SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF NATO

by

DR. KEITH A. DUNN

During recent years, numerous US political-military analysts have begun not only to question the ability of NATO to deter the Warsaw Pact (WP) but also to wonder if, in the event of a war in Europe, NATO could successfully defend its territory. Numerous authors have pointed to what they feel are glaring weaknesses in NATO's readiness posture: troop deployment patterns which are legacies of World War II occupation roles rather than realistic defense positions; vulnerable and exposed nuclear storage sites, airfields, reception facilities, and ammunition supply depots; and a dependence upon extensive NATO prewar warning time if NATO troops are to reach their defensive positions prior to a WP attack.[1]

Other commentators have noted what they observe as a declining commitment among some NATO members. For instance, due to domestic financial problems and attempts to control terrorism in Ireland, the United Kingdom has been forced to reduce its commitment to the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR). At any one time, approximately 25 percent of the combat troops assigned to the BAOR are actually stationed in Ireland. Belgium has withdrawn two of its four NATO-committed brigades from West German territory and is undecided whether or not it will continue to participate in NATO's Hawk air defense umbrella. Since 1974, NATO's Southern Flank has been in nearly total disarray, with Greece and Turkey at times appearing more concerned with fighting each other than with uniting against the Warsaw Pact. The possibility that Italian Communists might acquire influential positions in a coalition government, in combination with Italy's economic problems, makes even the most optimistic observer wonder how much military assistance Italy could provide during a conflict.

However, this Western perspective is only part of the picture. The other important part is how the Soviet Union perceives NATO. If American and West European policymakers are going to make intelligent

NATO decisions during the last quarter of this century, those decisions must be based upon a fundamental understanding of how the Soviets, through their own filters of Marxism-Leninism, view the European situation. A basic problem in such an effort, however, is what Robert Jarvis has called the "trap of believing." Actors assume:

> [that] their intentions, especially peaceful ones, are clear to others. Failing to realize that others may see the actor as a threat to their security, the actor concludes that others' arms increases can only indicate unprovoked aggressiveness.[2]

Changing such perceptions is not an easy task or one that occurs rapidly. However, if a real desire does exist in the Western World to move on issues such as Mutual Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR), limiting the dramatic quantitative and qualitative spiral of weapons systems which has occurred during the last decade, and generally defusing the NATO-WP military confrontation potentials, then it must start from an awareness of how NATO appears from Moscow.

SOVIET OVERVIEW OF NATO

The standard Soviet anti-NATO political propaganda theme has been that NATO's existence demonstrates the aggressive, anti-peaceloving character of Western capitalist nations, particularly Washington, London, and Bonn's "revanchist elements." There is really not much difference between the political propaganda originated in the 1950's and that of the 1970's. For instance, in 1949 and 1950, *Izvestiia* and *Pravda* regularly condemned the attempts to organize a NATO army as efforts to present the USSR with a "*fait accompli* of the remilitarization of Western Germany."[3] Or, as *Pravda* said in November 1949, American efforts to organize NATO were efforts by the USA and Wall Street "to draw Western Europe still further into the criminal preparations for war" and to create "West German armed forces as a striking detachment against the Soviet Union and the people's democracies."[4]

While the Soviets have reduced the level of their renunciations of West Germany in the 1970's due to what the Soviets refer to as the more "realistic positions" pursued by Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, Moscow is still quick to point out that *Bundeswehr* military officers avidly support "the development of the adventuristic NATO military strategy" of forward defense and that the *Bundeswehr*, in conjunction with American units, has "become NATO's striking force in Europe."[5] Likewise, despite the important developments that have occurred in international detente as a result of changes in the correlation of forces toward favor of socialism, *Kommunist* has argued against complacency:

> We must not forget, however, that the nature of imperialism has not changed, that the reactionary and aggressive forces have not laid down their arms and are attempting to hamper the positive changes occurring in international relations. The danger of war has not been eliminated. It exists and remains one of the harsh realities of our times.[6]

As always, NATO, the United States, and particularly revanchist elements in West Germany are labelled as the recalcitrants in international peace and disarmament.

THE THREAT AS SEEN FROM MOSCOW

The perception of NATO as a threatening alliance is much different if one holds a responsible position in the Kremlin than if an actor resides in London, Bonn, Washington, or Brussels. However, there are similarities to Western threat projections, particularly in the areas of worst-case analysis and the tendency to view NATO as being on the upswing of a military development curve.[7]

During the early 70's when detente was the key word in the Nixon-Kissinger lexicon, a SALT treaty had been signed, and West Germany had agreed to recognize the borders

of nations established as a result of World War II, Soviet commentators regularly made comments to the effect that there had been a "great and profound turnabout in the entire international situation" and that the dangerous and protracted cold war was giving way to the "broader recognition and practical implementation of the principles of peaceful coexistence. . . ."[8] Since 1974, however, the Soviet commentators seem somewhat less confident that realistic forces in capitalist states will continue to have the upper hand.[9] In fact, as one observer from the Institute of the USA and Canada has commented, "the Pentagon and the military industrial complex" have applied enough pressure "in such a way that allocations for defense purposes constantly increase."[10]

