention is known as the doctrine of low-intensity conflict. Secretary Weinberger stated in his Annual Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 1986 that 'low-level conflict will likely remain the most immediate threat to free world security for the rest of this century', and went on to argue that Reagan's revitalisation of Special Operations Forces gave the US the capability in some sixty countries to 'engage in unconventional warfare, psychological operations, counter-terrorism, and intelligence missions'. Such efforts, while low-key and low-cost, 'provide very large pay-offs, strengthening Third World countries and demonstrating our commitment to peace and stability'.⁴⁵ In short, the strategy offers a partial solution to the crisis and fragmentation of the American empire. Michael Klare, long a student of US military strategy, has argued that the doctrine of low-intensity conflict embraces three types of military and police operations in the Third World: first, classic counterinsurgency warfare, as in El Salvador and the early stages of the Vietnam conflict; 'active defences' against anti-American terrorism, including pre-emptive raids against terrorist strongholds and retaliatory strikes in response to attacks on US military personnel and American citizens; and third, pro-insurgency efforts against Soviet-supported regimes in the Third World. Klare points out that the driving force behind the new doctrine has been Secretary of State Schultz, not Defense Secretary Weinberger. 'While Weinberger has cautiously defined the conditions under which US forces would be destroyed in Third World conflicts, Shultz has campaigned vigorously against falling prey to the Vietnam Syndrome and has championed both the use of military force to combat terrorism and support for anti-Soviet insurgencies in the Third World.'⁴⁶

The premise behind the strategy is that the US is unlikely to face

nuclear confrontations or armed clashes with the Soviets in Europe, but there is a high probability that it will be faced with conflicts at the lower end of the spectrum of violence: e.g., the seizure of the US embassy in Teheran, acts of international terrorism, insurgencies against friendly or Marxist governments in the Third World. A further assumption is that the Soviets and their 'proxies' will be involved, directly or covertly, in most of these low-level conflicts. Low-intensity conflicts range from terrorism and civil violence through guerrilla warfare, police operations, and other actions below the threshold of full-scale war. Examples might include the air raids against Libya, the supply of lethal anti-aircraft missiles to insurgents operating in Angola, and exercises in armed intimidation off the coasts of Nicaragua. Low-intensity operations are designed to have maximum symbolic effects: what determines success 'is much less a function of the actual application of force at the locus of conflict than of how the overall situation is interpreted by the world at large. In a major sense, therefore, low-intensity conflict operates as much on the basis of symbolic significance and signal manipulation as on actual military performance. To the extent that political ends can be achieved without actual resort to force, strategy is most expertly applied.'⁴⁷ Here is another version of painless imperialism: bomb Tripoli and Managua surrenders.

A key theme in much of the American discussion of low-intensity warfare is the need to avoid costly, protracted interventions by US forces in the Third World. This can be done, it is argued by **army** strategists, by using military force quickly and in a highly concentrated manner. Surprise, rapid manoeuvre, the build-up of airlift and sealift capabilities to permit the quick deployment of Special Operations Forces, Ranger battalions and light infantry units, all specially trained to cope with 'security threats' in regions such as the Persian Gulf or Central America, are the prerequisites for sharp, decisive victories. The heavy stress in American conventional (and nuclear) strategy on seizing the offensive and 'playing to win' is in large part a response to the Army's frustrations over the defeat of Vietnam.⁴⁸ It also emerged from a critique of the Army's existing 'active defense' doctrine and a perception by its Chief of Staff that the military had to develop the capacity 'to meet threats to vital interests *outside* of Europe, but without compromising the decisive theater in NATO Europe'.⁴⁹ Within the US Army there was a strong push for a less reactive and defensive doctrine. Out of these frustrations emerged a new and authoritative statement of the US Army's doctrine of combat, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* (FM 100-5), published in August 1982 and usually referred to as 'AirLand Battle'. The Air-Land Battle, which is mainly about mechanised war in Europe, stresses the role of the offence, seizing the initiative from the enemy, launching deep assaults into the adversary's territory. 'It is the theory of securing the initiative in battle

and maintaining it until victory is achieved." In language that appears strongly influenced by the 'indirect approach' developed in the writings of the British strategist, Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, FM **100-5** comments:

Manoeuvre is the concentration or dispersion of troops to achieve a position of advantage in relation to the enemy to produce results that would otherwise be more costly in men and materials. . . At both the operational and tactical levels, the object of manoeuvre is to concentrate strength against enemy weakness and thus facilitate the destruction of his force. . . The object of all operations is to put the enemy off balance with a powerful initial blow from an unexpected direction and then to follow it up rapidly to prevent his recovery.⁵¹

