AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF SOVIET MILITARY POWER

by

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That perceptions are a fundamental element of international relations is undeniable, as long as it is "reasonable to assume that statesmen reach decisions by methods that are similar to those employed by other intelligent men facing important, hard choices and armed with uncertain knowledge and ambiguous information."[1] The decisions of statesmen will probably continue to be made in a "psychological environment" that is heavily dependent upon images of their nations' "operational environment." Therefore, it is critical that misperceptions be minimized.

One of the most obvious safeguards against false images is to try to view the world and oneself as others do. Unfortunately, there exists the danger that actors may underestimate the impact of established beliefs and predispositions, and, as a result, fit incoming information into preexisting images. As a consequence, people may exaggerate their own sensitivity to the behavior of others and their own ability to influence others' opinions of them.[2] So, before one can analyze others' behavior and act accordingly to influence their conclusions, he must establish his own beliefs and values, determine why he holds those beliefs and values and be able to support them.[3]

That beliefs and values have a tremendous impact on behavior was duly noted by Daniel Southerland of the *Christian Science Monitor* when he wrote that "A question as seemingly simple as 'Is it the Russians or the Americans—or both of them—who fuel the arms race?' provokes widely varying comment from the experts."[4] Debate in the United States concerning the question, unlike American television versions of "good guys" fighting "bad guys," pits "good guys" rightly sensitive to the urgency of limiting the arms race against "good guys" rightly sensitive to the dangers of making unilateral concessions.[5] For example, members of the American Committee on US-Soviet Relations feel that "What is needed . . . is a resolute abandonment of the stale slogans and reflexes of the cold war; a recognition that this is a new era, with different problems and possibilities; and a determination not to be governed by the compulsions of military competition."[6] At the same time, members of the Committee on the Present Danger caution that "decisive steps" are necessary to alert the nation and to steer its policy in the right direction or our ability to maintain peace with security will become dangerously inadequate.[7]

As Southerland put it, "Washington hasn't seen anything like this since the great missile gap controversy 17 years ago."[8] For while a few have viewed the debate as budget-time maneuvering—a "military-scare campaign" by the Pentagon—[9] in fact "The only thing comparable to this would have been the kind of debate we had right after the war, when we were putting together a basic strategy for

dealing with and competing with the Soviets."[10]

Few observers would deny that the Soviet military buildup that has occurred since 1965 is disquieting. As noted by Drew Middleton, official US estimates of Soviet military strength are not very different from independent estimates, either from our allies, from neutral states, or from recognized independent military study groups.[11] While some degree of skepticism of Defense Department assessments of Soviet strength may be healthy, the harsh fact is that the Soviet Union today is far stronger in every aspect of military power than it was in the early 1960's. It is the meaning of this buildup which constitutes the core of the present controversy.

THE ROOTS OF THE DEBATE

One of the most important national security documents in the United States is the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). In the early 1950's, General Walter Bedell Smith, the guiding architect of the Central Intelligence Agency in its formative years, set up an independent means of analysis within that agency to provide for an objective and impartial analysis of threats to the security of the nation. With the help of Sherman Kent, a Yale history professor, Smith created a "board of national estimates," made up of government officials, academicians, and "prominent" citizens, to summarize and analyze CIA-gathered data. What this board regarded as some of the best minds in American graduate schools were recruited for an "office of national estimates," created to support the board. This board was responsible to the Director of the CIA and ideally would not be subjected to "political pressures" and "institutional biases." While the board was never entirely free of outside pressures, dissenting views on the preliminary estimates as drafted by the Office of National Estimates could be worked out in the collegial atmosphere of the Board of Estimates.[12]

During the period of disenchantment with the Vietnam War, the Board of Estimates found it increasingly difficult to recruit graduate students for its Office of National Estimates. In 1973, William E. Colby, then Director of the CIA, disbanded the organization and set up a team of intelligence officers, each with responsibility for a different part of the world. Without their own supporting staff, the national intelligence officers had to depend on the Defense Department to draft the preliminary estimates, but the military still claimed that the CIA analysts held biases about arms control.[13] That was the genesis of "Team A."

