Defense Policy and the Reagan Administration

Departure from Containment

Barry R. Posen and Stephen Van Evera

The Reagan Administration has proposed the biggest military buildup since the Korean War. The first Administration five-year defense program, drawn up in 1981, would have required an average real budget increase of 8.1 percent per year from 1981 to 1987, for a net real increase of 59 percent. Under this five-year plan, United States defense spending would have risen from 5.6 percent of gross national product (GNP) in 1981 to 7.4 percent of GNP in 1987.[1] Later the Administration cut these proposed increases slightly, and Congress is bound to impose further reductions, especially if sizable budget deficits continue. Nevertheless, the Administration has made clear that it favors a major transfer of resources into defense, and the general direction of the Administration budget will continue to be sharply upward.

The budget has become the focus of a growing debate over whether the buildup is necessary and whether the new money is well spent. So far this debate has dwelled chiefly on the specifics of Administration proposals. By contrast, we believe that to assess the value of Reagan's defense policy we must first clarify the United States' grand strategy: What are America's basic aims? What missions must the United States military perform to achieve these aims? Can current U.S. forces already perform these missions, or do they fall short?

Defense policy cannot be properly evaluated unless national strategy and national military capabilities are specified first. Otherwise—as is generally

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1. William W. Kaufmann, "The Defense Budget," in Joseph A. Pechman, ed., *Setting National Priorities: The 1983 Budget* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1982); hereafter Kaufmann, SNP 1983. Also, William W. Kaufmann, "The Defense Budget," in Joseph A. Pechman, ed., *Setting National Priorities: The 1982 Budget* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1981), p. 135; hereafter Kaufmann, SNP 1982. The earlier essay is also published as a booklet: William W. Kaufmann, *Defense in the 1980's* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1981).

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the case—planners lack goals and guidelines to measure national defense requirements, foreign and defense policies are bound to be mismatched, and policymakers risk wasting money on areas in which their forces are already strong, while failing to correct weaknesses. Defense budget cuts make sense only if a leaner force can still carry out national strategy. Increases make sense only if current forces cannot carry out assigned missions and military reforms cannot make up the shortfall. In short, defense planners should ideally ask the big questions first—they should clarify basic aims and strategy before choosing forces and tactics; if they do not, their programs and policies run the risk of being incoherent and uneconomical. In practice, defense policy is seldom properly matched to strategy, and clear strategy itself is rare. But American defense planners will produce a better defense policy if they approximate this ideal as closely as possible.

Disputes about American defense needs often spring from hidden disputes about strategy. Analysts may differ on how much to spend on defense because they differ on whether the United States should adopt a more or less demanding strategy; it costs more to perform many missions than to perform fewer, so deciding how much is enough depends on first deciding "enough to do what?" Analysts also differ on the merits of specific weapons systems because they differ on what missions the military must perform. Different missions require different forces, so debates about hardware often grow from unacknowledged disputes about which strategy is best. Likewise, disputes about the East–West military balance often spring from hidden disagreements about how many missions the military is expected to perform. The U.S. and its allies appear strong if the requirements are few and weak if they are many. Pessimists and optimists often differ less on what American forces *can* do than on what they should be *asked* to do. In short, although the issues one hears debated most often are about specific weapons, force deployment, and resource allocations, the hidden agenda of the defense debate is a dispute about strategy.

The Reagan Administration, however, has failed to fully explain what grand strategy it pursues and has neglected to detail the capabilities and weaknesses of current American forces, leaving defense analysts and the public without yardsticks by which to measure whether the proposed buildup is necessary or appropriate. Administration statements merely suggest the outline of a strategy, while leaving important questions unanswered. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's two annual reports to Congress, for example, the main public documents explaining the buildup, failed either to define roles and missions or to specify shortfalls between current capabilities

and required missions. In fact, the secretary rejects "arbitrary and facile" estimates of the number of contingencies for which American forces must prepare.[2] He believes that the United States should "discard artificial definitions and contrived categories," and avoid "the mistaken argument as to whether we should prepare to fight 'two wars,' 'one and a half wars,' or some other such tally of war."[3] He demands a "necessary recasting of our strategy"[4] without explaining what the old strategy was, or what the new one will be. He points to "serious deficiencies in our military forces"[5] without explaining which missions cannot be met. The Administration, in short, does not publicly explain its proposed military buildup in terms concrete enough to allow us to measure its benefits against its costs. Thus, the first fault with President Reagan's defense program lies with its lack of a clearly articulated strategy.

Second, based on what the Administration suggests about its programs, its strategy seems to be extravagant and dangerous. Policy statements and procurement programs indicate that this Administration has adopted a more demanding strategy than any since Eisenhower's. Granted, all postwar administrations have adopted defense strategies that included more missions than the original Cold War containment strategy would require; but the implicit Reagan strategy defines containment even more broadly than did its predecessors by adding more and harder missions and putting more emphasis on offensive missions and tactics.

This demanding new strategy helps drive the Reagan defense budget upward, but the extra missions it requires have not been explained or debated, and the prima facie case that they protect vital American interests seems weak. On the whole, then, when we do catch a glimpse of the Administration's grand strategy, it appears to depart from original Cold War strategic ideas and toward a more ambitious and more dangerous grand strategy.

The following describes the original Cold War strategy of containment and the four essential military missions that follow from it. Then NATO forces are measured against these missions to assess current NATO military strength. The second section outlines which additional missions are implicit

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2. Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1983* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982; also available free on request from the Defense Department Public Affairs Office), p. I-15; hereafter *Annual Report 1983*.
3. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-15.
4. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-11.
5. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-3.

in Reagan Administration statements and programs, while the third and fourth sections discuss the causes of current public alarm about Western military strength, and suggest reforms which could strengthen NATO forces without a major defense budget increase.

U.S. Strategy and Capabilities

CONTAINMENT AND U.S. STRATEGY

To evaluate the current defense debate, we begin by assessing current American military strength. To do that, we need a set of missions against which to measure American forces. Past consensus held that American forces had four main missions. First, American strategic nuclear forces must be able to deter a Soviet nuclear attack on the United States by being able to inflict unacceptable damage on the Soviet Union even after a Soviet nuclear first strike against U.S. forces. Second, American forces must be strong enough to halt a Soviet invasion of Western Europe for several weeks, against whatever weapons Soviet invaders chose to use—conventional, chemical, or tactical nuclear.[6] A third mission was added once the West became dependent on Middle East oil: to defeat a Soviet seizure of the Persian Gulf oil fields. Finally, most strategists agree that the United States requires the capacity to fight an extra "half war" against another country, even while fighting a major war against the Soviet Union, thus creating a total "one-and-a-half-war" requirement. For planning purposes an attack by North Korea on South Korea was taken as the "half-war," but the half-war mission had no defined adversary, and might be fought anywhere against anyone.