How can these concepts be applied to low-level conflict, which Weinberger himself calls 'the threat we are most likely to encounter through the end of this century'?⁵² The difficulty, as the supporters of low-intensity doctrine see it, is that the Pentagon and US Army have not grasped the extent of the security threat in the Third World and remain obdurately committed to Europe. There has been a sense of frustration that a Eurocentric outlook has hindered a reallocation of conventional forces for low-intensity duty. The Army's emphasis on large-unit, NATO-oriented forces sharply conflicts with the light divisions, decentralised requirements for low-level operations. In a sense, critics have said, it is preparing to fight the wrong war in the wrong place. As we have seen, this view has strong political support on the New Right. In part because of such concerns, President Carter established the Rapid Deployment Force in March **1980** in response to the crisis in the Persian Gulf, but the RDF was plagued by inter-service rivalries, a serious lack of air and sealift capabilities, and confusion over its role. It was, said conservative sceptics, neither rapid nor **deployable**.⁵³ Thus, in early **1983** the Reagan Administration absorbed the RDF into a new unified command, the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), headquartered at MacDill AFB, Florida; sometimes referred to as Readiness Command, USCENTCOM reportedly has close to **300,000** service personnel under its control and has responsibility for the 'security' of some nineteen nations from the Horn of Africa through the Middle East to Pakistan and Afghanistan: its tasks are to deny further expansion by the Soviet Union and Cuba in the region, to safeguard Western access to Gulf oil supplies, to provide security assistance to America's clients in the so-called arc of crisis, and, in the words of the Secretary of Defense, 'if possible reverse, the spread of Soviet **influence**'.⁵⁴ In addition, in the event of a major US military intervention in Central America, the bulk of American air, naval and special operations forces would be deployed from Readiness Command in Florida and the US Atlantic Command, which patrols the Caribbean and Atlantic, rather than from Panama-based Southern Command, the smallest (less than **10,000**

troops) of the six regional commands which divide responsibility for US military- commitments around the **globe**.⁵⁵ (The only parts of the globe which are 'not assigned' to one of these commands are Alaska, Antarctica, Canada and **Mexico**.)⁵⁶

The rapidly deployable combat forces immediately available to USCENTCOM in the event of a crisis in, say, the Persian Gulf include: Army—one Airborne Division (each division consists of 16,000 to 18,000 soldiers) one **Airmobile/Air Assault** Division; one Mechanized Infantry Division; one Light Infantry Division; one Air Cavalry Brigade. Marine Corps—about one and one-third Marine Amphibious Forces, consisting of a reinforced Marine division and a Marine aircraft wing. Air Force—seven Tactical Fighter Wings (each consisting of about 72 aircraft) and two Strategic Bomber Squadrons. Navy—three Carrier Battle Groups; one Surface Action Group; and five Maritime Patrol Air Squadrons. Total combat and support personnel available for rapid deployment duty were estimated at 220,000 in 1984 and are scheduled to rise to 440,000 by FY 1989.⁵⁷ This brief summary does not include the very large increases in US military spending on special operations forces, navy Seal teams, the improvement of airlift and sealift capabilities (perhaps the largest constraint on rapid deployment) and the strengthening of global 'power projection forces' via an increase in aircraft carriers, amphibious assault forces, and the arming of many surface ships and submarines with deadly Tomahawk cruise missiles and Harpoon **antiship** missiles. Compared with the readiness of American interventionist forces at the time of the hostage crisis in Iran, US rapidly deployable combat services are already formidable and they are growing.

The rapid deployment of a multi-division force, plus support, from the US to a distant region in the Third World would involve enormous logistical, refuelling, supply, and other difficulties. Operating over great distances against revolutionary forces armed by other great powers, the US might over-reach the limits of its power once again. The consequences of using force are always unpredictable. But it would be a grave mistake to conclude that the United States lacks the capability to intervene with force in those Third World countries which it deems to be security threats. In many ways as we shall see, it is already intervening, albeit mainly through proxies and covert actions. If and when America does intervene to overthrow a pro-Soviet government in the name of the Reagan Doctrine, it will not be in a gradual manner using limited doses of force to bargain with the adversary. Rather, it will 'play to win', using its military power in a highly concentrated fashion to gain a decisive victory before the corrosive Vietnam Syndrome has a chance to set in. We can expect such action to be co-ordinated to have the maximum political effect, as it was in Libya in April 1986 when the bombers arrived over Tripoli at 7 pm **EDT—just** as the American TV networks began the evening news.