Then two other events occurred which would lead to the formation of a second team. First, the CIA was forced to adjust its Soviet military manpower and defense spending figures upward in 1975. Then John M. Collins, a Senior Specialist in National Defense for the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress, prepared a study for the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), which was published in January 1976. It indicated that the Soviets were making significant gains in the military sphere. As a result, an outside group was mandated in the fall of 1976 by then-President Ford's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board to independently analyze the latest raw intelligence data—and "Team B" was born.

TEAM A vs TEAM B

As though they were in competition, these two completely separate teams were tasked to prepare the NIE. Team A, which was comprised of the Board of National Estimates (those national intelligence officers of the CIA who normally prepare the estimate), was headed by Howard Stoertz, who is the national intelligence officer on the US-Soviet strategic balance. Team B was headed by Harvard history professor Richard Pipes, a specialist in Soviet affairs, and consisted of experts and officials considered "hard liners" in their views of Soviet intentions.[14] Although according to Leo Cherne, who was head of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board when it created Team B, members of the team were not selected "to load a point of view, [but] by definition, if you were seeking

an alternate judgment you would have people probably with an alternate point of view."[15]

Besides Pipes, Team B included a retired Army lieutenant general and former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; a retired Air Force colonel and RAND specialist on Soviet military affairs; a retired Air Force general who once served as staff director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; a professor of International Relations who had served on the US SALT delegation; a former US ambassador to Moscow and now university professor; the Deputy Assistant Director for Planning in the Verification and Analysis Bureau of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; and a former Secretary of Navy and Under Secretary of Defense. The then-Ambassador to the Bahamas also served on the team on an informal basis.

After about three months of investigation, these men turned out a new and far sterner NIE than the one produced by the official Board of National Estimates that comprised Team A. Team B made a brief oral report to the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board that was backed up by two written reports. One report consisted of a strategic assessment, and the other offered recommendations for a thorough reform of the assessment process.[16]

In the past, estimates had concluded that the Soviets were satisfied with "approximate military parity" with the US but might go farther if given the opportunity. Apparently, Team B concluded that the USSR had definite plans for worldwide strategic superiority. While Team A focused on "narrow bean-counting from satellite photos," Team B included Soviet history, writings, speeches, and information gathered from human intelligence sources.[17] The result, sources familiar with the Team B estimate say, "is more of a 'philosophical statement' than a classified intelligence report. . . ."[18] In intelligence community jargon, Team A tended to ignore or play down "soft" evidence that was not supported specifically by "hard" evidence in the form of reconnaissance photos.[19]

The reform of the assessment process urged by Team B suggested that the Board of National Estimates be independent and report only to the President, thereby reducing institutional biases.[20] To create this independent body, Team B urged that:

> Recognized experts from academia, industry, and elsewhere be recruited to fill some of its top posts; that intelligence agency analysts be given only short tours with the board so as to limit the number of insiders making careers in that function; and that ad hoc panels of specialists covering a wide spectrum of opinions be called upon more often to consider intelligence estimates before they became final.[21]

There are, quite naturally, rather divergent views as to the success of the adversary experiment. The debate has been variously described as "bloody, but healthy," or "constructive" and "long overdue." Numerous sources on both sides of the issue agree that the prestigious names and reputations of the members of Team B created a form of pressure on the members of Team A, some even going so far as to describe the experiment as "a 'bludgeoning' exercise, which further demoralized analysts in the battered CIA."[22] One critic flatly called it "a

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put up job," and a Western diplomat was quoted as saying that "Calling an outside panel produced . . . a dialogue with a devious purpose and it bodes ill."[23] Ray S. Cline, a former deputy director of the CIA, feels the problem is that now the old process of making national security estimates "has been subverted,"[24] which, it seems, is precisely what Team B hoped to achieve.