These four missions reflect the basic aim of containment, as framed by George F. Kennan, Walter Lippmann, and other strategists in the 1940s: to prevent the industrial power of Eurasia from falling under the control of any single state.[7] They warned that any state controlling all Eurasia could threaten

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6. "Strategic nuclear" forces are those that would strike the enemy homeland, while "tactical nuclear" or "theater nuclear" forces are those that would be used in a regional battle, in neither homeland.

7. An excellent summary of early containment thinking is John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 25–88. See also Gaddis, "Containment: A Reassessment," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (July 1977), pp. 873–887; George F. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966); and Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947). For an earlier discussion of American grand strategy from the Kennan/Lippmann perspective, see Nicholas John Spykman, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (1942; reprint ed., Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970), pp. 3–199.

the security of the United States, since the total industrial power of Europe and Asia (64 percent of gross world product [GWP] in 1978) far exceeds that of the United States (24 percent of GWP in 1978).[8] A hegemonic Eurasian superstate could convert this superior economy into a stronger war machine: hence the United States must prevent such a superstate from arising. In short, containment was a geopolitical security strategy; its purpose was to maintain the political division of industrial Eurasia, to thereby protect the United States from a hostile Eurasian power concentration.

After World War II, containment was directed against the Soviet Union because the Soviets became the principal threat for dominating Europe once Nazi German power had been destroyed. According to George Kennan, the stakes in this Soviet–American competition were the centers of military-industrial production—places where military power could be created. The purpose of containment was to keep the Soviets from seizing these industrial regions and mobilizing them against the United States. This would be achieved by cooperative effort among the states threatened by Soviet expansion, not by solitary action on the part of the United States. The final goal was to limit Soviet power but not to destroy it, both because this would be too difficult to achieve and because, even if it succeeded, it might create a new potential hegemony, just as the destruction of German power created the Soviet threat to Europe in 1945. Containment did not seek the destruction of the Soviet Union: it succeeded if Soviet hegemony over Eurasia was prevented.

As it was originally conceived, containment thus was more a geopolitical than an ideological strategy. It opposed the expansion of the Soviet state, not of communism per se—although American leaders often confused the issue by explaining containment with simplistic anti-communist rhetoric. The original logic of containment would have defined the Soviet Union as the American adversary even if it had abandoned communism for democracy, as long as it remained strong and aggressive.

Containment also was fundamentally defensive: Eurasia was to be divided, not dominated or policed. Containment was directed toward the industrial world, not the Third World, since industrial war-making power was the prize. And it assumed that the defense of the West was a joint effort, not an exclusive American operation. The basic purpose of containment was the

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8. Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1981* (Leesburg, Va.: World Priorities, 1981), pp. 25–26.

same basic purpose that led the United States to ally with the Soviets against Hitler: namely, to keep the rest of Europe free from being overrun by the strongest European state. Kennan summarized the logic of containment in these terms:

> It [is] essential to us, as it was to Britain, that no single Continental land power should come to dominate the entire Eurasian land mass. Our interest has lain rather in the maintenance of some sort of stable balance among the powers of the interior, in order that none of them should effect the subjugation of the others, conquer the seafaring fringes of the land mass, become a great sea power as well as land power, shatter the position of England, and enter—as in these circumstances it certainly would—on an overseas expansion hostile to ourselves and supported by the immense resources of the interior of Europe and Asia.[9]

Kennan identified five important military-industrial regions: the Soviet Union, the Rhine valley, the British isles, Japan, and the United States.[10] Today the Persian Gulf is a sixth important region, since Europe and Japan depend on Persian Gulf oil. In Kennan's terms, the task of the United States is to contain the Soviets within their military-industrial region, which in practical terms means defending Western Europe, Japan, and now the Persian Gulf. The direct Soviet military threat to Japan is minimal, so the defense of Europe and the Gulf are the main military missions.

Besides containing the Soviets, the United States, in traditional postwar thinking, has a second basic aim: to keep America out of a nuclear war. This aim involves two objectives: to keep any war conventional, avoiding the use of nuclear weapons as long as possible; and to keep any nuclear war off American territory if possible, confining it to the theater where it breaks out. Because a theater nuclear war could escalate to a strategic exchange, the U.S. has a further interest in ending any theater nuclear war as quickly as possible. These goals are not required by containment per se, but rather by the invention of nuclear weapons, which demand more careful tactics of containment.

These general aims—containing the Soviet Union and keeping the United States out of a nuclear war—engender the specific requirements for American conventional and tactical nuclear forces. Hypothetically, the United States could defend Europe and the Gulf simply by threatening to attack Soviet

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9. George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900–1950* (New York: New American Library, 1951), p. 10.
10. Kennan, *Realities*, pp. 63–64; and Kennan, *Memoirs 1925–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 359.

cities with strategic nuclear weapons if the Soviets invaded. But the Soviets could retaliate against American cities, and American strategists do not want to "trade Boston to defend Bonn." Moreover, the Soviets might not be convinced that American leaders would carry out such a threat. This fear led to the requirement that American theater forces in Europe and the Gulf should be strong enough to halt Soviet invaders. The hope is to keep the war away from American soil, confining it to the theater of action.

The United States would try to defend Europe and Japan conventionally, if the Soviets attacked conventionally, to lower the risk of nuclear escalation. American conventional forces are intended to form a buffer between peace and nuclear war—to give us a choice, in other words, between all or nothing. In official thinking, such a buffer lowers the risk of a holocaust by widening Western options: the United States can defend conventionally if the Soviets attack conventionally.[11] Before 1967 the United States had planned to defend Europe chiefly with tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, but then NATO endorsed a new plan to fight conventionally for at least several weeks, to give statesmen time to seek peace through negotiation. This plan, of course, does not guarantee a nuclear war would not happen anyway. Any major East–West conventional war may escalate even against the wishes of both sides.[12] Moreover, Soviet military writing indicates that the Soviets might use nuclear weapons from the outset of the war.[13] But conventional forces are intended to reduce this risk.

Past administrations have often added a fifth or a sixth mission to these four—most notably, an anti-China mission, a "counterforce" mission,[14] or a Third World intervention mission. Before 1969, American strategists planned for a simultaneous war against Russia, China, and a third enemy, creating a total "two-and-a-half-war" requirement, in contrast with the "one-and-a-half-war" strategy adopted by the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations. In addition, before 1964, and again after 1974, official policy included an ambiguous counterforce requirement, and during the 1960s, planners assumed

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11. For a critique of this thinking, see Bernard Brodie, *Escalation and the Nuclear Option* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).
12. For escalation scenarios see Barry R. Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War? Escalation and NATO's Northern Flank," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 1982), pp. 28–54.
13. A useful short summary of Soviet military thought is Benjamin S. Lambeth, "How To Think About Soviet Military Doctrine," in John Baylis and Gerald Segal, eds., *Soviet Strategy* (Montclair, N.J.: Allenheld, Osmun, 1981), pp. 105–123. A typical Soviet military view on European war is Col. A.A. Sidorenko, *The Offensive* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970).
14. On "counterforce," see below, pp. 24–28.

that the U.S. must be capable of intervening against Third World insurgencies. Kennan, Lippmann, and others often pointed out that American foreign policy goals were expanding beyond the original aims of containment; likewise, American defense policy incorporated more missions than pure containment would seem to require. But the four missions outlined above have been the only missions to receive continuous consensus support. They are also the only four that follow unambiguously from a containment grand strategy,[15] so these are the missions against which we should measure American forces.