Thus, at the same time that Western analysts were debating the political will of the United States and/or NATO to present a coherent deterrent to the Warsaw Pact, Soviet commentators began to observe a downturn in detente and a resurgence of the influence of reactionaries. In the US and European NATO, this reaction was exemplified by the commitment to increase individual defense budgets to produce new, qualitatively superior weapons systems. Soviet writers regularly point to the "attempts to improve quality" undertaken by the Pentagon.[11] For example, in a comparison between 1968 and 1975-76, one Moscow observer claimed that the United States had increased its deliverable strategic nuclear weapons through MIRV and Short Range Attack Missile (SRAM) technology from 4200 to 8500 and by the mid-1980's should have 15,000 deliverable warheads. The US Army had fluctuated from 19 divisions in 1968 down to 13 divisions in 1974, but by 1976 had moved back to 16 divisions, the same number that it had prior to the 1964 full-scale involvement in Vietnam. In 1968, there were no squadrons of C5-A aircraft, but by 1974 there were four. Even though the number of US Navy and Air Force aircraft had decreased significantly, the Soviets were quick to point out that the cargo capacity for the smaller number of planes had, in fact, increased by nearly 13 percent (from 29,800 tons to 33,900 tons between 1968 and 1974). The percentage increase of US strategic aviation cargo capacity was even higher at 19 percent.[12] At the same time, America was building a new tank and a new infantry combat vehicle and deploying the F-14A Tomcat, the F-15 Eagle, and the F-16.[13]

Soviet authors also have noted with some alarm that the European members of NATO are likewise pursuing what they observe as an extreme modernization program. Britain, "in spite of economic difficulties," supported increased defense expenditures for NATO members.[14] To modernize its forces, Britain had ordered new mortar radars, had received a new surface-to-air missile (the Blowpipe), had begun purchasing Lance missiles to replace older Honest John unguided missiles, and had begun development of a new towed and a new self-propelled howitzer, a new infantry combat vehicle, and an improved fire control system for the Chieftain medium tank. The West Germans had begun to develop the new Leopold II tank with reinforced armor protection, had replaced older armored personnel carriers with the Marder, had improved antitank guided missiles "with a rather high accuracy at distances up to four

Dr. Keith A. Dunn is a Political Scientist with the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. He received his undergraduate degree from Southeast Missouri State University and his master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Missouri. He served as an Army Officer from 1973 to 1977 and held positions as an instructor in the Command and Staff Department at the Army Security Agency Training Center and School, as Aide-de-Camp to the Deputy Commandant of the US Army War College, and as Strategic Research Analyst in the Strategic Studies Institute. Dr. Dunn's previous writings have appeared in *Military Review*, *Parameters*, and in the *Military Issues Research Memorandum* series of the US Army War College. An article on Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania will appear in the forthcoming volume, *Soviet Policy in the Post-Tito Balkans*.

kilometers," had introduced new multiple rocket launchers into their divisional artillery, and had improved transport helicopter capabilities.[15] Other Soviet commentators have noted that both the Swedes and the French were also developing new experimental tank models for future use, "although not to the extent of the United States and West Germany."[16]

When Soviet writers quantify the NATO threat, normally they use a method similar to Western worst-case analysis. Seldom does one see qualitative distinctions made among various NATO members' weapons or divisions. A US or German tank or airplane is just as good as a Turkish or British equivalent. The same is essentially true for differences in quality among troop formations.

Therefore, when Soviets comment upon NATO in general or specific member states of the alliance, the threat does appear ominous, particularly when one understands that Soviet analysts see NATO after 1974 on a trend line of continual modernization programs. For instance, *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil* in 1975 commented that NATO had at its disposal 63 armored, infantry, and airborne divisions; more than 7000 nuclear weapons; 10,000 tanks; and more than 400 combat ships. The total NATO personnel strength was counted at 5.1 million. Of that total, Turkey, Greece, and Italy contributed approximately 1.2 million troops, which were "equipped with modern weapons and are well-trained." Moreover, Britain was considered to have spent tremendous sums of money to staff its armed forces with "hired fighters" which "are on a high level of combat readiness."[17] The approximately 500,000-man *Bundeswehr*, as a number of Soviet commentators have argued, is equipped with extremely modern weapons, is considered to have the "best tanks in the capitalist world,"[18] and is viewed by NATO as its "main striking force."[19]

The trend that the Soviets observe, then, particularly in the post-1974 period, is one of dynamism rather than vacillation on the part of NATO. Of course, Moscow's observers are quick to point out that capitalist contradictions still exist, of which the Greek-Turkish problem and West Germany's disagreements over economic matters with the United States are just two of the prime examples.[20] However, the general NATO trend most commentators point to is what *Voynennyye Znaniya*, less than one year ago, called the "aggressive plans [of] the NATO bosses" to continue "the ever increasing arsenal of offensive weapons."[21]