Not long after Team B conclusions were leaked to the press, John M. Collins was nearing completion of an update of his 1976 report on the United States-Soviet military balance. The attempt to suppress this second report has further fueled the assessment controversy. In fact, both the contemporary military trends as analyzed and the reasons for the attempted suppression have been thrust into the debate.

THE COLLINS CONTROVERSY

Although the second report by Collins was requested in July of 1976, he did not receive official approval to begin the study until 5 August 1976. Having already submitted a study plan in July, he made periodic progress reports to the SASC and received no criticism. He also reportedly sent a copy of the rough draft to the SASC and again received no comments or criticism.[25] Even though Collins followed this procedure, prepared his report on the basis of statistics taken from unclassified and declassified material, and had it reviewed by experts in the defense and intelligence fields and in the Library of Congress,[26] soon after Frank J. Sullivan, staff director of the SASC, received the study on 16 February 1977,[27] he told Collins that his report was inadequate for the needs of the committee.[28]

Since the relationship of the CRS is a proprietary one, the report belongs to the SASC, with no obligations to publish it. However, while the research analyst is required to maintain client confidentiality, under CRS guidelines the analyst is allowed to prepare a revision of a report for a different client, once the original client declines the use of the original report. Thus after rewriting the introduction, making numerous editorial and substantive revisions, rewriting the "wrap-up," and adding an annex, Collins submitted his study to a senior House Armed Services Committee staff member. The House staff member checked with a senior SASC member to be sure the SASC was not planning to use it and was told that they were in fact planning to publish it.[29]

US Representative John Breckinridge received permission from CRS to obtain the report and hoped to make it available to the Congress and the public. After Collins provided Breckinridge with a copy of the study, CRS claimed that there must have been a "communication foul-up" and refused to release the report, threatening Collins with disciplinary action for breaking the confidentiality of his client. On 3 June 1977, Collins was given 60 days to improve his performance or be denied a pay increase. He was to demonstrate his understanding of guidelines concerning the review, dissemination, objectivity and non-advocacy of CRS work, and the confidentiality of congressional relationships.

Despite the fact that as a Senior Specialist Collins works under administrative supervision with work reviewed only from the standpoint of Library policy and not for the quality of analysis or the authoritative character of its content, he was ordered to incorporate all the criticisms by those who found the report to be analytically deficient and void of alternative concepts for making net assessments in order to bring the study up to CRS standards of "objectivity and non-advocacy." Then, almost a full week before the 60 days elapsed, Collins was notified of the denial of his pay increase. Collins was also informed that he must now clear all his DOD sources with CRS before contacting them,[30] and that a revised Soviet-American military balance study from CRS was being prepared by several CRS staff members without Collins' participation.[31]

In July, an article in *Aviation Week & Space Technology* stated that:

> The effort to suppress the document by delaying its approval is coupled with certain staff members [of the SASC]

> touting a presidential review memorandum, PRM-10, a document prepared for high-level Administration officials that sketches a much brighter picture of US defense and strategic capabilities.[32]

This study, headed by Lynn Davis, Deputy for Policy Plans in the Office of The Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), concluded that the military balance, previously believed to be in the USSR's favor, had leveled off.[33] It was written as National Security Council input for the Presidential Decision (PD) process that resulted in a PD paper on the Soviet-American military balance. While no one has yet cited any evidence to indicate that the White House or the National Security Council intervened to suppress the Collins report, it has been suggested that the report was suppressed because it conflicted with PRM-10. In fact, a CRS source has been quoted as saying that the Collins study was not being printed because it "needed more consideration of PRM-10." As viewed by US Representative Jack Kemp, "By preparing a report that conflicts with PRM-10, Collins has become the little boy who asked, 'Why isn't the Emperor wearing any clothes?'"[34]

While several congressmen campaigned for the release of the Collins report, in August Senator Jesse A. Helms put the report into the *Congressional Record* rather than attempt to get the SASC to publish it because "Time's a-wasting on this issue, which is of paramount importance."[35] The study, whose cost has been estimated at around $50,000 of the taxpayers' money, had finally become public property.[36] Representative Kemp followed up the action taken by Senator Helms by having a summary of circumstances concerning the attempted suppression of the Collins report published in the *Congressional Record* less than two weeks later.