One other factor is relevant to an assessment of U.S. ability to carry out a policy of containment: America's strategists have traditionally assumed that its allies would help carry out these missions and the United States would not shoulder the burden alone. Eurasian states on the Soviet periphery have at least as much at stake in containment as does the United States, since Soviet expansion threatens their freedom more directly. American strategists have therefore assumed that these states will contribute a major share of NATO defenses. A chief purpose of the Marshall Plan and postwar military assistance programs was to strengthen Western Europe so it could defend itself against the Soviets. The notion was always that the United States would stand with those who were attacked and with others whose interests were threatened by Soviet expansion; but the United States would not perform solo, since containment served a general Western interest. The proper comparison, then, should be between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, not between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Depending on whether we add or subtract missions from this list of four, American defense costs will vary sharply. A strictly bare-bones containment strategy might require only the three anti-Soviet missions—a nuclear retaliatory capability and denial capabilities in Europe and the Persian Gulf, with no extra "half-war" mission—because, as a containment purist might argue, only Soviet expansion poses a threat, and the Soviets can threaten only Europe and the Gulf. On the other hand, Reagan Administration defense requirements are exceptionally high because, as we shall see below, this Administration even more than past ones assumes a longer list of missions than a pure containment strategy would require.

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15. The "half-war" mission is a possible exception, since some might argue that it doesn't protect important interests from the Soviets, as we note below.

UNITED STATES MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Administration statements and press accounts paint a picture of serious American military weakness. President Reagan declares that, "in virtually every measure of military power the Soviet Union enjoys a decided advantage."[16] Defense Secretary Weinberger, for example, points to "serious deficiencies" and "major weaknesses" in American defenses and warns of "our collective failure to pursue an adequate balance of military strength" while the Soviets have pursued "the greatest buildup of military power seen in modern times."[17] *The Wall Street Journal* declares that the Soviet Union "now is superior to the U.S. in almost every category of strategic and conventional forces."[18]

A close examination of the evidence, however, suggests that such claims are exaggerated. American forces do suffer from some deficiencies, and a higher level of confidence in their capabilities would be prudent; but these problems can be alleviated by reforms and/or a modest spending increase. Indeed a convincing case can be made for the argument that American forces are actually capable of carrying out their four basic missions today. More pessimistic views of American capabilities generally rest on hidden assumptions that more missions are demanded or that American allies do not help.

NATO forces *should* be capable of achieving their basic missions, given the total size of the NATO defense effort. NATO states have more men under arms than the Warsaw Pact (5.0 versus 4.8 million men)[19] and spend more money on defense than do the Pact states. Latest United States government figures show NATO narrowly outspending the Pact ($215 to $211 billion in 1979, a 2 percent difference),[20] while figures from the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) give NATO a wider margin ($180 billion to $160 billion in 1978, a difference of 12½ percent).[21] Moreover, about 15 percent of the Soviet defense effort is directed toward China. If we deduct these Soviet forces, United States government figures show a NATO spend-

16. "Transcript of President's Address on Nuclear Strategy Toward Soviet Union," *The New York Times*, November 23, 1982, p. A12.
17. *Annual Report 1983*, pp. I-3, I-4.
18. "The Wrong Defense" (editorial), *The Wall Street Journal*, March 25, 1982.
19. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1982–1983* (London: IISS, 1982), p. 132.
20. U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1970–1979* (Washington, D.C.: ACDA, 1982); Spain is included.
21. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1979–1980* (London: IISS, 1979), p. 94.

ing lead of 17 percent, and IISS figures show NATO leading by 30 percent. These numbers are based on rough estimates rather than precise calculations, but they suggest the approximate balance of total assets invested on both sides.

Moreover, some analysts claim that official American figures exaggerate Soviet defense spending and understate allied spending. One expert suggests that government figures underestimate Western European NATO spending by perhaps 22 percent.[22] If so, NATO outspends the Pact by 12 percent using official figures, or by 29 percent if Soviet forces facing China are deducted. Another expert recently guessed that the C.I.A. may exaggerate Soviet spending by as much as 25–30 percent.[23] If we adjust United States government figures accordingly, NATO actually outspends the Pact by 25 percent. If Soviet forces facing China are then deducted, NATO outspends the Pact by 42 percent.

In short, NATO has the men and the resources needed to defend successfully. If NATO forces are weak, this reflects mistaken force posture, doctrine, and choice of weapons, not inadequate defense spending. Moreover, a detailed look reveals that NATO forces probably can perform their basic missions.

U.S. STRATEGIC NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES. U.S. strategic nuclear forces consist of a triad of 1,052 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) based in the U.S.; 576 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) carried in 36 nuclear-powered submarines; and 316 strategic bombers, which carry nuclear gravity bombs and nuclear-tipped short-range missiles. These strategic forces consume only 15 percent of the U.S. defense budget, with the rest going to conventional forces,[24] but they are the most important and powerful U.S. military forces.

The Soviets also have a triad, theirs consisting of 1,398 ICBMs, 989 SLBMs, and 150 bombers. Because more U.S. missiles have multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs)—more than one warhead—U.S. strategic

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22. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1981*, p. 37, col. 3.
23. Franklyn D. Holzman, "Is There a Military Spending Gap?" (mimeo, March 16, 1982), p. 6. See also Holzman, "Are the Soviets Really Outspending the U.S. on Defense?" *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring 1980), pp. 86–105. For shorter summaries, see Holzman, "Is There A Soviet–U.S. Military Spending Gap?" *Challenge*, September–October 1980, pp. 3–9; and Holzman, "Dollars or Rubles: The CIA's Military Estimates," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 1980, pp. 23–27.
24. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-17.

forces carry more warheads (9,268 to the Soviets' 7,300); however, Soviet warheads are bigger, so the Soviet force carries more total explosive power.[25]

The Administration warns that these U.S. strategic forces are dangerously weak. President Reagan declares that Soviet strategic forces have a "definite margin of superiority" over American forces,[26] while Defense Secretary Weinberger warns that the Soviets hold a "degree of superiority and strategic edge" in strategic nuclear capability which "will last for some years through the decade even if we pursue all the programs the President has sought."[27]

In fact U.S. strategic nuclear capability depends on the missions against which U.S. forces are measured. U.S. strategic forces have much more than a "second-strike capability" (the capacity to inflict "unacceptable damage"[28] on Soviet population and industry even after absorbing a Soviet nuclear first strike), and far less than a "first-strike capability" (the capacity to render Soviet forces incapable of inflicting "unacceptable damage" on U.S. population and industry). Nor do U.S. forces have a "second-strike counterforce" capability (the capacity to absorb a Soviet first strike, and then render remaining Soviet nuclear forces incapable of inflicting unacceptable damage on remaining U.S. population and industry). In short, U.S. forces *could not* prevent the Soviets from devastating U.S. population and industry after a U.S. first strike, or after a U.S. mid-war strike against Soviet reserve nuclear forces; but they *could* destroy most of the Soviet Union in retaliation after a Soviet first strike.

