

DOCUMENTATION

Reagan's Peace Process for Regional Conflicts

President Reagan has proposed a three-level peace process to address continuing wars in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Angola and Ethiopia. The following is a White House fact sheet on the peace process and the conflicts it addresses.

The President's Initiative on Regional Conflict

BACKGROUND: Soviet interventionism in the 1970s left in its wake a series of repressive regimes, seeking to impose alien ideologies on countries by military force, and kept in power by Soviet military aid. The policies of these regimes have given rise to indigenous opposition seeking to liberalize or overthrow them. The result has been conflicts which are taking a heavy human toll, are spilling across international boundaries, and are drawing in outside military involvement. The President has made clear that our sympathies are with those who resist Soviet expansionism, fight for freedom, and seek genuine self-determination. If these problems cannot be resolved through negotiations and by Soviet restraint, they will only worsen. The President hopes to provide a means by which to pursue political, rather than military, solutions to these problems.

DESCRIPTION: In his address to the General Assembly, the President proposed a peace process at three levels to address the continuing wars in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Angola and Ethiopia, where Soviet involvement contributed to the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1970s. The initiative is a comprehensive framework designed to improve the prospects for peace in these areas. It complements regional and other international efforts to achieve lasting political solutions. Progress in this can also facilitate an improvement in overall East-West relations.

1. The first level calls for negotiations between the warring parties. The form of such talks in each instance might vary but negotiations and the improvement of internal political conditions are essential to achieving an end to violence and true national reconciliation.

2. Once real progress in these areas has been made, the United States and the Soviet Union could hold a separate set of talks. These would not be formal peace negotiations but would explore how these two governments could support regional and other international peace-making efforts. In some cases, such as Afghanistan and Cambodia, the United States and the USSR might offer guarantees for agreements already reached by the warring parties. In every case, the primary U.S.-Soviet role would be to reduce and eliminate outside military involvement, including verified withdrawal of foreign troops and restraint on the flow of outside arms.

3. If the first two stages are successful, a third element of a long-term solution would become possible: reintegration of the war-torn nations into the international economy. The United States would be willing to contribute generously to democratic reconciliation with their own people, their respect for human rights and their return to the family of free nations.

This approach puts the burden on the warring parties to reach accommodation and offers a framework for achieving superpower restraint. It is clear that no U.S.-Soviet condominium can solve these problems. We must bear in mind that each of these conflicts has its own character and requirements for a political solution. Regional peace-making initiatives like Contadora in Central America and ASEAN's proposals for Cambodia have sought to address precisely these individual characteristics. The United States supports those initiatives and believes that this proposal will complement them by providing for participation by the warring parties.

REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS: Soviet involvement in Third-World conflicts has had a direct effect in souring U.S.-Soviet relations, especially over the last decade.

In September 1984, President Reagan proposed to the UNGA that the United States and the Soviet Union hold periodic exchanges at the policy level on key regions of the world. Over the past year the two sides have held experts talks on the Middle East, Afghanistan, southern Africa and East Asia. Talks on Central America and the Caribbean will be held at the end of October. While these talks have not produced dramatic breakthroughs, they have been useful for clarifying views and preventing miscalculation. We hope these talks will continue on a more regular basis in the future. The President, however, would like to move beyond exchanging views.

SPECIFIC REGIONAL CONFLICTS:

1. Namibia/Angola

Soviet intervention in the Angolan conflict was the first use of surrogate Cuban troops in the 1970s. Cuban forces enabled the present regime to take power, but it has not been able to end the resistance efforts of groups opposing its dictatorship. U.S. attempts to discuss the issue with the Soviets, and especially the Cuban troop issue, drew only brusque responses that the matter was one between the Cubans and Angolans.

U.S. policy for Angola/Namibia is aimed at achieving a negotiated agreement for Namibian independence under United Nations Security Council Resolution 435-78 and in that context the withdrawal of both South African forces from Namibia and Cuban forces from Angola. To this end, we have worked to bring the two sides, Angola and South Africa, into a negotiating framework in which they could reach the hard decisions necessary for such a settlement.

The President's initiative is aimed at seeking a way to reduce regional tensions and to test Soviet willingness to play a constructive role in Angola. The Soviet Union is directly involved in the Angolan conflict and bears a responsibility for resolving it. In fact, Soviet military involvement appears to be growing. U.S. efforts will continue to seek a resolution of the international aspects of the problem. The Angolan parties must reconcile themselves. We are calling on the Soviet Union both to contribute to this process and to play a constructive role in promoting reconciliation.

2. Afghanistan

The December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ended any prospects for ratification of the SALT Two accord and led to the imposition of sanctions by the U.S. and Western countries including Japan, sanctions which included the boycott of the Moscow Olympics and the embargo on U.S. grain sales. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the continuing brutal repression of the country has outraged world public opinion and seriously damaged East-West relations. In diplomatic consultations, including at the highest levels, the United States has strongly urged Moscow to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Every year since the invasion, the U.N. General Assembly has called for foreign troop withdrawal.

U.S. policy towards Afghanistan is based on achieving a negotiated political settlement based on four underlying principles: complete withdrawal of Soviet troops; restoration of Afghanistan's traditional independent and non-aligned status; self-determination of the Afghan people; and return of the refugees with safety and honor. As part of this effort, we support the ongoing U.N. proximity talks. However, these talks have not yet addressed the central issue of Soviet troop withdrawal. The Soviets have insisted that this is a bilateral issue between themselves and the Afghan regime.