For the Soviets, it is not so much the particular quantity or quality of weapons that NATO or the United States has on hand at the present. The future and NATO's trend line hold more importance. This is why in 1973 one Soviet commentator was not overly optimistic because the number of American naval vessels had fallen lower than at any time since World War II. As the author commented, the Pentagon had sacrificed the "present" for the "future." While the number of active ships was decreasing, funds for ship research, development, and construction had actually doubled, which meant in the future the United States would reverse the downward spiral and obtain more and qualitatively improved ships during the 1980's.[22]

The United States is now apparently experiencing this phenomenon, as some Western commentators have noted that America is no longer on the downward slope of the naval construction curve. This is the situation which Moscow apparently observes occurring throughout NATO, with the increased defense budgets and commitments to increase real defense budget growth by two to three percent per year in each nation, and the various weapon modernization programs that nations such as Britain, West Germany, and the United States have adopted.

THE SOVIET VIEW OF FRANCE: NATO OR NOT?

From a Soviet perspective, NATO is more than a military alliance. It is more importantly a grouping of capitalist states which have the same class-dominated political systems and anti-Communist outlook. Thus, Moscow's analysts quite often

consider states which are not necessarily members of NATO as at least surrogate participants. France most specifically falls into this latter category and most probably causes Soviet military threat projectionists to include that nation as a NATO participant in any European war.

When de Gaulle withdrew French military forces from the NATO military structure, one would have expected to see a positive reaction from the USSR, if only for the reason that the United States reacted in such a disgruntled fashion. While Soviet commentators did discuss the de Gaulle decision in the spring of 1966, there was little consistency in their views, and their reaction was considerably milder than one would have at first expected.

Izvestiia, 11 days after de Gaulle's decision, explained the move as a recognition by France that "Living in the Atlantic house is becoming risky" because increasingly NATO's "tone is being set more and more by West Germany . . . ."[23] Other commentators, however, stressed that Paris resented the infringements upon national independence which the US-dominated alliance imposed on its members and "That prompted General de Gaulle to insist on the restoration of French sovereignty."[24] Still another view was that anti-Sovietism was the cement of NATO and since Moscow had dispelled the Soviet menace as a myth, "Those who do not wish to land in a ludicrous and embarrassing situation are compelled to reckon with the facts and to correct their policy." Finally, at least one commentator implied that some fear existed that the United States might draw NATO "into the Vietnamese war or some other venture," and de Gaulle wanted to avoid this, or at least to have a significant voice in any such decision.[25]

If Soviet commentators were initally unsure why de Gaulle had chosen to withdraw French forces from NATO's military structure, they were equally unclear in 1966 what the withdrawal meant for future French military collaboration with NATO. As one Soviet writer said, "Of course, not everything is clear in the French attitude toward NATO . . . ."[26] And as another commentator observed, France may have withdrawn from NATO military structure, but in spirit it "remains a member of the North Atlantic bloc and does not reject joint action in the event of a military conflict."[27] Because the signals were somewhat confusing to Moscow, Soviet observers were not sure what the French military withdrawal from NATO meant. They were not positive that the USSR could feel secure or that Paris would not aid and assist NATO if it defined some future specific action to be in France's best interest. Moscow hardly believed that the withdrawal was a watershed.

While the Soviets have defined the duality within French policy as being "ambiguous and contradictory"[28] in the post-de Gaulle era, Moscow seems to be more impressed by French actions than by French words. Thus, they see French Presidents Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing as normalizing relations with the United States, and, since America dominates NATO, improving French relations with NATO.

On this latter point, Soviet commentators have continually pointed to the fact that France participates in NATO naval and ground force exercises. Even though Paris emphasizes that it has chosen to exercise with the US fleet in the Mediterranean or West German troops in West Germany on a bilateral basis and not as a NATO exercise, Moscow tends to disregard the important semantic difference and view the military exercises as NATO maneuvers with French participation.[29]

Why do the Soviets at least intuitively downgrade the importance of France's defection from the military structure of NATO? One reason, as stated above, is the continued French bilateral participation in military exercises and political structure of NATO. Of more importance, however, is the Soviet view of the world split between capitalists/imperialists and socialists. As Lenin said:

> Capitalist government . . . represents the interests of capitalism, is bound up with

> those interests, and cannot (even if it wanted to) break free from the imperialist, annexationist policies of conquest.[30]

Thus, when Soviet commentators do a macroanalysis rather than a microregional analysis, the important issues are capitalism versus socialism rather than NATO versus WP. From the macro prospect, France is always considered one of the members of the imperialist bloc "which comprise the main economic, political, and military strength of contemporary capitalism," and, thus, one of socialism's main adversaries along with the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, and Japan.[31]