Thus, overall, American counterforce capability—the ability to destroy Soviet retaliatory capability—is minimal, while American retaliatory capability is enormous. Neither side can disarm the other, and both sides can retaliate. An estimated 3,500 American strategic nuclear warheads could survive a Soviet surprise attack,[29] enough to destroy Soviet society several times over. Just 73 U.S. warheads could destroy over 70 percent of Soviet petroleum production capacity.[30] Just 631 small (50 kiloton) American warheads or 141

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25. IISS, *The Military Balance 1982–1983*, pp. 140–141.
26. "President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Matters," *The New York Times*, April 1, 1982, p. A22.
27. Theodore Draper, "How Not To Think About Nuclear War," *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 29, No. 12 (July 15, 1982), p. 38.
28. What damage is "unacceptable" to either side depends on the intentions of the parties and the nature of the dispute: what damage is each side willing to suffer to achieve its aims?
29. Kaufmann, SNP 1982, p. 63.
30. Office of Technology Assessment, *The Effects of Nuclear War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 76.

large (1 megaton) American warheads could destroy over 50 percent of total Soviet industrial capacity.[31] Some doubts surround the survivability of the American strategic command, control, communications, and intelligence apparatus (C^3I), but public information on strategic C^3I is not adequate to judge the extent of the deficiency, or what is needed to correct it.[32] Assuming sufficient C^3I survives, the United States now has many more than enough survivable warheads to retaliate effectively.

This does not mean the United States can stand still. The Soviets invest heavily in counterforce nuclear forces, and American strategic forces must be continuously modernized to cope with these Soviet threats to U.S. second-strike capabilities as they emerge. Improved high-accuracy Soviet ICBMs are now threatening American ICBMs, and improving Soviet air defense capabilities may eventually threaten the penetration capability of American strategic bombers; hence, some improvement or replacement of current ICBMs and bombers will be required to keep U.S. second-strike capability at current levels.[33] But certainly current American forces can retaliate effectively today.

In short, American strategic forces are strong or weak depending on the missions required: the United States is a long way from a meaningful counterforce capability, but American second-strike capability is robust. This reflects the basic attributes of nuclear weapons: they are very powerful, cheap, small, light, easily hidden, easily protected, and easily delivered. As a result, a second-strike capability is very cheap and easy to maintain, while a first-strike capability is virtually impossible under any known technology. It is much harder to find new ways to destroy enemy warheads than it is for the enemy to find new ways to protect them. The "cost-exchange ratio"—the ratio of the cost of producing a capability to the cost of neutralizing it—lies very heavily in favor of the second-strike capability. As a result *neither* superpower can deny the other a second-strike capability, because technology simply will not allow it. The notion that either superpower could gain a militarily meaningful "margin of superiority" is an illusion.

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31. Arthur M. Katz, *Life After Nuclear War: The Economic and Social Impacts of Nuclear Attacks on the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1982), p. 316.
32. On U.S. strategic C^3I, see John D. Steinbruner, "Nuclear Decapitation," *Foreign Policy*, No. 45 (Winter 1981–1982), pp. 16–29; Desmond Ball, *Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?*, Adelphi Paper No. 169 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); and Congressional Budget Office, *Strategic Command, Control and Communications: Alternative Approaches for Modernization* (Washington, D.C.: CBO, 1981).
33. A good analysis of current options to enhance the survivability of American ICBMs is Albert Carnesale and Charles Glaser, "ICBM Vulnerability: The Cures Are Worse Than the Disease," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 70–85.

WESTERN EUROPE. The common assumption holds that Warsaw Pact conventional forces could quickly overrun Western Europe in a conventional war. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig warned in 1982 that the United States must "triple the size of its armed forces and put its economy on a war footing" before NATO could defend Europe successfully.[34] The Committee on the Present Danger notes "a near consensus on the inadequacy of present NATO forces to defend Western Europe successfully with conventional arms."[35]

In fact, NATO conventional forces in Europe are substantially stronger than these gloomy views suggest, although they remain weaker than prudence requires.[36] If Warsaw Pact forces perform a little better than best evidence suggests they will, or if NATO forces perform worse than expected, or if NATO leaders fail to mobilize NATO forces promptly after they receive warning of a Pact mobilization, then Pact forces *can* win the battle. But overall the odds favor NATO, if NATO leaders mobilize their forces quickly once they receive warning[37] and if Pact forces demonstrate no surprising margin of strength over NATO forces. Although NATO forces could not crush Pact attackers decisively, they probably could deny the Soviets a quick victory and thereby turn the conflict into a long war of attrition.

In short, NATO forces cannot promise victory with the level of confidence that NATO leaders should demand, but they seem more likely to win than to lose. Moreover, NATO could be substantially strengthened without a major military buildup, if NATO forces are reformed along the lines outlined below. NATO forces are now close to speed, and could be brought up to

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34. *The New York Times*, April 7, 1982, p. A8.
35. Committee on the Present Danger, *Is America Becoming Number 2? Current Trends in the U.S.–Soviet Military Balance* (Washington, D.C.: CPD, 1978), p. 31.
36. An excellent essay on the NATO conventional balance is John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly in Central Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 3–39; also reprinted in Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983). Also useful are Robert Lucas Fischer, *Defending the Central Front: The Balance of Forces*, Adelphi Paper No. 127 (London: IISS, 1976); and Congressional Budget Office, *Assessing the NATO/Warsaw Pact Military Balance* (Washington, D.C.: CBO and U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1977). In addition to these and other sources, we base our discussion of U.S. conventional capabilities on interviews with Defense Department officials and other members of the American defense community.
37. A substantial percentage of both NATO and Warsaw Pact military capability becomes battle-ready only after several days of preparation, so it is critically important that NATO not allow the Pact a large head start in mobilization. NATO leaders must respond quickly when they receive warning of Pact mobilization measures. Failure to keep up with Pact mobilization would soon allow the Pact to muster sufficiently favorable force ratios to achieve a breakthrough against NATO.

speed, without a large spending increase, by improving NATO force structure and procurement practices.