In the broader sense of the term, strategy is not simply the science of planning the use of a state's resources for use in an armed conflict; it also involves the wider calculation of the state's vital interests, its purposes and priorities with respect to national objectives, its understanding of *raison d'etat*.⁵⁸ By this definition the Reagan Doctrine and the strategy of low-intensity conflict are based on grandiose delusions about what American military power can accomplish. The United States wishes to avoid a full frontal conflict with the USSR and it therefore wants to attack the Soviet 'empire' on the periphery by bleeding Marxist-led governments in Angola, Nicaragua, and so on. To do this, it is suggested, the US should scale down its strategic commitments in the European theatre and free up more forces to meet the global strategic threat. It is an old, discredited formula for avoiding continental commitments and the risk of total war. Liddell Hart called it *The British Way in War*, and it meant an aversion to the direct, frontal assault on the enemy, a retreat to a limited maritime strategy and to indirect strategies (such as the Dardanelles campaign in 1915 and Anglo-American sideshows in North Africa and the Balkans after 1942). Above all, it meant that the continental European powers must fight their own battles of total war. But if the two world wars taught us anything, it is that the indirect approach is a nostalgic illusion and that nothing short of the complete defeat and occupation of the enemy state will suffice to stop the fighting. The maritime school holds out the prospect that the Soviet Union can be destabilised, reformed, even overthrown without the threat of a third—and last—world war. It is merely an illusion. Michael Howard remarked in an essay at the time of Liddell Hart's death that, 'The Second World War was fought brutally, often wastefully, but with a total commitment of effort; everything that Liddell Hart in his teachings had sought to avoid. It is difficult to see how it could have been otherwise. When the survival of peoples appears to be at stake, they are not nice in the methods they use.'" There is little reason to think that the Soviets feel differently.

IV

The Reagan Doctrine raises anew some long-standing contradictions between the ideology of American foreign policy and the material interests of the US empire. The contradictions stem from the tactical exigencies and complexities of great power diplomacy, on the one hand, and the ambitious ideological support of the American New Right for the 'democratic revolution' or tide of freedom that is allegedly sweeping the globe. Supporters of anti-Marxist insurgencies in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique and so on believe that the United States ought to adopt a policy of 'global unilateralism', bypassing its traditional alliances and 'destabilizing the Soviet Empire through an energetic and orchestrated

exploitation of its vulnerabilities'.⁶⁰ The Reagsn Doctrine, argued Mrs Kirkpatrick in May 1985, 'states the case for the moral superiority of democratic institutions', which is nothing short of revolutionary for 'freedom fighters. . . defending themselves against incorporation into a great warrior empire'.⁶¹ And the ubiquitous Charles Krauthammer, in a diatribe against 'right isolationism', insisted that it is no longer possible to distinguish the core from the periphery: the core 'is no more Bonn and Vienna than it is Havana and Managua. . . A bipolar world has no "center", only webs of relationships radiating from the superpowers'.⁶² But a world that is only comprised of webs of relationships 'radiating from the superpowers' is a world without autonomous states; arguably, it is a world of illegitimate or 'totalitarian' states as well. A 'senior State Department official', who traced the origins of the Reagan Doctrine to President Carter's advocacy of global human rights, told *The Washington Post* in May 1985:

We debated whether we had the right to dictate the form of another country's government. The bottom line was yes, that some rights are more fundamental than the right of nations to nonintervention, like the rights of individual people. . . There's a growing sense that people's rights include the right to determine their own form of government; that is, we don't have the right to subvert a democratic government, but we do have the right against an undemocratic one.⁶³

However, the policy of supporting insurgencies to subvert particular states in the name of 'people's rights', once hardened into a universal doctrine, prompts the United States into commitments that may prove difficult to abandon. The right of intervention against Marxist states should in principle lead to the conclusion that the governments of Eastern Europe and the USSR also are illegitimate, and that the State Department 'has the right to dictate the form' of these as much as those of Nicaragua or Angola; but the implication of this, as the Eisenhower Administration acknowledged in the 1950s, would be war. The Reagan Doctrine commits American diplomacy to alliances based on ideology rather than interests, and it negates the distinction between what is worth fighting for and what is peripheral. No imperial diplomacy based upon universalism can succeed: the necessity of foreign policy is to recognise the limits of a state's power, to establish hierarchies of interest, to distinguish between vital and peripheral interests, and to create that equilibrium among competing forces which, however imperfect, is the international order. By international order I do not mean a condominium of great powers or some Holy Alliance of conservative states; rather, I refer to a world structure of sovereign and politically independent states respecting at a bare minimum the principles of self-determination, non-intervention in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of states, and peaceful co-existence of rival

social orders. The Reagan Doctrine is destructive of international order and fundamentally at odds with international law because it violates these principles and because it holds up universal concepts—individual freedom and democratic forms of government—as guides to foreign policy in a world that in its non-American diversity stubbornly resists diplomacies rooted in the fantasies of liberal ideology.