Understanding the macroanalysis view enables one to appreciate how Soviet writers can call Paris a US ally. Also, one can better understand how Soviet commentators can be discussing, for example, the NATO tank threat and immediately split into a description of French tanks, or any other French weapon system. Therefore, despite differences in views among the United States, European NATO, and France, the tendency is to view Paris following its class (i.e., capitalist) interests. As *SShA* once said when commenting on US-French relations:

> Both countries belong to the bloc of developed capitalist states of the present day, and, consequently, frequently coordinate their policies in regard to the socialist nations and the developing regions of the world. This potential is based *on the class solidarity of the ruling circles of both nations* [emphasis added] and on their membership in the same bloc (although France did reject attempts at military integration within the NATO framework).[32]

ANOTHER SOVIET WORRY: CHINA

While the People's Republic of China (PRC) does not have compatible class interests with the Warsaw Pact as does France with NATO, Soviet observers have begun to note that a coalition between the PRC and West European and American right-wing elements is a distinct possibility. Prior to the 1969 border clashes on the Ussuri River, Moscow confined most of its criticism of China to the ideological sphere. Mao had led China astray with his chauvinistic, revisionistic misinterpretations of Marxism-Leninism. Nevertheless, in general, Moscow perceived that Chinese military and foreign policy opposed both NATO and the United States. However, since 1969 and building to a crescendo in the 1970's, Soviet sinologists have seen a fundamental change occurring in Chinese-US-NATO relations.

Kissinger's visit to China in 1971, followed by Nixon's in 1972, and then Chou En-lai's heralded advice that Washington should not miscalculate Moscow's objectives and the West should maintain its military strength despite an American desire to reach a SALT agreement, seemed to mark the crossover in Soviet perceptions of China. Since 1973, Moscow's writers no longer view China as merely a socialist state misinterpreting Marxism-Leninism. Rather, as the theoretical journal *Kommunist* argued, the current Chinese leadership has "energized their efforts against world socialism and detente." Peking opposed MBFR, the Four Powers Treaty of 1970, and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); counseled Europe about a mythical "menace from the East"; and continued to invite right-wing reactionaries like Franz Joseph Strauss, Henry Jackson, Hans Roser, and Gerhard Schroeder to visit Peking in order "to proclaim their sympathies for the 'Western European Community' . . . ." Worst of all, however, Peking hastened to alter the anti-American trend of its Western European foreign policy and emphasized "anti-Soviet and anti-socialist aspects," such as the "call for increasing the power of the aggressive NATO bloc and the intensification of its aggressive policy toward the socialist comity, and for the permanent retention of American forces in Western Europe."[33]

The change in direction of Chinese policy and the resulting improved relations with the United States and NATO severely trouble Moscow, for it observes in China's motives an attempt to create another

alliance which encircles Moscow with its historic enemies on the East and West. As *International Affairs* commented, "Peking wants to see in Western Europe a force capable of bringing political and military pressure to bear on the USSR and other socialist countries."[34] To accomplish this task, Maoists seek "to form an alliance" with the imperialists.[35] One of the more eloquent statements on the possibility or probability of an alliance between the United States, NATO, and China directed against the USSR occurred in a 1976 Soviet party worker book on China:

> It would be impossible to exclude from one's calculations even the probability of China's being drawn in one or another form into an alliance with imperialist powers. Imperialist circles have already used the political course of the Maoists in their interests and undoubtedly will not refrain from plans to an even greater degree to put the population and material potential to the services of their own arms on the world arena.[36]

While many Westerners will find it impossible to accept the idea of a PRC-NATO military alliance against the USSR as anything other than a paranoiac Moscovite fear, one should recall that improved Chinese-Western relations extend beyond the arena of rhetoric and that opportunities which have occurred recently were unthinkable 10 years ago. For instance, in April 1978, the PRC signed a long-term (5 year) trade agreement with the Common Market. This hardly can give Moscow much comfort, since the only other Communist nation to sign such an agreement was recalcitrant, anti-Soviet Yugoslavia. The idea that Washington would allow Peking to be seated at the UN and would also exchange diplomatic personnel was no more than a pipedream a decade ago. Moreover, no one would have thought a decade ago that the United States would even consider providing the PRC military aid. However, in 1976, former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger told CBS that this was exactly what the United States had considered, and then a State Department representative announced that such a deal was still under consideration.[37] Moreover, Chinese trade patterns have dramatically switched, with an increased reorientation toward capitalist countries and away from socialist nations. In 1977, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) member nations supplied approximately 10 percent of China's foreign trade, with the USSR contributing only two percent of the total. In contrast, China's leading capitalist trading partners contributed more than 51 percent of China's total foreign trade: Japan, 26 percent; Hong Kong, 14 percent; West Germany, 6.8 percent; United Kingdom, 2.3 percent; and the United States, 2 percent.[38]