A Warsaw Pact attack would be likely to fail because Pact forces probably lack the superiority in firepower and manpower they would need to overcome the natural advantage held by the defender, and to compensate for the obstacles that West German geography could pose to an aggressor. The Pact has only a slender manpower and material advantage in Central Europe—between 15 and 20 percent in total manpower, and 20 percent in total ground firepower (i.e., firepower in all NATO and Pact army formations available in Central Europe).[38] Moreover, this firepower ratio may undercount NATO firepower because it omits some NATO weapons held as replacements for combat losses, leaves out some German reserve units, and ignores NATO's greater investment in divisional command, control, and intelligence hardware and staff, which increase the effectiveness of NATO firepower. If these factors were included, the Pact advantage might disappear.

Furthermore, the Pact trails NATO in tactical airpower. Total NATO tactical aircraft in Europe have triple the aggregate payload of Pact aircraft at distances of 100 miles, and seven times the payload of Pact aircraft at distances of 200 miles, according to the latest available data.[39] This reflects the much greater carrying power of NATO aircraft. A NATO F-4 Phantom carries 16,000 pounds, while a Soviet MiG-27 carries only 6,600 pounds.

NATO planes should also be superior in air-to-air combat. NATO fighters are more sophisticated, NATO has better "battle-management" systems (the AWACS aircraft), and NATO pilots are better than Pact pilots. American pilots have more combat experience, they fly more hours, and their training is more realistic.[40] Overall, as Air Force Director of Plans General James Ahmann has testified, NATO fighter forces are "superior to the Warsaw Pact" and could achieve "very favorable aircraft exchange ratios" against Pact fighters.[41]

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38. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly," pp. 7–8. This "firepower" score is a composite index that includes the killing power of all tanks, anti-tank weapons, artillery, and so on—all the killing instruments in the division.
39. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Challenges for U.S. National Security: Assessing the Balance: Defense Spending and Conventional Forces*, Part II (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 1981), p. 71. A similar qualitative advantage for NATO tactical air forces may be construed from figures offered by Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough?* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1971), p. 145, and *Annual Report 1983*, p. II-18.
40. Joshua M. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities in Iran and the RDF Deterrent," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 1981), pp. 149–150.
41. U.S., Congress, House of Representatives, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on*

These facts are often overlooked because press accounts stress Pact advantages in unrepresentative subcategories, such as numbers of tanks or artillery or planes, where the Pact does have an advantage (150, 180, and 15 percent respectively).[42] Such comparisons ignore NATO quality advantages (NATO planes, artillery, and antitank weapons and ordnance are better than those of the Pact) and categories in which NATO leads (major warships, helicopters). In general, NATO forces in Europe are not significantly outnumbered and may even hold the advantage in overall military capability.

The advantage of the defender also favors NATO. As a rule, attackers require substantial material superiority for success—between three- and six-to-one at the point of attack, and between one-and-one-half-to-one and two-to-one in the theater of war.[43] But the Pact probably cannot gain enough superiority unless NATO mobilizes late. In fact, NATO can maintain force ratios close to the premobilization ratio if NATO mobilizes simultaneously with the Pact. If NATO waits several days and then mobilizes, the balance in favor of the Pact would briefly exceed one-and-one-half-to-one but still would not reach two-to-one in favor of the Pact. Then it would fall back to a level close to the pre-mobilization ratio. The odds clearly favor the Pact only if NATO delays mobilization more than a week after receiving warning.[44]

German terrain further complicates a Pact attack. German forests, mountains, and other obstacles limit the Pact to four possible attack routes: the North German plain, the Hof Corridor (toward Stuttgart), the Fulda Gap (toward Frankfurt), and the Göttingen Corridor (toward the Ruhr). Because the Pact attack is canalized by this geography, NATO can focus its defensive efforts, and Pact forces are compressed to the point where they cannot fight efficiently. NATO troops can "cross the T"—chew up forward Pact units

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Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Department of Defense, Part 4, 95th Congress, 2nd session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 347. On deficiencies in Soviet pilot training, see also Joshua M. Epstein, "On Conventional Deterrence in Europe: Questions of Soviet Confidence," *Orbis*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 1982), pp. 71–88.

42. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly," p. 4; Carnegie Endowment, *Challenges for U.S. National Security*, p. 71.

43. These ratios represent a best estimate for average situations. There are, however, some historical cases of successful armored assaults by attackers who enjoyed less than a three-to-one force ratio. It is possible, though not likely, that the Pact could achieve local successes against some NATO forces with less than a three-to-one advantage at the point of attack. If so, NATO might find itself without enough ground forces. This possibility is one of the uncertainties against which the reforms suggested below are designed to buffer.

44. Mearsheimer, "Why the Soviets Can't Win Quickly," p. 9.

serially—while other Pact units sit idly in the rear, since the Pact will not have room in these narrow channels to bring all its units forward at once. Moreover, three of these channels run the width of Germany, so attacking Soviet forces cannot spread out even if they break through NATO front-line defenses. The war would not unfold like the German attack on France in 1940, when the Germans burst into open plains, ideal tank country, after crossing the Meuse. Instead, Pact forces would be confined by geography to a narrow area until they penetrated deep in Germany.[45]

NATO suffers some unique weaknesses, but these are roughly counterbalanced by unique Pact handicaps. NATO's seven European armies have not standardized their weapons, so ammunition, spare parts, and communications gear are not fully interchangeable. As a result NATO armies cannot easily feed on one another's supplies, a limitation that undercuts their wartime flexibility. In contrast, the Soviets have imposed Soviet arms on all their Pact armies. But this advantage is offset by the fact that Pact forces are less reliable than NATO forces; in wartime the Soviets cannot be sure whether the Poles and Czechs will fight with them, sit the war out, or even fight against them. Some 45 percent of Pact standing ground forces in Europe are East European, a circumstance that greatly complicates Soviet planning.