The Reagan approach also allies the US with weak, dependent rebel groups in countries that could be detached from the Soviet bloc through other means; once committed politically to such groups, a great power may find itself drawn into a deepening involvement in a region where it has no vital interests. Lacking popular support in their own countries, anti-communist insurgents can nevertheless gain a purchase over the foreign policy and financial backing of the United States (and a first claim on refugee status as insurance against defeat) merely by reciting the incantations of American Cold War ideology: liberty, democracy, free markets. 'Perhaps I should have seen that fanatic gleam', remarks the cynical narrator about Graham Greene's 'quiet American', Pyle: 'the quick response to a phrase, the magic sound of figures: Fifth Column, Third Force, Seventh Day. I might have saved all of us a lot of trouble, even Pyle, if I had realised the direction of that indefatigable young brain'.⁶⁴

Walter Lippmann, in a famous critique of the 1947 Truman Doctrine of global containment, warned that the policy could only be implemented by recruiting and subsidising 'a heterogenous array of satellites, clients, dependents and puppets. The instrument of the policy of containment is therefore a coalition of disorganized, disunited, feeble, or disorderly nations, tribes and factions around the perimeter of the Soviet Union'.⁶⁵ To organise this coalition of disunited, feeble and immature states would require continued intervention by the United States in the affairs of the members of this ideological alliance: the US would be drawn into endless conflicts by its own satellites. 'We shall have either to disown our puppets, which would be tantamount to appeasement and the loss of face, or must support them at an incalculable cost on an unintended, unforeseen and perhaps undesirable issue':

Now a weak ally is not an asset. It is a liability. It requires the diversion of power, money, and prestige to support it and to maintain it. These weak states are vulnerable. Yet the effort to defend them brings us no nearer to a decision or to a settlement' of the main conflict. Worst of all, the effort to develop such an unnatural alliance of backward states must alienate the natural allies of the United States.

To Lippmann, the 'natural allies' of the US were the states of the Atlantic community, not the *ragbag* collection of anti-communist clients surrounding the USSR. 'We cannot any longer afford to wage a diplomatic

and indirect military war against the Soviet empire all over Europe and Asia,' he wrote privately. The US should acknowledge the limits of its power and concentrate on a few vital areas.⁶⁶ The real quarrel between America and Russia was not on the remote Asian perimeters of the Soviet empire; the central issue was the need for a political settlement to eliminate the presence of Soviet forces in the heart of Europe.⁶⁷

It is intriguing that in the recent conflict over the Reagan Doctrine and the older debate between the proponents of containment and its critics, we can detect the same arguments over the limits of US power, about which countries—Third World or European—are the 'natural allies' of America, and how much ideological and doctrinal matters should influence the calculation of American national interests. Those who have wanted to raise anti-communism onto the plane of an undifferentiated morality would have the United States practise a unilateral globalism in diplomacy; while others, such as Robert W. Tucker and Kenneth W. Thompson, argue that the Reagan Doctrine is even less resistant to prudential considerations than its predecessor, global containment; for not only do the supporters of anti-Marxist insurgencies insist upon a seamless web of interests and the indivisibility of commitments and credibility, but they have also 'proclaimed a vision of international order that is deeply at odds with the old order which, indifferent to internal forms of legitimacy, rested on the foundation of self-determination, sovereignty, and nonintervention'.⁶⁸ This traditional order, as Tucker admits, was very far from ideal; the reciprocal observance of its rules of conduct has been breached on both sides. Under 'peaceful coexistence', states such as Hungary, Chile, Iran and Czechoslovakia and others falling within the spheres of influence of the dominant powers were brutally repressed when they attempted to rearrange their internal social and political systems. And yet the repudiation of the legitimacy of the post-war order and of all Marxist regimes implies that if support for anti-communist insurgents fails, then more forcible measures of intervention are morally justified. Thus, it is universal doctrine and morality that must define the interests of the American state. However:

. . . the issue of interest cannot be decided in the abstract. It cannot be determined apart from circumstance. The effort to persuade us otherwise rests largely on the assertion that the American people will not give their support to a foreign policy that does not have as its core and driving force the securing of freedom and democracy for others as well as for themselves. According to this view, the American people, unlike other peoples, cannot support a foreign policy devoted merely to the pursuit of national interests, conventionally defined. Perhaps not. But what our history does clearly show is that we will not for long support a foreign policy that must ultimately be purchased at the price of blood and treasure unless it can be persuasively shown that vital interests, narrowly defined, are first and foremost at stake.⁶⁹