THE CHARACTER OF THE DEBATE

Unfortunately, much of the debate concerning the Soviet-American arms race has involved the opponents' unwillingness to both seriously address the crucial elements that underlie policy preferences and identify that evidence which would tend to confirm or disprove those elements. Instead, motives have often been impugned. For example, when Richard Pipes expounded on the essence of the Team B view in an article in the July 1977 issue of *Commentary*, one critic described the work as "rank hysteria in scholarly garb."[37] Pipes anticipated such critics when he wrote that "Like some ancient Oriental despots they vent their wrath on the bearers of bad news."[38]

A *Washington Star* editorial dismissed the same critic, but it made a fundamental contribution to the debate when it noted that "Professor Pipes' article is probably more valuable as a glimpse of the mind-set of those sometimes called, too simply, 'hawks' than as a convincing appraisal of the origins of Soviet strategic doctrine."[39] Pipes' response that the "mind-set" is of no import is fundamentally incorrect.[40] A view of the "mind-set" is the first step in discovering the crucial elements that underlie policy preferences. However, the identification of a "mind-set" must be restricted to its utility in discovering those elements, and must not become a restrictive "tag" stuck to the participants in the defense debate.

Previous work or position has also been cited in the debate. For example: Paul H. Nitze, a member of Team B, had written the "NSC 68," urging President Truman to take up a cold war posture.[41] He was also a member of the "Gaither panel," which reported to President Eisenhower in 1957 that in two or three years the Soviet Union would constitute a grave threat because of her significant ICBM delivery capability, thereby touching off the "missile gap" controversy.[42] This may not be completely irrelevant to the debate, but making an issue of it only further encourages a stereotyping that could discourage others "from sober reflection on the implications of . . . trends in relative Soviet and American strength."[43]

CRUCIAL ELEMENTS UNDERLYING POLICY PREFERENCES

As Earl C. Ravenal has noted, "Both the

hawks and the doves are hung up on numbers."[44] While Pipes, for example, is willing to admit that "Numbers are not all," he is also convinced that the race is becoming a qualitative one and it could end in a meaningful superiority for the victor.[45] Former Secretary of State Kissinger, on the other hand, feels that because casualties will be so high on both sides, "supremacy" is operationally insignificant as long as a balance is maintained.[46]

Those on the conservative side of the debate are concerned that a sufficient strategic advantage might allow the Soviets to successfully attack American strategic forces, destroying enough of them so that any surviving capability could be neutralized by a reserve strategic force targeted against American cities. Within the framework of such a situation—or perhaps even a simple threat made under the psychological advantage of a numerical lead in throw weight, total megatonnage, or delivery vehicles—it is feared that the Soviet conventional forces could not be contained. In the words of Pipes:

> Strategic superiority . . . has many uses besides its application in nuclear war: it can be used to shield a conventional war, to extract political or economic concessions, to intimidate, to compel acquiescence.[47]

Those on the liberal side of the debate are not worried about Soviet superiority. For them, superiority is not only meaningless, it is unattainable. Representative Les Aspin, a former Pentagon analyst, calculated that even if a Soviet surprise attack on the American "triad" destroyed 50 percent of the submarine-based missiles, 80 percent of the strategic bombers, and 90 percent of the ICBM force, the United States would still possess 3100 warheads for retaliation. Such a figure is said to represent a little less than the Soviet strategic stockpile. Thus, "For nations the size of the United States, there are diminishing returns to military might. The first 100 nuclear weapons, perhaps the first 1,000, are a source of immense power. But not the next 9,000, nor redundant systems for delivering them."[48]