Most published estimates of the European balance are admittedly more pessimistic than ours,[46] but they fail to fully utilize available information. Key data required for a thorough assessment are missing from their analyses: aggregate firepower estimates for the forces on both sides,[47] terrain factors, and estimates of troop movement and interdiction rates. Instead, their judgment of NATO's weakness is supported by unrepresentative statistics and by conclusions based on unduly pessimistic political and factual assumptions. An overwhelming Pact firepower advantage, for example, is suggested by focusing on subcategories of weapons in which the Pact has the lead. Sometimes the number of Soviet divisions promptly available is exaggerated. Other

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45. Ibid.
46. Pessimistic estimates include those of John M. Collins, *U.S.–Soviet Military Balance: Concepts and Capabilities 1960–1980* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), pp. 291–330, 539–549; Jeffrey Record, *Force Reductions in Europe: Starting Over* (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1980), pp. 5–33; Joseph M.A.H. Luns, *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Force Comparisons* (n.p.: NATO, 1980); Phillip A. Karber, "The Growing Armor/Anti-Armor Imbalance in Central Europe," *Armed Forces Journal International*, July 1981, pp. 37–48; and Congressional Budget Office, *U.S. Ground Forces: Design and Cost Alternatives for NATO and Non-NATO Contingencies* (Washington, D.C.: CBO, 1980).
47. The Congressional Budget Office's *U.S. Ground Forces* is an exception.

estimates overlook Soviet weaknesses, such as the unreliability of East European armies. Still others neglect the advantage of fighting on the defense. In short, pessimistic estimates are more common, but they are based on sketchier information and less comprehensive analysis.[48]

THE PERSIAN GULF. Conventional wisdom holds that American forces could not block a Soviet seizure of the Iranian oil fields, or even the Saudi Arabian oil fields, without using nuclear weapons. One columnist suggested that American forces "could never be a match for the Soviet juggernaut across the Iranian border."[49] Defense Secretary Weinberger warned that American

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48. See, for instance, the 1980 Congressional Budget Office study *U.S. Ground Forces*, which is perhaps the most thorough pessimistic assessment, but which exaggerates the number of Soviet divisions available to attack Western Europe, undercounts forces available to NATO, and plays down terrain factors favoring NATO.

The CBO assumes that Soviet Category III cadre divisions can be readied and moved from the Soviet Union to Germany in 35 days, although another analyst estimates this would require three to four months. (See Jeffrey Record, *Sizing Up the Soviet Army* [Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1975], pp. 21–22, estimating that Soviet Category III divisions cannot be ready before 90 to 120 days. See also William W. Kaufmann, "The Defense Budget," in Joseph A. Pechman, ed., *Setting National Priorities: Agenda for the 1980s* [Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1980]; Kaufmann notes that the Afghanistan invasion indicates that "it takes the Soviet establishment a substantial amount of time—months rather than weeks—to organize a small operation against a weak and relatively disorganized country" [p. 30]. For an assessment of the readiness of Soviet Category III divisions which suggests that they mobilize slowly, see testimony by the Defense Intelligence Agency to the Joint Economic Committee, published in "Allocation of Resources to the Soviet Union and China–1981," *Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Trade, Finance, and Security Economics of the Joint Economic Committee*, Congress of the United States, 97th Congress, 1st session, Part 7 [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982], p. 199.)

As a result the CBO credits the Pact with a 120-division force 30 days after mobilization, instead of the 90-division force that most NATO plans assume the Pact can field, or the 71-division force the Pact could field if the Soviets chose not to employ any Category III divisions early in the war, relying exclusively on Category I and Category II divisions (Robert Shishko, *The European Conventional Balance: A Primer*, P-67-7 [Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1981], p. 8). The CBO's pessimistic conclusions depend on this unexplained assumption, since the CBO grants that NATO could halt a 90-division Pact assault (p. xiii).

Second, the CBO understates the capability of the German territorial forces. The German territorials are trained reserves that can be mobilized at least as fast as Soviet Category III divisions, to a total 750,000 men. By simply mobilizing the German territorials, NATO almost doubles the size of total NATO European forces, which would grow from 780,000 to 1,530,000 men. Yet the CBO credits the territorials with only six mechanized brigades—roughly two divisions, or at most 70,000 men, a fraction of the total German territorial forces actually available to NATO.

Third, the CBO understates the advantage conferred on the defender by terrain in the North German Plain, instead repeating the conventional wisdom that the plain is an easy invasion route for Soviet forces. In fact, this area is crossed by rivers, bogs, and urban sprawl, which make defense easier.

49. Jack Anderson, "Frightening Facts on the Persian Gulf," *The Washington Post*, February 3, 1981, p. 18, quoting "top military hands."

forces were "incapable of stopping an assault on Western oil supplies,"[50] while one prominent defense analyst proclaimed that Iran "may be inherently indefensible."[51] But these predictions, like those pessimistic predictions concerning Europe, do not make full use of available information. In fact, American forces could probably halt the Soviets short of the oilfields, chiefly because a Soviet attack would require an enormous transportation and logistics effort, which probably lies beyond Soviet capabilities.

The United States stands a good chance in the Gulf because Soviet forces could not gain decisive materiel superiority in the battle area. Even though the Soviets are much nearer, the United States can probably bring as much firepower to bear in the Persian Gulf theater as can the Soviets.[52]

Proximity would seem to give the Soviets the upper hand; but appearances are misleading, for three reasons. First, the United States has invested more money in mobility equipment (transport aircraft and amphibious assault ships, aircraft carriers, airmobile and seamobile forces), which partially offsets greater Soviet proximity.

Second, the Soviets have not tailored their military to invade the Persian Gulf, so their forces are not ready to attack on short notice. As a result NATO would gain valuable advance warning if the Soviets chose to invade. Before the Soviets attack, they must assemble and test a command and control apparatus in Transcaucasia, which would make telltale radio noises. They must amass tens of thousands of trucks in the Caucasus, to supply Soviet divisions advancing into Iran, because Soviet forces near Iran do not have enough trucks. Soviet army divisions are structured for war in Europe, with its many railroads. As a result, these divisions are designed to operate no farther than 100 miles from a railhead, so they normally include relatively few trucks. Soviet forces invading the Gulf would be fighting hundreds of miles from any functioning railroad, requiring an enormous additional complement of trucks to ferry supplies on Iranian roads. By one estimate all the trucks from more than 55 Soviet army divisions (one-third of the *mobilized* Soviet army) would be required to support a Soviet invasion force of seven

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50. Robert S. Dudney, "The Defense Gap That Worries the President," *U.S. News and World Report*, February 16, 1981.
51. Jeffrey Record, "Disneyland Planning for Persian Gulf Oil Defense," *The Washington Star*, March 20, 1981, p. 17.
52. The best assessment of the East–West balance in the Gulf is Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities." For brief assessments see Kaufmann, SNP 1981, pp. 304–305, and SNP 1982, p. 160. Also useful is Keith A. Dunn, "Constraints on the USSR in Southwest Asia: A Military Analysis," *Orbis*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 1981), pp. 607–631.

divisions in Iran, assuming no trucks break down or are destroyed in fighting.[53] By another estimate almost all the trucks in the Soviet army might be required.[54] This armada could not be assembled quickly or discreetly.

These preparations would give NATO at least one month's warning.[55] In the meantime, the United States could move substantial forces into the Gulf to greet Soviet attackers—perhaps 500 land- and sea-based tactical fighters, the 82nd Airborne Division, and two Marine brigades within two or three weeks. Later the United States could bring in much bigger forces by sea.

