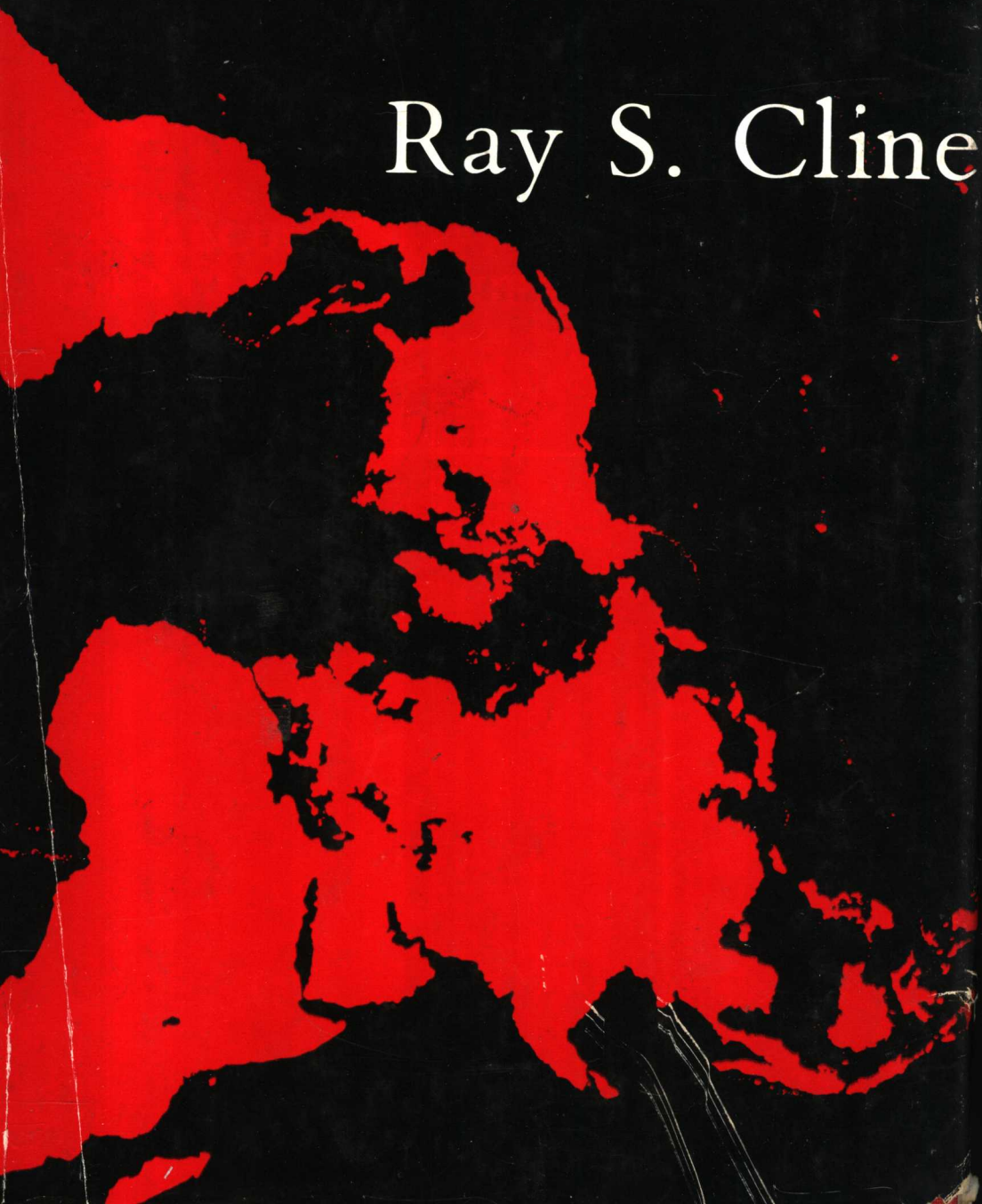


# World Power Assessment 1977

A CALCULUS OF STRATEGIC DRIFT

Ray S. Cline



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# Foreword

**T**here are many assessments of the military balance—both nuclear and conventional—within the framework of world power relationships, but most have a largely quantitative and technical focus. What has been lacking is an overall conceptual methodology that incorporates these military factors with the broader geopolitical, economic, and psychological issues that tend to determine the outcome of real international conflicts. It is this need that Dr. Ray S. Cline undertook to fill with his first *World Power Assessment*, issued in 1975, in which he developed and employed a novel methodology and terminology.