While the conservative appraisal of Soviet capabilities and intentions is relatively simple and straightforward, the opposing view is not. Whereas most of those opposed to military spending do not on the whole dispute the raw intelligence data on Soviet weapons and manpower, some claim the facts are interpreted incorrectly, either on purpose or innocently.[49]

Though some would concede that the Soviets have made significant gains in terms of raw numbers, they also believe that Soviet technology is vastly inferior to the West, and that as a result an essentially inexperienced Soviet military would have to fight with outdated weapons. Others maintain that numerical superiority and improving technology still cannot be equated to political power in this day and age. Another argument says that the Russians must defend themselves on two frontiers, while the Americans have no such worry.[50] Still others talk of historical-cultural-psychological factors and claim that the Soviets act out of fear generated by the many invasions their land has suffered, or that as a result of these invasions and other factors the Russians have always been partial to large standing armies, or that Soviet allies are less reliable than American allies.

It is clear that national security is not the crucial element underlying policy preferences for either the hawks or the doves. Despite the fact that policy preferences depend upon the interpretation given to numbers and their significance for national security, there has been little debate of the broader questions concerning numbers and their significance. "Actors must remember that both they and others are influenced by their expectations and fit incoming information into pre-existing images."[51]

Social psychologists have noted that the perception of causality is directly related to the perception of power.[52] Those convinced that the Soviet Union is powerful tend to perceive Soviet actions in terms of internal motivations. Those convinced that military

superiority is misinterpreted or irrelevant tend to perceive Soviet actions as reactions to external causation, whether real or imagined. In other words, some perceive Soviet arms increases as indicating unprovoked aggressiveness, while others contend Soviet activities mostly reflect threats that the Soviets perceive. The interactions of perceptions and expectations are simply being ignored. In addition, such things as inadequate information, inability to digest it, or failure to assess all explanations also lead to misperceptions and false expectations.[53] The evidence that would tend to confirm or disprove policy preferences in the present defense debate must, therefore, be translated into data relevant to the behavioral responses at issue.

THE EVIDENCE

Conservatives such as Pipes can, and do, cite publication after publication from the Soviets that support their contention that the Soviet military buildup since 1965 has significant political and military implications. Pipes maintains that the Soviets believe in the Clausewitzian theory that war is an extension of politics and therefore the Politiburo very closely supervises Soviet military planning. For him, that proves that the Soviets do not mince words.[54]

Fred Warner Neal believes that Soviet military thinking is more traditional and often unrealistic when compared with that of their own scientists.[55]

Paul Warnke, head of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, believes that Soviet leaders who believe it possible to fight and win a nuclear conflict are not being realistic. He feels that instead of talking in such primitive terms, the US should try to open Soviet eyes to the fact that nobody could possibly win a nuclear war.[56]

Pipes states that US doctrine is usually formulated and implemented without consideration of the Soviets. He also feels that Soviet deployments over the past 20 years must be regarded in the context of Soviet doctrine, not American.[57]

Pipes calls the American doctrine of mutual deterrence "passive" because it does not guarantee that an aggressor will not strike, but only threatens punishment if he does. He cites the Soviet World War II loss of over 20 million casualties, as well as the destruction of 1710 towns, over 70,000 villages, and some 32,000 industrial establishments, as proof of the inability of the Soviet Union to be intimidated by the prospect of war losses.[58] Therefore, he concludes that the Soviets have rejected the proposition that nuclear war would be suicidal for all participants. Although he can muster the evidence to demonstrate that the Soviets want to save as much as possible should a nuclear exchange occur, and that they would like to be able to pursue a conflict to a successful conclusion should it occur, there are other conclusions with which this evidence would be in accord.