Third, although the Soviets are much closer to the Gulf oilfields than is the United States, each mile the Soviets must travel is much harder to traverse. Soviet invasion forces must move 850 miles overland to reach the Iranian oil fields in Khuzestan province in southwest Iran. If they attack from the Soviet Union, they must cross two formidable mountain ranges: those along the Iranian northern tier, and the Zagros Mountains, which separate Khuzestan from central Iran. If they attack from Afghanistan they must pass over the fierce, desolate Khorassan desert and the Zagros. Only a handful of roads cross the northern mountains, and only four roads and one railroad span the Zagros.[56] In the mountains these roads cross bridges, run through tunnels, cling to the sides of countless gorges, and wind beneath overhanging cliffs. As a result Soviet supply arteries would be dotted with scores of choke points—places where the artery could be destroyed or blocked. The blockage could not be bypassed or easily repaired.

With all the geographical barriers, Soviet movements in Iran would be exceptionally vulnerable to delaying action by American airstrikes, commando raids, or attacks by Iranian guerrillas on the scores of choke points between Khuzestan and Russia. This distance is too great for the Soviets to erect solid air defenses along their entire groundline of communication, so American airpower could probably continue striking these choke points even if they were overrun by advancing Soviet forces. These air strikes could be flown from aircraft carriers, by land-based aircraft that could be moved to the Mideast after warning is received, or by B-52s based on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, on Guam in the Pacific, or even in the U.S.[57] Iranian forces

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53. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities," p. 144.
54. Andrew Krepinevich, "The U.S. Rapid Deployment Force and Protection of Persian Gulf Oil Supplies" (unpublished paper, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1980).
55. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities," pp. 139–140; and Kaufmann, SNP 1981, p. 305.
56. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities," p. 139.
57. Ibid., p. 136.

could also slow down Soviet forces and disrupt Soviet supply lines, especially if they organized in advance for guerrilla war.

By one estimate, American air strikes and helicopter infantry teams working in the Zagros Mountains could slow the Soviet advance toward Khuzestan by sixty days. If we assume the United States receives and uses thirty days of warning, then American forces have ninety days to prepare the defense of Khuzestan. In this time the United States can move enough ground forces to Khuzestan to equal the firepower of Soviet divisions coming through the Zagros. Moreover, the United States can probably bring more airpower to bear in Khuzestan than can the Soviets, giving the United States a net firepower advantage.[58] If so, American forces have more than enough firepower to win.

Some Westerners suggest that the Soviets might mount a surprise airborne attack on Iran, seizing key airfields and other facilities with airborne units and holding them until Soviet ground forces could follow up, instead of mounting a prepared ground assault. But such an airborne strike seems even more likely to fail than a ground assault, because the Soviets could not assemble the trucks their ground forces require without giving away the surprise which an "airborne grab" would require. As a result, any airborne divisions dropped into southern Iran would have to hold off American and Iranian counterattacks for weeks while the Soviets readied their ground invasion force in the southern Soviet Union. Morever, these airborne units could not be easily resupplied by air in the meantime, because Soviet fighter aircraft probably lack the range to provide adequate air cover over southern Iran from bases in the Soviet Union or Afghanistan, and the Soviets probably could not quickly seize, secure, and prepare enough air bases in Iran suitable for modern fighter aircraft. As a result, the Soviets probably could not defend their transport aircraft over southern Iran against American fighters, leaving their airborne units stranded. In sum, a Soviet "airborne grab" against southern Iran seems even harder than a Soviet ground attack.

Lord Robert Salisbury once remarked, concerning British fears that Russia would sweep through Afghanistan into India: "A great deal of misapprehension arises from the popular use of maps on a small scale."[59] Likewise, American fears that the Soviets could sweep through Iran spring from dismissal of geographic and military realities. Overall, as one analyst notes,

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58. Ibid., pp. 140, 145–148.
59. Quoted in Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 356.

"the invasion of Iran would be an exceedingly low confidence affair for the Soviets."[60]

As with the European balance, pessimistic estimates of the Gulf conventional balances do not fully utilize available data, or they rest on dubious factual or political assumptions.[61] Again, aggregate firepower estimates, geographic factors, movement tables, interdiction rates, and warning estimates are usually missing. Instead, misleading statistics are combined with unduly pessimistic political assumptions: e.g., that the Gulf states refuse American help or cooperate with Soviet invaders, or that the United States loses simply because it lacks the will to fight, or that the American mission is to defend only *northern* Iran, which would be much harder than defending the southern oilfields, or that American leaders would simply fail to heed the warning they receive.[62]

In short, public alarm about American capabilities to achieve basic missions seems exaggerated. Publicly available information is spotty, so estimates of our current capabilities must be tentative—partly because the government has not published much useful information about military balances. Nevertheless, the best evidence indicates that these missions are not beyond the capacity of current U.S.–NATO forces.

The Implicit Reagan Military Strategy

We believe that the Reagan defense buildup is driven by the tacit assumption that, in addition to the four traditional containment missions, American forces must perform five extra missions, which in most cases were not publicly accepted elements of American strategy a decade ago.[63] Moreover,

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60. Epstein, "Soviet Vulnerabilities," p. 157.

61. Pessimistic estimates include Jeffrey Record, *The Rapid Deployment Force and U.S. Military Intervention in the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1981), pp. 8–42, 61–68; Collins, *U.S.–Soviet Military Balance*, pp. 367–394; Albert Wohlstetter, "Meeting the Threat in the Persian Gulf," *Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 1980), pp. 128–188; and W. Scott Thompson, "The Persian Gulf and the Correlation of Forces," *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer 1982), pp. 157–180.

62. Regarding the "half-war" balance, published information on U.S. capacity to fight a Korean "half-war" is so scanty we cannot supply a detailed analysis of American capabilities. However, most public sources indicate American forces can perform the Korean "half-war" mission they are sized against. See Kaufmann, SNP 1983, pp. 89–90; and Congressional Budget Office, *U.S. Ground Forces*, p. 67.

63. For Reagan strategy ideas, see: Thomas C. Reed, "Details of National Security Strategy," Speech delivered to the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, June 16, 1982 (mimeo, available from the White House, Office of the National Security Adviser); "Revised

the case made against these missions in the past—that they do not serve traditional containment aims—still seems sound. In short, the Reagan defense buildup is predicated largely on an unacknowledged and undebated shift from a cheaper to a more expensive strategy. In this section we enumerate these five missions and the arguments about them.

COUNTERFORCE

The counterforce debate has continued nonstop since the 1940s. Policy analysts agree that the United States requires a second-strike capability, but America's need for a counterforce capability (either a first-strike or a second-strike counterforce capability) has always been controversial. The size and shape of American strategic forces depend on how this argument is resolved, since a meaningful counterforce capability requires much bigger and rather different nuclear forces from those deployed today.