The changes in Chinese-capitalist relations, both in rhetoric and fact, are enough to cause Moscow deep concern for the future. Currently, Morris Rothenberg argues that the Soviets view the situation as an isosceles triangle with the Soviet Union and the United States still maintaining predominance, but China is steadily growing.[39] For the future, Moscow must watch when the triangle becomes equilateral. If China then falls into disagreement with the United States and its NATO capitalist allies, Moscow will still face major problems due to the relative increase in power of Peking. However, what Moscow would fear most is a continuing rapprochement between the US-Europe and China directed against Moscow. Using Soviet worst-case analysis methodology, the latter is a distinct possibility if one accepts a *Kommunist* editorial view stated in 1973 that "The Chinese leadership is beginning to form a direct bloc with the imperialist forces."[40]

NATO STANDARDIZATION

Soviet commentary on NATO standardization efforts seems to follow two somewhat contradictory streams, and it does not seem apparent which one is the more important. On one hand, one group—in which the military writers probably predominate—seems to see NATO moving

toward more standardization than in the past. This group of writers tends to be more impressed with the small steps taken in the area of NATO standardization. For instance, *Tass* saw the US-West German decision to deploy a common 120mm gun on both the XM-1 and the Leopard II tanks as an "accord on standardization" which would increase "the combat might of the units of this [NATO] aggressive bloc in Central Europe."[41] Likewise, *Krasnaia Zvezda* has noted with considerable interest that France is also experimenting with a 120mm gun on its AMX-30 tank.[42] The British Chieftain has carried a similar main gun since 1966. Thus, for at least the nations which Moscow acknowledges as its main capitalist threats, it is not difficult to surmise that some Soviet writers see the future trend is toward at least a NATO-standardized main tank gun.

On the other hand, another group of Soviet authors tends to view the standardization issue as a ruse employed by the United States to increase profits for its military-industiral complex, to exacerbate the arms race, and to maintain American dominance in NATO. Soviet commentary on the 1975 sale of F-16s to Belgium, Holland, the Netherlands, and Norway is a good example of this view. *Izvestiia* discounted the importance of "fancy phrases about 'Atlantic solidarity'" as the real factors motivating American interest in the sale of F-16s. Capitalist profits were important, as *Izvestiia* said, because the sale "is a question of a very big military contract . . . ." Political-military motives also motivated the sale, as the United States tried "to preserve its dominant position in NATO and to intensify the dependence of its West European partners in NATO upon US military supplies." Thus, "standardization of arms" was only a guise. America's (i.e., the Pentagon's) main goal was an attempt "to tighten up discipline among its NATO partners by imposing upon them a new round of militaristic preparations . . . ."[43] Also, *Tass* apparently saw little connection between the F-16 sale and standardization, and emphasized the "definite political colour" of the rivalry leading up to the decision to buy the American plane, rather than the French Mirage. The agreement to purchase an American plane indicated that the "Atlantic solidarity," as defined by the Pentagon, "would take the upper hand," rather than the French idea of "European unity."[44] Another commentator emphasized that as a direct result of the sale, the "US military-industrial complex has gained a new incentive to renew the arms race. It will be followed by others."[45]

On the issue of NATO standardization, probably the only thing that can be said with certainty is that Soviet writers recognize it as a NATO objective. Likewise, they understand that standardization (much less interoperability) has not been achieved. However, the goal and what steps have been taken—small as Western observers may think they are—some Soviets would mark as significant and something to watch for in the future. It must always be understood that Soviet commentators (as do their Western counterparts) look at trends, and not necessarily at what exists in fact at a specific time. That is why in 1972 *Krasnaia Zvezda* could argue that the "trend toward further development of standardization is a decisive one . . . ."[46]

The Soviets probably never expect to see a completely standardized NATO because the military-industrial complex in the NATO nations could not forego individual profit for collective improvement. From a Soviet perspective, what is most likely to occur is the continued capitalist competition for weapons sales and development programs, but there will be a growing tendency to follow a general NATO standard. NATO nations—particularly West Germany, Britain, and the United States—will continue to "stick to their own types of vehicles" but there will be a tendency "to create vehicles of the same type . . . ."[47] This may be as definitive as the Soviets can get on standardization, given their ideological outlook and the snail's pace taken by NATO on the issue.

LESSONS FROM RECENT WARS

While it may never be stated openly in the press, Soviet writers seem to be envious of the

US military and the lessons it learned from Vietnam and other so-called "imperialist wars of aggression." Although American activities are condemned, Soviet commentators recognize that the United States developed new techniques of warfighting, experimented with a variety of new weapons in Southeast Asia, and—most importantly—tested its forces under hostile fire, something the Kremlin has not done since the end of 1945. As one observer writing in the major Soviet theoretical military journal said a number of years ago about the Vietnam conflict:

> Modern imperialist local wars serve as a type of test training ground for new military-technical equipment and also for improving the forms and methods for waging an armed struggle.[48]

One of the most obvious outcomes of the Vietnam War that Moscow writers see is the increased emphasis placed upon helicopters and airmobile forces, both in the United States and NATO. Although helicopters and the concept of employing them as weapons platforms and troop transports have existed since the Korean War, they were never extensively used because they were considered too vulnerable on the battlefield. However, both the tactics of low altitude helicopter approach to avoid antiaircraft positions in Vietnam and the new engineering techniques which the war spawned made the United States realize that previous ideas about helicopters were outdated.