If the United States faces a Soviet Union whose leadership is willing to accept the loss of tens of millions of Soviet lives plus the material destruction that would result from a nuclear conflict, it does not matter what action American leaders take because they would be confronted by people for whom no sacrifice would be too great for the destruction of opposing social orders. Thus the ability to cite evidence in support of the contention that the Soviets are preparing to survive and win a nuclear conflict does not prove that they desire the opportunity to fight one.

When Senator Helms placed John Collins' study in the *Congressional Record*, he also included some asymmetries that he believed could be drawn from the study. Regarding conventional general purpose forces, he concluded that "Soviet ground combat power dwarfs that of the United States. . . . ."[59] The Collins study indicates that US ground force maneuver units total 19 divisions, while the Soviets, with 169, have almost nine times as many. With 65 of the Soviet divisions closely corresponding to US reserve components, the Soviets really have a 5.47-to-1 divisional ready force advantage. The overall ground force manpower ratio, by contrast, is on the order of 2.5-to-1.[60] Because US divisions are larger

than their Soviet counterparts, it can be demonstrated that if the US Army and Marines were reorganized along Soviet lines, the US could then deploy roughly 41 "divisions." As a result, while the differences in training and combat power emphasis between the Soviets and the US are still up for debate, it is clear that a reorganization of American divisions would reduce the apparent numerical imbalance between the two.[61]

The area of the Soviet military buildup which has perhaps had the greatest visibility is naval power. With a campaign assisted immensely by the Western press, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov has built the Soviet Navy into the largest naval force in the world. While Soviet surface ships are essentially designed for short, intense engagements, there is little doubt that given the element of surprise they could have a devastating effect on the American Navy. Collins points out in his first report that the US Navy is vulnerable to a surprise attack from close quarters and the Soviets could possibly stage one with a reasonable chance of success. Thus although there can be little doubt from a careful examination of the naval forces of both sides that the US Navy can handle the Soviet surface fleet, it must survive the opening of hostilities.

The liberal critics of this problem may offer a basic truth that the Soviet forces could hardly conduct a worldwide operation without the US picking up the signals, but knowledge of what may happen still fails to offer a solution for the problem. One can be sure that the liberal critics do not intend for the US to start the shooting with a preemptive attack. There also exists the problem of handling the large Soviet submarine fleet. The enemy ships would not generally be subject to destruction until they funnelled back to their bases to refuel or rearm after they had already inflicted their damage. But if the US attempted to "bottle up" the Soviet submarine fleet before it did anything, it might *cause* a war rather than prevent one.[62] In the area of naval offensive combat power, it seems as though the advocates of increased military spending have a case. The US depends upon access to the sea lanes, and the Soviets have the flexibility to deny us use of the seas.[63]

Aside from concerns about Soviet ground and naval combat power, Senator Helms also expressed his view that the asymmetries drawn from the Collins study are such that they cast doubt on our strategy for the protection of Western Europe.[64] The concern about US forces in Europe is shared by many. In 1976, a General Accounting Office investigation revealed that US armored units in Europe were in a doubtful state of readiness and suffered from personnel shortages and ammunition and equipment problems.[65] The major shortages and deficiencies in combat equipment stored in Europe were of particular concern to Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, who stated that "The situation could jeopardize the safety of American troops in an actual combat situation."[66] By January 1977, Senators Sam Nunn and Dewey F. Bartlett had concluded that major changes in NATO's force posture are needed or its ability to insure security would be dangerously impaired.[67] More recently, in September 1977, Senator Gary Hart called for "a sweeping review of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's strategy, weapons and deployments to assure an effective defense against Soviet attack."[68]

Despite common rhetoric, the numbers game is not the best evidence that American forces in Europe would be pressed if they were required to cope with a Soviet invasion of the West. As noted in Collins' first study, when France pulled her forces out of NATO, the Alliance's vulnerability increased sharply. The theater is now barely 130 miles wide at points and the Soviets could easily reach every important target.[69] The facts of geography and the effectiveness of the Soviet doctrine of "mobilization by maneuver" in achieving the fundamental military element of surprise lend a great deal of credibility to the evidence that American defense requirements in Europe cannot go unfulfilled.

