

Oklahoma Law Review

Volume 38 | Number 5

1-1-1985

National Security Implications of Strategic Resources: An Eastern Perspective

Zdzislaw M. Rurarz Dr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/olr>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Zdzislaw M. Rurarz Dr., *National Security Implications of Strategic Resources: An Eastern Perspective*, 38 OKLA. L. REV. 859 (1985),
<https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/olr/vol38/iss5/14>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oklahoma Law Review by an authorized editor of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact darinfox@ou.edu.

NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF STRATEGIC RESOURCES: AN EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

DR. ZDZISLAW M. RURARZ*

This paper will focus on a topic that is vital not only to the United States and its national security, but also to the Free World. The subject is national security implications of strategic resources: an Eastern European perspective. Precisely defining strategic resources is difficult because the list of strategic resources is determined by scientific and technological progress. This progress creates new demands for mineral resources with names that are strange even to professionals and sometimes mean nothing to laymen.

Access to strategic resources is not a new problem. Today, however, the problem has assumed proportions which must be viewed with great concern. This is because possession or unhampered access to strategic resources is vital to the national security interest of any country. To a country like the United States, it is crucial.

We live in an age of electronic revolution. Currently, palladium is essential to electronic progress. To the best of my knowledge, only two countries produce palladium—the Soviet Union, producing about 100 tons yearly, and the Republic of South Africa, producing about 50 tons yearly. If production in the Republic of South Africa was disrupted or fell under Soviet control, one can easily imagine the implications to this country's national security of such an event.

Strategic resources must be viewed as one of the most important factors in the multidimensional contests being waged by various countries. If one major country, namely the Soviet Union, or a group of countries, gives special attention to the accessibility of strategic resources as a form of warfare, such resources must be viewed from an unconventional angle. It is precisely access to these resources which may upset the present balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union. Eastern Europe plays an important role in the existing balance of power. Moreover, it may be instrumental in upsetting this balance.

With the access to strategic resources unevenly distributed throughout our planet, there are many dangers in gaining access to them and in transporting them over increasingly unsafe sea routes. These resources have become a major strato-political bone of contention between the most powerful countries. Thus, these resources must be viewed in a global context, as a global conflict. Only a global approach to the issue can resolve the dilemmas.

With political developments becoming more unpredictable, these dilemmas vary. No possibilities, however extreme, should be excluded because the stakes

* Former Ambassador of Poland to Japan.

are high. Whether this involves disruptive measures undermining orderly trade flows, the operation of private capital engaged in supplying strategic resources, or the seizure of strategic resources through nationalization or aggression, all possible contingencies must be considered.

This country is becoming more dependent on external sources for strategic resources. The United States must view this situation soberly and seriously. Although still the most powerful country, the United States has been relatively weakened in the postwar years. As such, the United States cannot act recklessly in regard to the issue of safe access to strategic resources.

The Soviet Union, as part of its strategy to conquer the world, has always viewed strategic resources as a vital factor in contending with its true or imagined adversaries. Soviet diplomats in the early 1950s were quietly disseminating an idea of an "oil weapon." Following the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, that weapon was used. Because of the resulting oil crisis, the West and non-oil-exporting developing countries went through difficulties from which they have only recently recovered. The vulnerability of the West, along with its lack of unity in dealing with the disruption, did not escape Soviet attention. No doubt, such response increases the possibility that the Soviet Union will engage in additional attempts at disruption. Eastern Europe appeared to be uninvolved in the Yom Kippur War and unaffected by the oil crisis. This, however, was not the case. The Egyptian tank assault across the Suez Canal was made possible by Polish-made tanks.

Eastern Europe seemingly has very little in common with strategic resources and the United States' national security. Indeed, Eastern Europe has few strategic resources of interest to the U.S. or the West. Moreover, Eastern Europe appears not to compete for access to these resources with this country or the West. Nothing, however, is more misleading.

Eastern Europe is Soviet-dominated. In fact, the USSR has totally absorbed three countries in the region—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Together with Communist Yugoslavia and Albania, the region is populated by approximately 135 million people. The Soviet population is twice that figure. Altogether, the region is approximately a 400-million strong, tightly knit military bloc, spanning the Euro-Asian land mass. The result is a military force rendering the regions bordering it virtually indefensible.