The 1975 version of this book was widely acclaimed and has been put to good use not only by scholars but also by policymakers, the news media, and students. One enthusiastic reviewer went so far as to compare Dr. Cline's formula for measuring perceived power favorably with the somewhat more famous nuclear energy formula,  $E=mc^2$ .

The Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is proud to bring out this updated assessment reflecting not only new data but the substance of the many dialogues engendered by Dr. Cline's first volume. This 1977 edition considerably refines and extends some of the concepts of measuring international power in accordance with the concept for which he coined the word "politectionic." It further assesses the trend line indicating the likelihood of future conflict or stability and identifies critical elements that must be taken into account in U.S. strategic thinking and foreign policy as of 1977. We feel that this new study is especially relevant and timely as the United States, under new national leadership, faces the turbulent international environment of the remainder of the 1970s.

DAVID M. ABSHIRE  
Chairman, CSIS

## Author's Preface

**M**y hope in writing this book is that readers will be stimulated to realistic thinking about world affairs and the necessary ingredients of an effective U.S. foreign policy. Whatever value there is in this assessment of the balance of world power derives from exchanges of ideas and information with all of the friends and associates with whom I worked for many years in the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of State as well as, more recently, at Georgetown University.

I am deeply appreciative for the sterling assistance given during the preparation of *World Power Assessment 1977* by my able research editor, Sylvia Lowe; by Mary Cobb, who diligently, even heroically, prepared the manuscript for publication; and by my wife, Marjorie W. Cline, who compiled the index with great competence and good humor. Finally, I am grateful to my personal secretarial and research assistants, Ann Campagna and Ona Gelman, for their many contributions to the completion of the whole task of research and writing.

RAY S. CLINE

Washington, D.C.

March 1, 1977

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# Politectonics: Measuring the Strength of Nations

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**T**he political and economic structure of international relations has never been more complex and challenging than at this time when a new national political leadership under President James E. Carter is taking hold of the reins of power. Whatever the United States does or refrains from doing abroad materially affects the fate of nations and peoples whose welfare is tied to the fortunes of the strongest country in the world. From the vantage point of Washington the view looks out over a sea of challenges; the question uppermost in most of the capitals of the world is whether the political will and coherence of purpose in the United States is adequate to those challenges, which present great opportunities as well as great dangers.

The low point in American fortunes was reached in 1974 with the removal from office of an incumbent President for the first time in U.S. history. Alliances hitherto thought vital to U.S. security seemed to be drifting apart or simply drifting. In Vietnam the United States suffered the first clearcut military defeat ever inflicted on it. As a result, the world witnessed a humiliating U.S. withdrawal from the Indochina area and the collapse of a regime and a society in which successive U.S. presidents had invested heavily in terms of lives, money, and prestige. The buoyancy of earlier U.S. behavior trailed off into national uncertainty, indecisiveness, and self-doubt. Public confidence in government policymaking reached its lowest point since before World War II.

Since 1975 the country has appeared to be gradually recovering its spirit and vigor. The bicentennial year brought a lift to public spirits and some longer perspective to the public view of the more recent travails of

the country. The economy has resumed its growth. A new political leadership has been elected and taken office with a mandate to restore confidence and build a national consensus behind American national purposes at home and abroad. It is more generally realized now than in the past two or three years that, the frustration of U.S. strategic efforts in Vietnam notwithstanding, the United States still has enormous economic and military power which needs only to be focused on the pursuit of a coherent national purpose or strategy on which there is political consensus. The beginning of an upswing in U.S. drive and performance is only now in 1977 registering on the crude scale of international perceptions of power factors. It is crucial to understand what is happening in the international arena that has brought about these changes and to calibrate just where the United States really stands in the scale of world power. This book suggests some answers. They emerge upon looking at the strength of nations in terms of global geography, economic interdependence, military capability, and shifting political alignments.

