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As this issue went to press American Secretary of State George Shultz was in the Middle East trying to restore momentum to a U.S. peace initiative shaken by PLO intransigence and the bombing of the American Embassy in Beirut. President Reagan has vowed that the peace process will continue, but as Robin Montgomery points out in his article, the prognosis is not good. Fears are currently focused on the threat of a major conflict between Israel and Syria, with all the risks of superpower involvement.

In another part of the region, Soviet forces are engaged in a costly and brutal counter-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan. The Soviet intervention and subsequent operations in that country have fueled debate amongst Western Sovietologists about the place of military power in Soviet foreign policy. Joseph Collins' contribution to this debate suggests that in spite of Soviet difficulties in Afghanistan the military arm of Soviet foreign policy remains a force to be reckoned with.

That, in turn, is an important factor in what is likely to remain the most heated domestic political issue in Europe and North America during 1983: the modernization of NATO's long-range theatre nuclear forces. The difficulties involved in reaching a viable arms control agreement in this "grey area" are highlighted in Cynthia Cannizzo's article. It leaves precious little room for optimism, suggesting that once the Soviets achieve superiority in any category of weaponry they will be reluctant to agree to a lower level and parity. Such considerations may have a bearing on the willingness of the Canadian government to allow the Americans to test the cruise missile in Alberta.

Finally, Central America—the region is once again making headlines: President Reagan and the Congress debate over military aid to El Salvador and American covert action against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua; the Brazilians uncover a massive Libyan arms shipment destined for Nicaragua; an American adviser is murdered; and a high-level American envoy is appointed to pursue the peace process in that troubled area. Ernest Evans, in the third of his series of articles on the region, focuses on the problematic electoral process in El Salvador by way of explaining the difficulties, inherent in trying to introduce democracy into a third world country wracked by civil war.