From the Soviet perspective, Vietnam taught the US military how best to employ helicopters and airmobile forces: what tactics would work best, and what tactics were deficient. As a result of its experience in Southeast Asia, Soviet writers argue that the United States discovered that airmobile forces could execute deep penetrations faster and more expeditiously than infantry or armor forces. Moreover, America was able both to refine techniques to employ airmobile forces in a jungle environment by using hover and rappeling techniques and to develop explosives which could blast out a wooded area without making the landing zones impossible to use. In addition, the United States learned that airmobile forces were best suited for offensive operations or mobile defense on a wide front that required "powerful attacks by fire and rapid counterattacks in great depth."[49] In essence, US experience in Southeast Asia caused the United States to realize that airmobility and helicopters were "one of the most promising resources of war,"[50] regardless of the type of conflict.

Partly as a result of this American experience, Soviet commentators have observed some changes occurring in NATO to reflect the lessons learned. While European nations are not quite as enthusiastic over airmobile forces as the United States, England, France, and West Germany already include some airmobile units in their force structure. Nevertheless, the helicopter "as a massive means of armed combat is now recognized in all countries belonging to NATO."[51] One Soviet military writer has projected that the army helicopter fleet in Britain, West Germany, and France would double by 1980, and the US Army would have nearly 18,000 helicopters by 1980.[52] Such a projection fits neatly into Soviet concepts of NATO as a hostile, aggressive alliance because, as noted above, Soviet commentators view helicopters and airmobile forces as tools which are best utilized in a fast-moving, offensive battle.

Soviet writers have also noted other positive and negative lessons from the Southeast Asian war which have utility for a NATO context. A recent *Krasnaia Zvezda* article noted that as a result of Vietnam, the United States discovered ways to improve its tactical communications. Specifically, the author wrote that American forces found that the small-unit helmet radio set, the AN/PRC-88, was inadequate and unreliable in combat. From this experience, the US defense community redesigned and simplified the radio, and improved its range and reliability.[53] Similarly, American antiaircraft experience in Vietnam—and Israeli

experience in the 1973 war—demonstrated that conventional bombing of antiaircraft facilities was not the method of the future. Either too many planes would be lost or accuracy could not be adequately projected. The lesson which the United States learned—applicable also to NATO in any future military conflict—was that it had to both create new systems and to "perfect existing radio countermeasures and long-range air-to-surface missiles with a high degree of accuracy for the purpose of breaking through powerful and dense air defense systems . . . ."[54]

IMPLICATIONS

How the Soviet Union perceives NATO, and particularly the United States as the leading member of the alliance, has affected and will continue to affect future East-West relations. The task for the future is to try to understand—as completely as possible—Soviet motivations and not to assume that every USSR military action is a hostile step directed generally toward NATO or specifically toward the United States.

While Western observers in the current era have a propensity to focus upon NATO's centrifugal forces, Soviet commentators since about 1974 have emphasized the opposite. Of course, any NATO problem areas are given high visibility in the Soviet press, but on balance there seems to be less optimism about the direction of the European correlation of forces. From the Soviet perspective, NATO is spending more money for defense, which means quantitatively and qualitatively superior weapons systems will appear in NATO's inventory during the 1980's and 1990's. Thus, even a simplistic action-reaction model can easily justify increased Soviet weapons deployments to offset NATO improvements. Unless the Western decisionmakers can impress their Eastern counterparts that Western trepidations over a Soviet menace or threat are real and naturally generate and support NATO defense growth, the last quarter of this century will closely resemble the past—a constantly increasing emphasis upon military weapons on both sides that only continues to fuel the mutual perception of aggressive intentions.

Future efforts to reintegrate France into NATO's military structure probably will have little impact upon Soviet threat projectionists. France may not be a military member of NATO, but it participates in the political circles of NATO and exercises its troops with NATO nations. Most importantly, France is a capitalist nation, and, in the final analysis, Soviet commentators seem to believe Paris would follow its class interests and align with NATO in the event of conflict.

If the Soviet Union perceives that China continues to strengthen its ties with NATO and the United States, there are two basic courses of action it may choose to follow. On one hand, Moscow might attempt to defuse one of the two military fronts. A very real possibility might exist that the USSR would attempt rapidly to adopt an MBFR program in order to facilitate moving military formations to the East. On the other hand, the possibility of encirclement and a multifront conflict might encourage the worst elements in Moscow's psyche. Any overt or covert signals that Moscow interprets as a growing probability of increased PRC-NATO rapprochement could encourage the Soviet Union to abandon any discussion of demilitarization and force it to build its military unrelentingly in order to cope with the worst contingency it can imagine: a two-front conflict with Soviet troops separated by more than 3000 miles. Obviously, NATO must maneuver very carefully in order not to confuse Moscow on this issue. It is of particular significance that NATO communicates clearly that PRC rhetoric has it own logic and does not necessarily reflect NATO's intentions on specific military issues.