There is nothing very new in this approach to our problems. It is really a return to basics and the long perspectives of historical change. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, in 1904, the great British geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder, wrote an essay on "The Geographical Pivot of History" emphasizing the pivotal significance of political control of the human and material resources of the central Eurasian land mass on the international scene. This emphasis increased as his ideas evolved more precisely down into the period of World War II. As the core of his thinking, Mackinder articulated a crucial concept in international relations by declaring that command of the Eurasian heartland (essentially Central Europe and Russia, from the Rhine to the Urals) would eventually lead to command of all of the world's resources and peoples. The pros and cons of this dictum have formed the core of most informed discussion of strategic theory ever since. Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin all came very close to seizing control of that heartland. The USSR commands most of this region today. Mackinder looks more prescient every day as we search for insights into present international circumstances.

There is a striking analogy between present political and strategic trends, on the one hand, and the terminology of new scholarly findings relating to the seabeds, as well as fundamental new geological concepts, on the other. It now seems that the earth's surface is made up of a

number of separate "tectonic plates"<sup>1</sup> containing entire continents and immense stretches of the surrounding seabeds. There is a North American plate, a South American plate, a Pacific plate, a China plate, a Eurasian plate, an African plate, and an Indian Ocean-Australian plate as well as some smaller regional pieces of the earth's outer crustal shell. These continental plates float on a more fluid inner core, and they have very slowly drifted apart and then together over the millennia. Where they meet or pull apart, mountain ranges are thrust up, volcanic and seismic pressures erupt, the great oceanic ridges and rifts are formed, and some underwater terrain slips beneath the edge of adjoining tectonic plates and is slowly ground down back into the molten core of the earth.

A more graphic picture of what is taking place in a much quicker time frame in the shifting of international power in this century could hardly be found. The strength of nations and of the clusters of nations allied to one another waxes and wanes in conformity with subterranean rhythms of economic, military, and political currents producing either growth and stability or conflict, erosion, and destruction.

No good word is in common use to describe the process of analyzing such structural international changes. The old term, "geopolitics," which derives from Mackinder's model for world trends, fell into disrepute some time ago, largely as a result of distortions introduced in Germany by Karl Haushofer in Hitler's time. In its place we now most often hear theorists talk of a geometric—triangular, pentagonal, etc.—"balance of power" vaguely reminiscent of Metternichean Europe. This talk has proved to be largely irrelevant to what is actually taking place in the twentieth century. The economics and ideology of the nineteenth century "concert of Europe" among nations very similar in political structure are not very helpful in explaining the relations between the pluralistic U.S. open society and the autarchic dictatorships of the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China (PRC). The structure of international ties and conflicts is based on politics and geography, not geometry. A more realistic model is needed for analyzing today's power distribution among nations.

Accordingly, this book undertakes to study the elements of power in international politics and the gradual shift in the balance of those elements among nations and groups of nations in terms of a new formula based on old truths. To suggest the geographical foundations of this method of strategic analysis, and yet emphasize that the kind of power

we are talking about is essentially political, economic, and military, I have used a new word, "politectionics," i.e., political structuring. By this, I mean to denote the formation and breakup of international power groupings, mainly regional in makeup, but also shaped by cultural, political, and economic forces, that determine the real balance in today's give-and-take relations among nations.

In keeping with this approach, this analysis is centered on the United States, the foremost single continent-sized unit of national power, and on the clusters of nations which associate themselves in one or more ways, some closely, some loosely, with the power of the United States. In addition, we analyze those clusters of nations which stand apart from the United States and, in some cases, directly or indirectly oppose U.S. power and influence.

By this method, we describe the world as made up of a number of discrete politectionic zones. The future international alignments of major nations within these are crucial. There are eleven such zones, as shown on the frontispiece map, of which the primary ones are: (I) North America, the heartland of which is the United States; (II) the USSR, the heartland of Eurasia; and (III) China (PRC) and the Asian Communist regimes in Korea and Indochina, which together occupy most of the mainland of East Asia.