The threat of a surprise attack against NATO has also raised concern by some as to whether the US is capable of augmenting its forces in Europe in order to meet the

reinforcement capability of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. Land-based fighters and medium bombers based in the United States can arrive almost anywhere in one to three days after notification, armed with conventional or nuclear weapons. The reinforcement of ground forces is not as simple. Dependence on ground force reserves in the United States necessitates a strategic lift capability. While America's strategic airlift capabilities are unquestionably the best in the world, it still would require eight or more days to move the men and equipment of a single mechanized division to Europe.[70]

Although troops can be airlifted to prepositioned equipment, such action presupposes that the equipment will not be destroyed, captured, or needed by troops already fighting. In light of the fact that these are not safe assumptions, and that to send more forces without proper support could be disastrous, a sealift capable of withstanding the attrition that could be caused by the action of Soviet naval forces is required. Unfortunately, the evidence indicates that the US Merchant Marine has been allowed to languish. Furthermore, at best it would require at least 23 days to get reinforcements by sea to a European conflict.[71] The argument that mobilization and reinforcement could be accomplished in response to "early warning indicators" presupposes the willingness of political leaders to either meet repeated "alerts" or to increase tensions and, thereby, perhaps help start a war. The political cost of either of these actions to politicians who have to periodically face electorates could very well be considered too high.

It is clear that the evidence which would tend to support or disprove the policy preferences of both those who would like to increase military spending and those who would like to decrease it, or at least hold it steady, is mixed. In general, the evidence tends to confirm the liberals in the nuclear arena, and the conservatives in the conventional/general purpose arena. American nuclear power has been "checked" by the Soviets at the same time that the Soviets have increased their conventional/general purpose capabilities. The meaning of this situation lies in the role images play in international relations.

IMAGES AND BELIEFS: PERCEPTIONS OF MILITARY POWER AND SECURITY

"The character of military forces is partly determined by geography, partly by the way technology unfolds over time, and partly by conscious choices in the design and deployment of military force."[72] So, while a balance (or imbalance) in a given area can affect capabilities if the opposing systems are similar, it is of little concern when the opposing systems are different. Quantitative comparisons are useful only for perceptions.[73] Much of the danger, then, lies with images and beliefs, and the willingness of leaders to act upon them. If the United States is going to limit the concrete gains the Soviets might make because of their perceived ground force superiority, it is going to have to dispel perceptual considerations through more careful examination of structural differences.

When the US had a distinct nuclear advantage, we could deter a Soviet attack on Europe, even though our armies might not be able to repel an invasion.[74] However, now that there exists rough parity between the two nations' nuclear forces, if we plan to remain Europe's last line of defense, we need a strong first line of defense. The line between conventional and nuclear weapons is narrow and vitally important. Once crossed, there is no returning.[75]

While the Soviets recognize the destruction they would suffer as the result of a strike against the United States, they understandably have concluded that if nuclear exchanges are going to escalate from "tactical" to "strategic," it is to their advantage to preempt the American strike because of the fueling and gyroscope delays in the launching of their missiles. The presence of a "trip-wire" of US troops in West Germany, backed by tactical nuclear weapons, is a possible "hair trigger" for escalation to a strategic nuclear exchange.[76] If a nuclear strike against the US occurs, this will be its most likely cause. The distinction

between this "preemptive" nuclear attack and a "preventive" attack is not as fuzzy as Pipes has claimed.[77] "If they can't disarm us, they aren't going to try to hit us, [if only because] in a world shared by six or seven other nuclear powers—notably China—the Soviets would hardly wish to become a nuclear pygmy by expending their own missiles in an exchange with the United States."[78]

Along with the change in the nuclear balance there are also changes that may assist the West in a conventional defense of Europe. The growing, converging cities of Western Europe can become major obstacles to the movement of military forces.[79] In particular:

