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# Defense Report

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## **Deng Xiaoping — the United States Is on the Defensive and Can't Do Much About It**

The current leaders of the Peoples Republic of China are in a unique position to observe the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. China shares a common border with the Soviet Union and also shared a common political philosophy during the early years of the Chinese Communist movement. During those early years Communist China and the United States were probably even further apart politically than the United States and the Soviet Union are today. The Chinese have had the novel opportunity to deal with both superpowers as friends at some time and as enemies at others.

In a recent newspaper interview, China's Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping took advantage of this unusual position to examine the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and to predict the most likely path in the relations between the two nations. In his view, of course, both the United States and the USSR are imperialist nations: one an economic imperialist and the other a political imperialist. Because this imperialism exists, he said, war between them is unavoidable and the likelihood of that war starting in the 1980s is very high. The United States might be able to adopt some policies that will serve to postpone open conflict, he said, but, in the meantime, "chattering" about peace and détente when there really is no peace or détente has become a form of self-delusion. People who think détente is workable, Deng said, ". . . shut their eyes and swallow the toad."

Deng shares the view of most Western military analysts: that since the end of the war in Vietnam the military forces of the United States have been declining and that the United States has assumed an essentially defensive posture. But, as concerned as he is with the decline in U.S. military might, he is more worried about our inability to stop that slide. He blames that difficulty on the slowness of the U.S. political system to respond to the growing Soviet threat. All the Soviets have to do to initiate a new military program, Deng points out, is to gather a few members of the Politburo. The decision to invade Afghanistan is the most recent evidence of summary action by the Politburo, the members of which have no one to please but themselves. "The Soviet Union speaks every day about the SALT agreements," Deng said, "but, in the meantime, it continues to increase its armaments."

Deng sees no end to Soviet aggression. "I am sure the Soviet Union will not stop in Afghanistan. The next target can only be Iran or Pakistan." Deng sees little hope that the United States will be able to do anything to frustrate the aggression of the USSR without becoming involved in a full-scale war, simply because the United States is not prepared for any eventuality short of that extreme.

None of Deng's observations about the precarious balance between the United States and the Soviet Union breaks entirely new ground. Nevertheless, they deserve close attention from those who remain convinced that the military power of the United States is adequate to support a continued balance between the superpowers.