The President's initiative, by emphasizing the need for negotiation between the parties directly involved in the conflicts, would force the Soviets to come to terms with the fundamental reality in Afghanistan — the existence of a broadly based national liberation movement. The second level of the new initiative supports and complements our commitment to the U.N. process to serve as a guarantor of a negotiated political settlement. U.S.-Soviet guarantees of non-interference by external forces would reaffirm arrangements already worked out between the warring parties. Such guarantees would apply both to the withdrawal of foreign troops and to the elimination of outside flow of arms. The third level, by providing generous assistance to war-torn Afghanistan, would assure the smooth reintegration of the massive refugee population into the economy and provide a basis for the reconstruction of the country.

3. Cambodia

The December 1978 invasion and subsequent occupation of Cambodia by Vietnamese troops created a major threat to the stability of Southeast Asia and a direct threat to Thailand. In addition, the earlier establishment of the Soviet base at Camh Ranh Bay, which is related to Moscow's support of Hanoi's military efforts, increased the danger of military incidents between U.S. and Soviet naval and air units. In diplomatic exchanges, the United States has urged Moscow to persuade Hanoi of the need for a political settlement based on the withdrawal of its troops, as advocated by U.N. resolutions, the ICK and ASEAN.

The United States strongly supports the efforts of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to obtain a political solution to the problem of Cambodia based on the essential elements worked out by the 1981 U.N.-sponsored International Conference of Kampuchea (ICK): complete withdrawal of foreign forces; U.N. supervised free elections; and a U.N. peacekeeping force. The United States believes that a durable settlement acceptable to the Cambodian people and to their neighbors must be based on these principles. These same principles have been included in six successive resolutions adopted overwhelmingly by the U.N. General Assembly.

The President's proposal is an integral part of U.S. support for ASEAN and the leadership on the Cambodian problem which its members, as the countries most directly

concerned, have shown. The principles enunciated by the President in his address — negotiations, withdrawal of foreign forces, an end to hostilities — parallel those of the ICK. In July 1985, the ASEAN countries proposed indirect talks between the Cambodian resistance forces and a Vietnamese delegation including representatives of Hanoi's Cambodian clients. Such talks, if accepted by Vietnam, could lead to the negotiations between the warring parties called for in the President's initiative.

4. Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, a Soviet-supported regime has betrayed the democratic goals of the 1979 revolution, moving increasingly toward totalitarianism and generating a large and growing indigenous armed resistance. The Sandinistas' refusal to address the legitimate grievances of Nicaragua's armed and civilian opposition and the increasing reliance on force — both in its domestic and foreign relations — have led to spiralling regional tensions; Sandinista policies of force have taken a heavy toll in human lives and scarce economic resources and have threatened the region's fragile democracies.

U.S. policy toward Nicaragua is premised on four basic goals: internal reconciliation through implementation of promises made to the OAS in 1979 for a democratic, pluralistic society guaranteeing full civil, political and religious rights; termination of Sandinista support for insurgency in El Salvador and other Central American countries; termination of Nicaragua's military-security ties with the Soviet bloc and Cuba and the departure from Nicaragua of military-security advisors from those countries; and reduction of Nicaragua's military apparatus to a level of forces and types of armament compatible with those of other regional states.

The United States has consistently called on the Sandinistas to seek a peaceful resolution of Nicaragua's civil war by engaging in discussions with leaders of the armed resistance to address substantively the legitimate grievances which have compelled a resort to arms. Negotiations envisioned under the President's initiative would be directed toward eliminating the major sources of regional concern: the presence of large numbers of Soviet-bloc and Cuban advisors and technicians; the massive influx of military hardware from those countries; and the direct role of the Soviet bloc and Cuba in crafting Nicaragua's military, foreign and domestic policies. U.S.-Soviet negotiations on Nicaragua would complement the negotiations among the five Central American countries, mediated by the Contradora group, to seek a comprehensive settlement of the region's problems. The third stage is essentially a reiteration of our long-standing proposal to offer major economic and developmental assistance in exchange for substantive progress in meeting our basic goals, as described above.

5. Ethiopia

Our long-standing policy is to respect the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. We do not support the separatist movements active in that country. The insurgents are divided up into many different groups, the two largest of which are Marxist-oriented. Some of these groups have been supported by Libya.

Ethiopia is a key nation in the Horn of Africa, a strategically important part of the world that is torn by internal strife and regional political conflicts. Within Ethiopia, a repressive regime is at war with its people. We believe that no military solution is possible, despite the supply of large quantities of Soviet military aid and the presence of 1,700 Soviet military advisors and 2,500 Cuban combat troops. Moreover, pursuit of a military solution has led to cross border violence and serious aggravation of regional rivalries. The Ethiopian

leadership has not been willing to seriously negotiate dissident demands for greater autonomy. Given its large involvement, the Soviet Union has responsibility to help bring about peace within Ethiopia and with its neighbors. If the Soviets are willing to work for peaceful reconciliation in Ethiopia, the United States is prepared to increase its long-standing efforts to promote better relations among all the countries of the region.

SOURCE: United States Information Service, Embassy of the United States, Singapore, 25 October 1985.