As long as NATO finds it difficult to make positive standardization moves, Moscow will hold conflicting interpretations on this issue. One group will continue to point to the small steps taken toward standardization and to emphasize the threatening nature of such

efforts. Another element will continue to emphasize that true standardization within NATO is impossible because the military-industrial complexes of each NATO nation will not sacrifice profits for the collective good. However, it must be recognized that the achievement of standardization followed by interoperability probably would significantly frighten Moscow.

Finally, Moscow continues to view American forces with a unique respect. Soviet military officers apparently discuss rather frankly at times that the United States has tested its military rather successfully on at least two major occasions since World War II, and they somewhat envy the American experience. Likewise, Soviet officers have been impressed with the American noncommissioned officer (NCO) and have commented that the tasks accomplished by US NCOs would require a battalion commander in the Soviet Army. They also appear to believe that American military morale and professionalism is quite high.[55] The same attitudes, except on the war experience issue, seem to carry over into the Soviet assessment of the British, West German, and French military.

Thus, above all else, it is important to remember that the world appears much different from behind the Kremlin walls. How events in the last quarter of this century evolve will depend not only on NATO's actions, but also on Soviet perceptions of those actions.

NOTES

1. As examples, see Steven L. Canby, "Dampening Nuclear Counterforce Incentives: Correcting NATO's Inferiority in Conventional Military Strength," *Orbis*, 19 (Spring 1975), 47-71, and "The Alliance and Europe: Military Doctrine and Technology," *Adelphi Paper No. 109* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1974/75); Robert W. Komer, "Treating NATO's Self-Inflicted Wound," *Foreign Policy*, No. 13 (Winter 1973-74), 34-38; US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *NATO and the New Soviet Threat*, Report by Senators Sam Nunn and Dewey F. Bartlett (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1977).

2. Robert Jarvis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 409-10.

3. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 7 April 1951, pp. 18-19 (hereafter cited as *CDSP*).

4. *CDSP*, 20 December 1949, p. 29, and 27 December 1949, p. 36.

5. V. Mikhaylov and Yu. Khudyakov, "Imperialist Armies and Military Blocks," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 16 (August 1975), translated in *Joint Publications Research Service* 65785, p. 43 (hereafter cited as *JPRS*).

6. V. Izmaylov, "The Nature and Features of Modern War," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 6 (March 1975), in *JPRS* 64665, p. 37.

7. See Michael Deane, *The Soviet Concept of the "Correlation of Forces,"* (Arlington, Va.: Stanford Research Institute, Strategic Studies Center, 1976), for an opposing opinion.

8. N. Inozemtsev, *Kommunist*, No. 13 (September 1973), in *JPRS* 60363, p. 112.

9. President Nixon's resignation partially contributed to this view. Throughout the Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation, Kremlin observers implicitly supported Nixon's claims of innocence. The President resigned not because he was guilty but because "powerful monopolies" had "ordered" the press to make incriminating discourses. These monopolies were "dissatisfied" with the detente policies pursued by Nixon. Daniel S. Papp, "Watergate: The Soviet Assessment" (unpublished paper presented at The Georgia Political Science Meeting, 31 January-1 February 1975, Athens, Georgia), p. 23.

10. G. I. Svyatov, *SShA: Economika, Politika, Ideologiya* No. 12 (December 1975) (herafter cited as *SShA*), in *JPRS* 66547, p. 86.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

12. *Ibid.*

13. For Soviet commentary on US tank and Air Force modernization efforts, see N. Grishin, "Tanks of the Present and Future—Military Thinking Abroad," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 8 July 1976, in *JPRS* 67826, pp. 30-35; and Ye. Aleksandrov, "According to the Aggressive Plans of the Pentagon," *Kryl'ya Rodiny*, No. 5 (May 1977), in *JPRS* 69418, pp. 1-4.

14. Excerpts from book by Major General P. I. Sergeyev, *Sukhoputnyye Voyska Kapitalisticheskikh Gosudarstv* (Moscow: Voyennoye Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSR, 1974), in *JPRS* 64607, p. 27.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Grishin, p. 35. For more discussion of Soviet views on NATO's weapons and modernization programs, see also excerpts from N. S. Nikitim, *Otdeleniye I Vzvod V Boyu (Po Inostrannym Armiyam)* (Moscow: Voyennoye Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSR, 1974), in *JPRS* 64672, pp. 88-92; K. Dolgov, "Tanks in the Armies of the Capitalist Nations," *Voynennyye Znaniya*, No. 6 (June 1977), in *JPRS* 69544, pp. 43-46; and D. Kostantinov, "Military-Technical Training Abroad: Aircraft Cannon," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 12 March 1976, in *JPRS* 67301, pp. 11-17.