The United States has had a long but uneven record of attempts to aid anti-communist movements; and most of the efforts have failed. The most conspicuous fiasco was the Central Intelligence Agency's 1961 support for anti-Castro rebels at the Bay of Pigs, an operation that incidentally fits squarely within the framework of the Reagan Doctrine. In spite of the hard-line rhetoric of the Reagan Administration, by May of 1985 the United States was only providing military aid to two anti-communist insurgencies in the Third World—Nicaragua and Afghanistan. The CIA opened its covert war against Nicaragua in early 1981 and, as will be discussed below, Reagan has stubbornly fought with a reluctant Congress to expand US military assistance to the *contras*; indeed, the Reagan Doctrine itself was a response to the Administration's political difficulty in gaining support for its interventionist policies in Central America. Afghanistan was very different because of the direct involvement of Soviet combat forces there since late 1979; it was the Carter Administration that, in alliance with Pakistan and China, began to provide military aid to the *mujahedeen* as a way of raising the costs of intervention to the USSR. The policy of increasing aid to the Afghanistan resistance had strong bipartisan support from Congress, despite the clear liabilities of the United States of being allied to a disunited coalition of Afghan rebels. However, the Reagan Administration remained wary of an open-ended commitment to all anti-communist insurgents; American interests dictated a gap between rhetoric and policy. Support for insurgents in Angola, for example, would align the US with South Africa, radicalise black states and harm American business interests in Angola. Thus, the policy of backing insurgents would be made on a case-by-case basis, as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs noted in Senate hearings in May 1985. 'The enemy of our enemy will be assured of our friendship if he shares our values in his opposition to our enemy', he said. However, 'not every group that professes anticommunism deserves our support':

A fundamental basis of any decision to support a resistance group will be our judgment that if it succeeded, it would be preferable to the regime in power. . . The resistance of one tyrant to another's tyranny is not a sufficient claim on US assistance, for we do not believe it is correct or useful to overthrow one tyranny in favor of another. There are cases where we cannot support resistance groups because of their own tactics and principles. For example, US assistance in virtually any form to the Khmer Rouge would be a classic example of where a lack of discrimination went wrong. . . the groups which deserve our help vary in terms of the assistance which can be most helpful, and a blanket commitment of assistance without regard to these difficulties would not only be mindless, it could also be counter-productive.⁷⁹

For American policy makers, it was essential 'to view the problem in its full international dimensions, and assess the actions we take to assist freedom fighters in terms of how the Soviet Union will react'; anti-

communist insurgencies took place within and affected 'an international context in which the stakes are very high'.⁷¹ This cautious and qualified statement of its 'working guidelines' reflected divisions within the government, but it also confessed the Administration's understandable reluctance to become inextricably committed to insurgents unless some clear US interest was served. It implied a willingness to link support for anti-communist insurgents to the settlement of larger East-West questions; and the inference could be drawn that such support was primarily designed to pressure the Soviet Union into diplomatic and military concessions. Carefully draped in suitable ideological garb, the 'working guidelines' for US support for insurgencies reflected an awareness of the realities of great power politics that continually disillusioned the Administration's supporters on the far Right.⁷² Norman Podhoretz, editor of the neoconservative *Commentary* magazine, complained around this time that Reagan was 'very prudent and cautious about using American power despite his fiery rhetoric'. Podhoretz and other neoconservative intellectuals had looked to Reagan 'to reverse the decline of American power since 1975 that left a dangerous tilt in the balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union', but, 'I don't think he's delivered.'⁷³ What the New Right deplores is that despite the deep anti-communist theme that has run through Reagan's foreign policy since 1981, the pragmatic concern for broader American interests has remained an important check upon those who would conduct US diplomacy on the basis of one or two ideological principles or a grand design. Empires cannot otherwise survive.

The impetus to elaborate a broader concept of support for anti-communist insurgencies emerged in the early months of Reagan's second administration, particularly in the hot summer of 1985—dubbed 'the guns of July' by one writer.⁷⁴ Domestic politics and a growing mood of belligerence in Congress strongly influenced the outcome. In a rapid succession of votes the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives reversed itself and supported so-called 'humanitarian' aid to the Nicaraguan rebels, initiated US assistance to insurgents in Kampuchea, publicly voted funds to sustain the anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan, and repealed a legislative amendment banning aid to insurgents operating in Angola. Most of the House bills were sponsored by prominent Democrats. A large foreign aid bill authorising aid for anti-Marxist insurgencies was then approved, and on the same day (July 11 1985) the Administration announced the despatch of 100 portable 'Stinger' anti-aircraft missiles to Pakistan for use in the conflict over Afghanistan (light, deadly accurate and capable of being fired from a shoulder launcher by a single guerilla, the Stinger is the emblematic weapon of the Reagan Doctrine). These votes overturned a number of the existing informal and legislative constraints on executive powers for intervening covertly in the Third World and, taken collectively, may be seen as a Congressional repeal of the

decade-old Vietnam Syndrome. As one Congressman put it during debate on the 1976 Clark amendment prohibiting US military assistance to anti-government rebels in Angola, by 'repealing Clark, we will be saying that the President should have the flexibility and the leverage available to respond both to Soviet and to Cuban adventurism in the Third World, especially in an area so rich in economic potential'.⁷⁵ Support for the Reagan Doctrine implied a strengthening of executive powers, support for a return to covert interventions in the Third World, and bipartisan endorsement of the policy of aiding anti-Marxist insurgencies.