Eastern Europe was once abandoned and left to the Soviets. Forty years ago George Kennan thought no tactic less than war could rid Eastern Europe of the Soviets. Instead, the USSR was merely contained from making further conquests. The Soviets use its Eastern Europe occupation to the detriment of this country and the West. In the early postwar years it drained more than 15 billion dollars¹—with today's inflation this exceeds 50 billion dollars—from Eastern Europe. As a result, the USSR recovered from the war destruction more quickly than would have been otherwise possible.

Eastern Europe gave the Soviets fantastic access to certain strategic resources. For example, it used Czechoslovak uranium to explode its first atomic bomb

1. Some estimates put the sum at \$22 billion.

in September 1949. Without that access this event could have been delayed. A short time later, the Soviets engineered the North Korean aggression. Only by breaking the U.S. nuclear monopoly was the Soviet Union able to risk such a feat. Had the United States foreseen such possibilities in 1945, perhaps General Patton's Third Army would have driven deeper into Czechoslovakia.

Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe is instrumental in supplying the military arms and instructors to places that can one day be decisive in the final contest for certain strategic resources. Excluding many Middle East and North African countries, this is also true of the "Persian Gulf" of mineral resources, specifically Namibia and the Republic of South Africa. Having the Soviet shield to protect them, and even some blessings throughout the non-Communist world for helping organizations such as the South-West African People's Organization (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC), Eastern Europe does not risk much. Eastern Europe sells arms not only to earn currencies for imports of various needed resources, but also with hopes to acquire access to these resources.

More important, Soviet divisions are deployed on the Elbe River. More than fifty East European divisions under Soviet command comprise a highly destabilizing factor in Europe. The U.S. spends approximately 100 billion dollars a year on military defense of Western Europe. This budget is needed to respond to the most demanding of potential conflicts, a Soviet-led Warsaw Pact assault against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Additionally, the U.S. is forced to look for various strategic resources to make that defense truly credible. If not used to acquire specific weapons and munitions, the money is wasted.

From the previous comments, it is clear that the implications of strategic resources to the United States' national security cannot be dealt with on a narrow basis. Particular resources in particular places are short-term issues. Long-term issues viewed globally are the heart of the problem.

Soviet stratocracy and the political considerations involving long-term strategy, including the use of an all-out assault, would be clearly linked to strategic resources. As long as the USSR maintains its current power, the United States' national security is uncertain, at best. The Soviet Union, however, does not act alone. Communist-controlled countries, together with the Third World, make up 80 percent of the world's population. Common sense dictates that the Soviet power must be diminished. The surest way of diminishing this power is to restore full sovereignty to Eastern Europe. Then, the Soviet Union would have less opportunity for expansionist activity.

The question then becomes how to make Eastern Europe free. Eastern Europeans themselves must decide this course of action. It must be realized, however, that as long as the Soviet Union's ideology influences and expands to other countries, U.S. security is jeopardized. Any piecemeal approach by the U.S. or the West to solving particular strategic resources problems may be helpful but will ultimately settle little. On the contrary, various ploys denying the U.S. access to resources may proliferate and disorganize long-term programming of scientific, technological, and economic progress.

It is important to remember that strategic resources, whether oil, chromium, platinum, or any other resource, cannot be likened to the most precious resource—human beings. The U.S. needs access not only to resources covered by natural and scientific laws, but also to human resources. Nowhere in the world can there be found human resources friendlier to the United States than there are in Eastern Europe. It is ironic that access to these human resources is not only denied to the U.S., but also used against this country. Having been exposed to two repressive political systems, nazism and communism, the people of Eastern Europe appreciate the freedom and democracy brutally denied to them. It is up to the United States and its Allies to draw proper conclusions and calculate national security interests which take the above situation into consideration.

The Soviet Union and its Eastern Europe satellites have learned two things. First, by contributing covertly to the oil crisis, the USSR was its main beneficiary. Oil and gold prices skyrocketed. Since the Soviet Union exports both, it had windfall profits. The West, flooded with petro-dollars and short-term deposits, looked for ways to convert them into medium or long-term credits. The only reliable debtors available were among the Soviet bloc. Eighty billion dollars were pumped into that bloc in these transactions. These events strengthened Soviet power, which today threatens this country's access to strategic resources.

Second, the USSR can proceed with new aggression, covertly or overtly, and go virtually unpunished. Since the Soviet Union faces trouble in generating enough domestically supplied strategic resources, it may be prompted to seize other countries' resources. Commercially, this may be quite a profitable business. I am sure we shall soon see Soviet efforts to this end. The situation in South Africa may be only the beginning.