17. Mikhaylov and Khudyakov, pp. 45-46.

18. Grishin, p. 32.

19. S. Vladimirov and L. Teplov, *NATO: A Bleak Picture* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 37. For other Soviet writers who make the same essential comments about the Bundeswehr, see Dolgov, p. 44 and Mikhaylov and Khudyakov, pp. 43-44.

20. For one of the more dismal assessments of NATO, see Vladimirov and Teplov.

21. Dolgov, p. 46.

22. G. Svyatov, "Prospects for Development of the U.S. Navy During the 1970's," *Morskoy Sbornik*, No. 3 (March 1973), in *JPRS* 58757, pp. 1-10.

23. *CDSP*, 6 April 1966, p. 16.

24. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 29 March 1966, p. BB6 (hereafter cited as *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*).

25. *Tass*, 14 April 1966, in *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 15 April 1966, p. BB8.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 7 April 1966, p. BB7.

28. Yu I. Rubinsky, *SShA*, No. 3 (March 1971), in *JPRS* 5770, p. 72.

29. See V. Drobkov, *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 1 (January 1974), in *JPRS* 61271, p. 6; and Mikhaylov and Khudyakov, p. 44, for two of the more explicit examples.

30. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 24 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 177-78. For other Lenin quotes on how the Soviets view capitalism as united against socialism, see also A. S. Milovidov and V. G. Kozlov, eds., *The Philosophical Heritage of V. I. Lenin and Problems of Contemporary War (A Soviet View)*, translated and published under auspices of the US Air Force (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 16.

31. V. Yekovlev, "Imperialism—The Enemy of Peoples and Social Progress," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 14 (July 1975), in *JPRS* 65785, p. 12.

32. I. Utkin, *SShA*, No. 11 (November 1975), in *JPRS* 66355, p. 32.

33. Albert Norden, *Kommunist*, No. 18 (December 1974), in *JPRS* 63910, pp. 129, 134.

34. Y. Agranov, "Peking's Great Power Policy and Western Europe," *International Affairs (Russia)*, No. 4 (April 1974), p. 24.

35. I. Alexeyev and G. Apalin, "Peking's Ideological Subversion," *International Affairs (Russia)*, No. 10 (October 1975), p. 50. The death of Mao has given Moscow little comfort on this issue. In January 1978, *International Affairs (Russia)* claimed that Peking's new leadership continues to follow the "Maoist anti-socialist and anti-popular line." Moreover, as recently as August 1977, Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing warned Secretary of State Cyrus Vance that the Soviet threat was still real and Washington should continue to build NATO's military potential. See Y. Semyonov, "Peking: Against Peace and Socialism," *International Affairs (Russia)*, No. 1 (January 1978), pp. 54-55.

36. Quoted in Morris Rothenberg, *Whither China: The View from the Kremlin* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami, Center for Advanced Studies, 1976), p. 267.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

38. *Asia Yearbook: 1978* (Hong Kong: Far Eastern Economic Review, Ltd., 1978), p. 168.

39. Rothenberg, pp. 285-86.

40. Editorial, *Kommunist*, No. 12 (August 1973), in *JPRS* 60363, p. 110.

41. *Tass*, 5 August 1976, in *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 6 August 1976, p. A7.

42. Grishin, p. 35.

43. *Izvestiia*, 11 June 1975, in *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 17 June 1975, p. E2.

44. *Tass*, 9 June 1975, in *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 11 June 1975, p. E2.

45. *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 11 June 1975, p. E2.

46. Ye. Kosyrev, "Tanks: Their Present and Future," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 19 July 1972, in *JPRS* 56768, p. 21.

47. N. Malyugin, "The Motor Vehicle in the Combat Formation," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 18 June 1975, in *JPRS* 65323, p. 41.

48. V. Kozlov and A. Skrgl'nik, "One of the Most Important Tasks of the Party and People," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 13 (July 1971), in *JPRS* 53831, p. 11.

49. M. Belov, *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 23 August 1975, in *JPRS* 60134, p. 7.

50. M. Belov, "Helicopter Attack," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 24 January 1975, in *JPRS* 64318, p. 9.

51. M. Belov, "The Air Mobility of Ground Troops," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 11 August 1973, in *JPRS* 60029, p. 16.

52. *Ibid.*

53. A. Chizhov, "Communication Resources: Achievements and Prospects," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 28 January 1977, in *JPRS* 68074, pp. 52-53.

54. V. Babich, "Free Tactics," *Aviatsiya I Kommonavtika*, No. 10 (October 1975), in *JPRS* 66343, p. 26.

55. Drew Middleton, "Soviet Officers Said to Admire American Army," *The New York Times*, 19 December 1977, p. 9.