The Reagan Administration did not altogether encourage—indeed, it tried to dampen—the war fevers that took over Congress in the summer of 1985. Support for anti-Marxist insurgencies in selected countries, such as Nicaragua and Afghanistan, was very strong in the CIA, the National Security Council, parts of the Pentagon and, of course, with Reagan. But the government was divided. There was strong opposition from the State Department to providing military aid to the UNITA forces in Angola or giving such assistance to the so-called non-communist resistance in Kampuchea. In both cases, State argued, US backing of insurgencies would threaten the success of diplomatic negotiations then underway. The Administration was pursuing an illusory settlement in southern Africa which would send 25,000 Cuban troops home from Angola and gain independence for neighbouring Namibia: military aid was 'not necessary or appropriate', Reagan's officials cautioned the Congress.⁷⁶ Congress disagreed.

The Congressional debates over aid to insurgencies were influenced by a mood of public frustration and bellicosity which had been building over events such as the terrorist hijacking of a TWA plane in Athens, the exposure of spy rings in the US, the visit of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega to Moscow immediately following a House vote to withhold aid from the *contras*, and the killing of several Marines in El Salvador. Congress was already in a xenophobic fever over trade and other economic matters. The popular culture reflected a mood of revenge: 'The spirit of the anti-communist movie crusader Rambo had been everywhere taken as a sign of the times.'⁷⁷ Many House Democrats were preoccupied with their image of 'looking weak', of appearing unwilling to use force. 'There is an emotional need in America that has not been satisfied—to strike back, to revenge the [TWA] hostages', said the Democrats' chief deputy whip.⁷⁸ The party was moving toward conservative foreign and security positions espoused by southern Democrats and allies of the late Senator Henry Jackson. Sunbelt Democrats strongly supported Reagan on aid to the *contras* because of growing fears in the South that spreading Marxist revolutions in Central America would lead to chaos and a flood of new refugees to the US. Reagan and Shultz had also openly warned that failure to back the *contras* would prompt the direct use of American

combat forces against Nicaragua.⁷⁹ A plausible invasion plan appeared in *The New York Times* on June 4th, just in time for the vote on aid to the *contras*. Anxious to counter a public perception that their party was soft on terrorism and defence, the 'Rambo' Democrats threw their support behind Reagan. New York Representative Stephen Solarz, a leading party voice during the 'guns of July', argued that if the Democrats hoped to recapture the White House, 'we will have to develop a new and more toughminded consensus on foreign policy'.⁸⁰ Clearly, deeper forces of ideology were at work here: the Reagan mix of bellicose anti-communism, relentless build-up of military strength, and advocacy of liberty and democracy had attained a near-hegemonic position in the domestic debate over foreign policy. At the same time, the White House and its many allies in Congress were using the votes on support for insurgencies to wear down the Vietnam Syndrome and to whip up support for the Nicaraguan *contras*, rebels without popular appeal in either Nicaragua or the United States.

The Congressional debates suggest no single, over-riding motive for support for counter-revolutionaries, but the allegation that assistance to insurgents would add leverage to diplomacy was a common theme. Aid to the *contras*, it was argued, would help pressure the Sandinistas into negotiations on American terms and force Nicaragua to 'cry uncle'. Yet Reagan had made it plain that his terms involved a complete alteration of the 'national structure' of the Nicaraguan state and the revolution, *not* a regional negotiation between Nicaragua and its neighbours over a peace treaty.⁸¹ Those who supported the Solarz amendment to initiate US military assistance to the 'non-Communist resistance forces' in Kampuchea argued that such action would send a strong signal to Vietnam 'that the costs of their occupation are becoming sufficiently great to require a political settlement'.⁸² If Vietnam did withdraw, how could America prevent the return of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge except by aiding anti-communist forces? The rationale for military aid to UNITA in Angola was similar: to raise the costs to the Cubans and Soviets of their support to the MPLA government, but also to demonstrate to Marxists everywhere 'that we are not terminally ill with the dreaded "Vietnam Syndrome" ' by repealing the Clark amendment. Communists would celebrate in Havana and Moscow if Clark was not repealed. 'They will certainly celebrate in Managua if we do not finally, after a decade of watching the forces for freedom lose struggles or cling precariously to freedom, reject this Clark amendment tragedy'.⁸³ To send a message to Managua the Congress wanted to align the US with the weakest tribal group in Angola, led by a man who collaborated with the Portuguese, was trained by the Chinese, is heavily dependent on South Africa, who calls himself a 'Marxist' and is treated to tea at the White House as a great freedom-fighter. Seldom have the lunatic fantasies of our age been more heavily subscribed by a single opportunist.