On the periphery of Eurasia are five great peninsular or insular zones, the rimlands, which can be dominated from the center of the continental land mass but which are also at this time in history closely connected by transoceanic ties to other parts of the world. These five are: (IV) West Europe, the crucial, long-disputed area stretching from Greece to the United Kingdom, an extended Eurasian peninsula from the viewpoint of the Soviet heartland; (V) the Mideast, a long, disorganized belt of nations reaching from Iran across Asia Minor and the Arabian peninsula to the Arab littoral of North Africa; (VI) South Asia, the subcontinent; (VII) Southeast Asia beyond Indochina, the vast ocean archipelago area containing Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Burma; and (VIII) Northeast Asia, the Japan-South Korea-China/Taiwan triangle.

These zones, the rimlands of Eurasia, are surrounded by an outer circle of continents and peoples. This circle comprises mainly the lands of the southern hemisphere, which group themselves in three zones: (IX) South America; (X) Central and Southern Africa, and (XI) Australia and New Zealand.

Needless to say, other dividing lines between zones could be picked out and there are several geographical regions, like the Caribbean or the Arabian and Iranian geological plates, that can be viewed as separate politectonic subzones. The eleven basic zones, however, provide a useful structural overview of international relations today. The power of the individual nations in each zone and their links with one another as well as their relationships with nations in other zones are the stuff with which world strategy and diplomacy deal. The slow, sometimes nearly imperceptible shifting and drifting of the dominant elements in these zones, the dynamics of clusters of allied nations, whether they are tightly controlled empires or voluntary associations of countries, are what we are observing.

This gradual movement within and back and forth among zones is indeed like the drift of continental plates on the earth's surface. The insights gained through this politectonic approach to international power largely coincide with the conventional wisdom of most Americans about international power and conflict in recent years. Attempts to measure the power of nations individually or in groups are exceedingly difficult and inexact, whatever approach is used. Judging the trend in power relationships among the earth's politectonic zones is even more difficult. Looking at the United States' place in today's power structure from such a viewpoint may, however, clarify an understanding of the dangers and opportunities in the world around us in an era of strategic drift.

## Nations

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In the rhetorical atmosphere of the United Nations all of the 158 more or less sovereign nations<sup>2</sup> of the world are equal, but everyone is aware that in the real world some nations are much "more equal" than others. Some have tremendous power, others very little. In modern times the nation-state is the main aggregative unit of political force in international affairs.

A nation is a group of people, usually living in a specific territory, who share a common sense of history, customs, and—usually—language. A state is a sovereign body politic. Many modern states are homogeneous nations and many nations are sovereign states. On the

other hand, there are many states which are multinational, as in the USSR, where the dominant Great Russian population constitutes barely more than half of a country which includes many still quite distinct cultural minorities concentrated in specific regions like the Ukraine or Kazakhstan that by any normal definition would make up nations in their own right. The United States is a quite different type of nation-state with an astonishing mix of ethnic groups, many of whom deliberately came to North America to belong to a pluralistic body politic of remarkable political, cultural, and linguistic homogeneity.

Within national boundaries in many parts of the world, especially in Asia and Africa, tribalism or ethnic subnational loyalties are strong. Religious minorities and ethnic or linguistic factions battle in Ireland and Belgium and India, and create agonizing tensions in Cyprus, South Africa, and even in Canada. The melting pot does not always really meld, not even in the United States, as fast or as thoroughly as once supposed. Nevertheless, the nation-state is the decisive political unit of action and responsibility in our era. Decisions in international conflicts or collaborations are made by the political leadership in power at any given time in each of the 158 nations.

From the town meeting to the nation-state, communities of all types and sizes dispense power and privileges insofar as they act as a group. All of them must work out systems for sharing benefits and burdens, as well as for settling disputes among their members. They must also set up some kind of sanctions to enforce compliance with those settlements, sanctions vested in some constituted authority, whether it is an absolute monarch with his army or a judiciary backed by civil police. Ultimately, power is the ability to coerce. Making decisions on all these matters is the business of government.