> West German urban regions, urbanized strips, small cities, towns and villages form man-made geographical obstacles to any attacker. Defensive positions of great natural strength are produced when forces, employing a combined arms doctrine and armed with the most sophisticated of conventional weapons, are deployed in these builtup regions.[80]

If NATO tactics are reshaped to take advantage of this situation, a conflict in the central front could be turned into a house-to-house brawl that would greatly restrict the utility of the large advantage the Soviets have in armor, which is the principal numerical comparison contributing to perceptions and misperceptions concerning Soviet conventional "superiority." Such a threat to "stabilize" the front, which would be disastrous for the Soviets in a war with the West, would no more leave the Soviets free from the dangers of escalation should they utilize tactical nuclear weapons than the present situation does the United States. A "stabilized" front would mean that the greater American industrial capacity could be brought to bear on the conflict. That is a deterrent the Soviets fully understand.

Henry Kissinger recently said that we clearly need to gain the long-term support of the American people for our international role, whatever it finally is. He termed this "our biggest foreign policy challenge" and warned that success in meeting this challenge can develop only from the realization that there are no final answers, and that "Each 'solution' is only an admission ticket to a new set of problems."[81] With an acceptance of the limitations of power, priorities can be set and images adjusted to more effectively support fundamental values.

It seems, as Robert Jervis has pointed out, that many of the crucial errors in the conduct of foreign policy occur "not because decision-makers arrive at the wrong answers, but because they ask the wrong questions," either by taking too much for granted or by overlooking basic assumptions.[82] The expectations that grow out of images and beliefs must be well defined so as to sharpen the recognition and reaction capabilities with regard to discrepant information. Detailed investigation and willingness to offer possibly unpopular theories are essential ingredients of intelligence work.[83]

Senator Orrin G. Hatch was mistaken when he said that "The incompetence of the high strategists and the damage inflicted on our security by PRM-10 are so extraordinary that only strong action can remedy the situation and restore the military credibility of the United States."[84] PRM-10, as a memorandum for the President's review, took note of the difficulties of gaining popular support for expansion of US conventional forces for support of NATO. It simply suggested a strategy that was contrary to the generally held beliefs about the European central front.[85]

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General George S. Brown, has stated that "There is a recognition that we do not have sufficient conventional forces to stop a Warsaw Pact penetration in Europe with nonnuclear forces."[86] If war began in Europe, the US would have to conduct a massive infusion of manpower and equipment within 14 days,[87] but General David C. Jones of the Air Force says that "We are far short of what's needed if we are to move US forces around the world, particularly the Army with

its heavy equipment."[88] Admiral Isaac C. Kidd, Jr., Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, believes that "as many as 2 out of 3" merchant ships in any sealift to Europe might be lost.[89] Furthermore, research over the past nine years has found that almost half the American populace wants to reduce military spending. That compares to 20 percent or less 40 years ago. Apparently, the American public is also not willing to employ nuclear weapons on behalf of allies nor is it willing to use armed forces for the defense of other nations.[90]

It seems, therefore, that Lynn Davis was admirably performing her job when she played the devil's advocate and challenged the assumptions explicit in the present US theory about the defense of Europe. The contribution made by the public discussion of PRM-10 goes far beyond the addition of the words "... and ultimately to restore prewar boundaries" to the phrase "... the U.S. is committed to minimum loss of territory in the event of a Warsaw Pact conventional attack."[91] Hard choices need to be made concerning American foreign policy and the use of military power in support of that policy. It is clearly dangerous for the United States to continue to accept discrepant information without allowing it to disturb its faith in the images it accepts.

The turmoil caused by the Team A/Team B competition, the Collins controversy, and PRM-10 is forcing national security decisionmakers to make their important images and beliefs explicit, to try to discover the crucial elements that underlie their policy preferences, and to consider what evidence would tend to confirm or deny their preferences. Such activities can only lead to the minimizing of dangerous misperceptions.

NOTES

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