We noted earlier that the litmus test of the Reagan Doctrine is Central America, and especially Nicaragua. It is no coincidence that this new global doctrine of support for anti-communist insurgencies appeared at a moment when the White House was having serious problems in winning popular and Congressional backing for its policy of assisting the contras. Robert Tucker notes that the Reagan Doctrine 'is largely a response to the need to explain and to justify **administration policy** in Central America, and particularly its policy toward **Nicaragua**'.⁸⁴ But Nicaragua itself was but a regional aspect of a world-wide struggle: as Henry Kissinger, chairman of the Bipartisan Commission on Central America said: 'if we cannot manage in Central America, it will be impossible to convince threatened nations in the Persian Gulf and in other places that we know how to manage the global **equilibrium**'.⁸⁵ The emergence of the Reagan Doctrine also represented a newly assertive phase in American foreign policy. It appeared to reflect a conviction in Washington that in the global **power struggle** with the Soviet Union the United States had again gained the upper hand, thanks to its massive military build-up. In early 1986 the US agreed to supply Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to UNITA rebels in Angola as well as to the Afghan insurgency. Leslie Gelb, the diplomatic correspondent of *The New York Times*, argued that this decision was 'part of a new assertiveness in the Reagan administration':

President Reagan and his senior advisors believe that they have the means to balance power between the Soviet Union and the United States more in the American favor. Secondly, they believe that the Soviet Union is over-extended militarily and economically. They've got lots of client states around the world—in Cuba, in Nicaragua, in Vietnam, but their troops are engaged in Afghanistan; and this is causing the Soviet Union to be rather cautious about pursuing support of these client states and trying new adventures elsewhere. The third **reason** is that the Soviet Union is having trouble internally—economically. So the sum of this, in the judgment of the administration, is that the Soviet Union is somewhat on the run now and that the administration can afford to push the Soviet Union, to challenge Soviet interests more than in the past. . . . My understanding from talking to people in the Reagan administration is that they understand that the Soviets aren't going to like this one bit. But they wanted to define a new basis of Soviet-American relations. They want the lead issue to be not arms control, as it has been in the past, but they want it to be on regional issues. And here, by providing a better quality of armaments, more armaments, to rebels fighting in Angola or Afghanistan, or the contras in Central America, they feel that they can make the Soviet client states bleed more and force the Soviet Union either to more or less back away from those client states and negotiate or to allow our side to gain the upper **hand**.⁸⁶

Gelb's analysis underscores the extent to which, the United States government views aid to insurgencies as a combative policy designed to transform the agenda of superpower relations. By bleeding 'Soviet client states' such as Nicaragua through proxy wars, the Americans attack the

USSR without the risk of frontal war and reassert their hegemony in traditional American preserves such as Central America. Liberty and democracy are part of the doctrinal weaponry used in this war of proxies, but the underlying motive of the Reagan Administration is the **reassertion** of US hegemony in the Third World and the roll back of Moscow's gains. The new assertiveness described by Gelb was evident in the US air raids against Libya, ostensibly an anti-terrorist action but a vivid demonstration of the strategy of low-intensity conflict in action. And it was evident from reports in early 1986 that the United States was spending \$500 million a year in covert assistance to anti-communist insurgencies in the four target nations—Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia and Nicaragua. An inter-agency policy group, headed by CIA director William Casey and known as the 208 Committee, implements and co-ordinates this latest chapter in America's long, obsessive history of counter-revolutionary warfare.⁸⁷

The Reagan Doctrine asserts that Marxist revolutions can be reversed *and* that this can be accomplished without the bloody and protracted engagement of US combat forces. The global strategy of rolling back Soviet power and keeping the USSR 'on the run' requires a victory in one of the four target nations. It is Nicaragua alone that can provide such a victory, but it cannot happen without direct US military intervention. The rationale for military assistance to the *contras* or, if needed, American involvement was set down in the report of the Kissinger Commission and has been repeated endlessly by the Administration. Nicaraguan involvement with the Cubans and Russians creates a security threat near the US border, leaving America 'with a difficult choice between unpalatable alternatives. We would either have to assume a permanently increased defense burden, or see our capacity to defend distant trouble-spots reduced, and as a result have to reduce important commitments elsewhere in the world.'⁸⁸