In a community embracing the whole world, at this period of history, there is no single legitimately constituted power for the effective settlement of disagreements about economic, military, and political conflicts. More important, there is no procedure in international relations which guarantees that sanctions will be applied to enforce compliance with such international settlements as can be agreed upon. The extent to which one country can pursue its international and domestic aims without regard to, or even against, the interests of others, is based in the final analysis on its own national power as compared with that of other nations. Power in the international arena can thus be defined simply as the ability of the government of one state to cause the

government of another state to do something which the latter otherwise would not choose to do—whether by persuasion, coercion, or outright military force.

Power is a subjective fact; it need not actually be brought into use to arrive at the results desired by those who wield it. A nation's leaders make decisions affecting foreign policy on the basis of projections of what they perceive their own power to be or of what they think is the power of others. Such projections may not always be accurate; there is often a marked lag between changing facts and perceptions of them, but the perceptions nonetheless determine governmental decisions.

International conflicts of interest, whether political, economic, or military, are played out like games of chess. Perceived power is a decisive factor, even if it only prevents another's action, like a chessman which threatens every square on the board to which an opponent's piece might move. The threat may never be carried out and therefore superficially nothing may appear to have happened. As on a chessboard, however, the pattern of potential power and counter-power in the minds of the antagonists determines how the game proceeds from move to move and how it will end. Sometimes one nation carries out its aims to complete victory. More often the match is indecisive or flatly stalemated. Only in desperate cases does the struggle move into a true end game, when—in international affairs—other levels of political and economic conflict are transcended and nations at last resort to war.

A study of national power, in the final analysis, is a study of the capacity to wage war, but it is also in the normal run of cases an appraisal of many other kinds of international competition or conflict, where differences are resolved within a political or an economic context. It is important to calculate carefully the capabilities and intentions of enemies or potential enemies. Thus, in thinking about an appropriate strategy for the United States and the strategic balance which we seek in the world, it is essential to return to some positive ideas about which nations in the world are sympathetic toward U.S. purposes and which of them are strong enough to be helpful to the United States. It is at this point that moral or political considerations come into play in foreign policy and strategy.

A nation cannot afford to become mesmerized by the power potential of an adversary. An obsessive preoccupation with hostile governments can lead to error, either through exaggerated fear of the dangers they present or through anxiety to placate them. The *sine qua non* is to

recognize national objectives and to estimate whether or not they can be achieved. This will depend upon our own national power plus that power committed to our side by dependable alliances. Like good friends, good allies must be shown again and again the mutual benefits of free and voluntary association. As Walter Lippmann said, 30 years ago:

American commitments and interests and ideals must be covered by our armaments, our strategic frontiers, and our alliances.<sup>3</sup>

These basics—military strength, strategic position, and alliances—are what we must examine in the light of the real international environment today. Circumstances change drastically but the basics persist. The U.S. problem is complicated by the fact that the whole era since World War II is in many ways unique, unprecedented. It has seen a vast explosion of populations and technologies, along with a proliferation of economic goods and services.

For the first time in history two nations greater in most respects than any of the rest, the United States and the Soviet Union, each plainly possess the capability of using nuclear weapons and their delivery systems to destroy the cities and total industrial structure of the other, or of any nation. This fact acts as a restraint on the use of military force by all nations to pursue their national objectives at the expense of others. It also constitutes heavy psychological pressure on weaker nations to conform with the wishes of the two great nuclear powers and, in some cases, acts to prevent conflicts at levels of intensity lower than total warfare. In many cases restraints on resort to terror or small-scale military action are diminishing because of the widespread belief that the nuclear powers will never dare to use their immensely destructive weapons.

Gradually, over the past quarter century, it has become apparent that the ultimate sanction of maximum nuclear destruction is, in fact, if not quite “unthinkable,” too awful—in the true sense of that much abused word—to contemplate except as a desperate defensive last resort. Thus it is unlikely to be employed except in those improbable circumstances where such drastic punishment would fit the provocation. Lesser crimes of nation-states tend to be dealt with by the conventional methods of diplomacy, economic suasion, and the implicit threat of non-nuclear military force. We must try to measure these more intangible forms of national power in order to see where the balance lies and which way it is