In late June of 1986, on the eve of a critical vote by the House of Representatives on an Administration plan for \$100 million in military and economic assistance to the *contras*, Reagan warned the (rather sceptical) American people that Nicaragua was being turned into a Soviet base. 'Eventually, we Americans will have to stop arguing among ourselves. We will have to confront the reality of a **Soviet** military beachhead inside our defense perimeters—about 500 miles from Mexico.'⁸⁹ Faced with such logic (which had nothing to say about the 'global democratic revolution') and the prospect of Fall elections in which 'toughness' on foreign policy was expected to feature in many campaigns, the House reversed itself and voted for the *contras*. One of the leading *contras* remarked subsequently that Congress had won a great many new Post Offices and less tangible *quid pro quos* for its vote for an insurgency which, two days later, the World Court declared to be in violation of

international law. The House vote represented a major step toward a full-scale American intervention in Central America—an intervention that will, despite the low-intensity planners, be prolonged, cruel, bloody and divisive. For such is the nature and logic of real war. The incompetence and venality of the *contras*, who enjoy popular support only in Florida, Washington and Swiss banks, almost guarantee another summer of war fevers on the Potomac, another round of crisis management by the civilian strategists and geopoliticians, an emergency session of Congress in which the President is granted sweeping war-making powers, and another Presidential address to the nation about the dire threat to the Republic. Then the shells and rockets will fall on Managua, and the real war will begin. If this should happen, then Kenneth Thompson's comments on the Reagan Doctrine may seem sadly prophetic. 'What the Reagan Doctrine requires, in theory, is indiscriminate intervention to overturn Communist regimes regardless of calculations of interest and power. In practice, such policies will be abandoned, as happened with US policy in Lebanon, or will be pursued half-heartedly with advance and retreat over long years in circumstances bound to yield growing public disillusionment, as happened in Vietnam.'⁹⁰ On the other hand, Nicaragua is not Vietnam and there is little reason to think that the US military is planning 'half-hearted' advances and retreats 'over long years' in Central America. On the contrary, it is planning to win, and that it *can* win in the military sense is scarcely debatable.

In summary, the Reagan Doctrine is not about liberty. It is not about democracy. It is about undeclared wars and violations of the most basic principles of international law and justice. The Reagan Doctrine expresses openly one of the most repugnant ideas of the New Cold War—namely, that the US and its right-wing clients have a moral right to subvert duly constituted, sovereign states and to intervene in their internal affairs—and wraps it in the revolutionary language of Tom Paine and the American Revolution. Thus, the killers who lead the *contras* are compared with the American Founding Fathers, and the current occupant of the White House travels to Bitburg, Germany, to state that, 'I am a *contra*; I am a potential victim of totalitarianism'. Farce aside, the claims of the Reagan Doctrine to moral superiority or legality cannot be taken seriously, for this doctrine undermines that fundamental basis of world order which makes democracy, freedom and peace possible. Reagan and his supporters assume the right—which cannot be upheld on any reading of international law—to dictate forms of government to states which they define as illegitimate, and go on to assert an unqualified right to interfere with force in the affairs of Marxist states and to overthrow socialist revolutions. The legal implication of this was set out at great length and with much clarity in the judgment of the International Court of Justice at the Hague in June 1986 in the matter of US military and paramilitary actions against

Nicaragua. The World Court ruled that the US was in breach of its legal obligations in mining Nicaragua's harbours, infringing its air space, arming the contras, and imposing a trade embargo, and it ordered reparations to be paid. Among other fundamental principles, the Court emphasised that 'the principle of non-intervention involved the right of every sovereign state to conduct its affairs without outside interference. Intervention was wrongful when it used coercion, particularly force, directly as military action or indirectly as supporting subversive activities in another state':

Considering the principle of non-intervention, the Court held that if one State, with a view to the coercion of another State, supported and assisted armed bands in that State whose purpose was to overthrow its Government, that amounted to an **intervention** in its internal affairs, whatever the political motives.

Therefore, the US support to the military and paramilitary activities of the Contras by funds, training, weapons, intelligence and logistic support constituted a clear breach of the principle of **non-intervention**.⁹¹

Great powers have intervened in the affairs of weaker countries since the beginnings of international relations, and they will continue to do so. The Reagan Doctrine is different, however, in that it tends to repudiate the basic principles, political as well as legal and moral, on which the international system is based and claims an unlimited right to intervene in the affairs of radical Third World states. This doctrine strikes at the very heart of the notion of a peaceful coexistence between rival social systems and declares a war against socialist revolutions in the Third World. As well as being a declaration of war against revolutionary states by the leading imperialist state, the Reagan Doctrine undermines the international order itself and the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty, self-determination, and non-intervention on which that order shakily rests. To repeat, the defence of those basic principles is fundamental to the defence of all progressive states, in the Third World and elsewhere, and this is why the Reagan Doctrine must be outlawed. Ronald Reagan has made America a purveyor of dangerous ideas, a menace to international society.

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