A successful disarming counterforce attack against the Soviet Union would require two operations: a strike against Soviet nuclear forces and a battle to limit the damage done to American cities by surviving Soviet nuclear warheads launched in retaliation. Accordingly, counterforce weapons include those that can preemptively destroy Soviet nuclear warheads before they are launched against the United States *and* those that destroy retaliating Soviet warheads in flight toward American cities or at least limit the damage these warheads do to American cities. Thus, counterforce weapons include highly accurate ICBMs and SLBMs (which can preempt enemy ICBMs and bombers), antisubmarine ("killer") submarines and other antisubmarine warfare forces (which can destroy Soviet ballistic missile submarines), air defense systems (which can shoot down retaliating Soviet bombers), area-wide antiballistic missile systems (ABM, which can defend cities against retaliating ICBMs and SLBMs), and civil defense (which limits the damage inflicted by Soviet retaliation). Such "defensive" systems as air defense, area-wide ABM, and civil

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U.S. Policy Said to Focus on Prevailing Over Russians," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1982, p. B17, summarizing Reed; Richard Halloran, "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy for Fighting a Long Nuclear War," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1982, p. A1, summarizing the secret Administration 5-year defense guidance document; Richard Halloran, "Weinberger Denies U.S. Plans for 'Protracted Nuclear War,'" *The New York Times*, June 21, 1982, p. A5; "Lehman Seeks Superiority," *International Defense Review*, May 1982, pp. 547–548; Richard Halloran, "New Weinberger Directive Refines Military Policy," *The New York Times*, March 22, 1983, p. A18; David Wood, "Pentagon Tames Rhetoric to Offer a 'Softer' Image," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 1983, p. 1; *Annual Report 1983*; and Caspar W. Weinberger, *Annual Report to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1984* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), hereafter *Annual Report 1984*.

defense are really "offensive" in the nuclear context, because they are a vital part of an offensive first-strike system. Second-strike weapons are those that can ride out an enemy attack and retaliate against enemy cities or other "value" (industrial or economic) targets; they include, for example, U.S. Poseidon SLBMs. They need *not* be able to destroy enemy strategic nuclear forces.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a public consensus formed against counterforce, reflected in the congressional decision to constrain American ICBM accuracy improvements and in congressional hostility toward the proposed ABM system. Some people opposed counterforce on grounds that it increased the risk of war and the risk of wartime escalation. First-strike capabilities on both sides would create a hair-trigger dilemma: whichever side fired first would win, so both sides would be quick to shoot in a crisis.[64] Moreover, conventional war would be much harder to control, since the first side to use nuclear weapons would hold the upper hand, creating a strong temptation to escalate if conventional war broke out.

But the clinching argument was that a counterforce capability simply could not be achieved. According to this view the Soviets, like ourselves, could always take steps—implement countermeasures—to preserve their second-strike capability, because a second-strike capability is so much cheaper to maintain than a counterforce capability. Moreover, the Soviets could not tolerate an American first-strike capability, so they would make sure we never got one, whatever the cost. A second-strike capability is essentially defensive, but a counterforce capability is offensive: a state that can disarm the other side can demand its surrender. Neither superpower could ever let the other get such a capability. Hence, the argument went, American spending on counterforce is futile, because the Soviets will always counter the counterforce the Americans build.

Counterforce came back into fashion in the mid-1970s, with Ford and Carter administration decisions to build major new counterforce systems, chiefly the high-accuracy MX and Trident D-5 (Trident II) missiles. The Reagan Administration has accelerated the Trident D-5 program and added

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64. On preemptive war, see Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 221–259; and Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 207–254. For another important argument on why counterforce is dangerous, see Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978), pp. 186–214, also excerpted in Robert J. Art and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Use of Force*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983).

new counterforce programs: a modernized continental air defense system, including new F-15 interceptors and AWACS early-warning aircraft; an enlarged civil defense program; and increased research on ABM systems.[65] Administration planning documents suggest a requirement for a second-strike counterforce capability, which could disarm the Soviet Union even after absorbing a Soviet first strike. Presumably a force with this capability could disarm the Soviets more reliably if the United States struck first. A secret Administration "Defense Guidance" paper calls for nuclear forces that "can render ineffective the total Soviet (and Soviet allied) military and political power structure," even if American forces struck second.[66] The Administration envisions attacks on the whole Soviet force structure, including "decapitation" strikes against Soviet political and military leadership: targets would include Soviet "political and military leadership and associated control facilities, nuclear and conventional military forces, and industry critical to military power."[67]

Yet a counterforce capability is much harder to achieve today, because American forces must destroy a much bigger set of Soviet targets. In 1970 the Soviets had 1,800 strategic nuclear warheads; in 1982 there were 7,300.[68] The number of Soviet strategic delivery vehicles (missiles and bombers) has not gone up substantially, but the number of warheads these launchers carry has gone up dramatically (because the Soviets have MIRVed their missiles), so an American first strike must be much more effective to contain the Soviet retaliation to acceptable size. In fact, the Administration's own warning that this Soviet buildup threatens American second-strike capability conflicts with arguments for counterforce: if American second-strike capability is precarious, then a counterforce capability would not seem feasible, since counterforce is much more demanding. Moreover, top priority should go to enhancing the United States' second-strike capability if its retaliatory forces really are not secure, since second-strike capability is the backbone of its defenses.

Hence, the case against the feasibility of a counterforce strategy seems even more persuasive than it was when counterforce was unpopular. More-

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65. See Kaufmann, SNP 1983, pp. 65–66. Other Administration programs also enhance U.S. counterforce capability, including enhanced nuclear "battle-management" C^3I and new nuclear killer submarines.
66. Halloran, "Weinberger Denies U.S. Plans," p. A5.
67. Ibid.
68. Ground Zero, *Nuclear War: What's In It For You?* (New York: Pocket Books, 1982), p. 267, and IISS, *The Military Balance 1982–1983*, p. 140.

over, no new information has appeared to discredit the now-forgotten fear that a first-strike capability on either side would raise the risk of war and escalation. The Administration's commitment to decapitation strikes also seems dangerous, since decapitating the Soviets would leave the United States with no negotiating partner while turning Soviet forces over to Soviet generals and colonels imbued with nuclear warfighting ideas.[69] In such an event, how could the war be stopped?

In the late 1970s the notion arose that counterforce made more sense than before, both because new technology (ICBM accuracy improvements, for example) allegedly made counterforce easier, and because the Soviet counterforce buildup required a symmetrical American response, to retain American "essential equivalence." But by any measure, counterforce is harder to achieve now than fifteen years ago, because the Soviet arsenal is much bigger and better protected. The fallacy lies in counting how many warheads American forces hypothetically could destroy (which has increased), instead of counting how many could not be destroyed (which has also increased), and how much damage these remaining warheads could do to the United States.

The Soviets devote even more effort to strategic nuclear counterforce programs than does the United States, and the Soviet strategic nuclear buildup in the 1970s heavily stressed counterforce. But this does not argue for a simpleminded American imitation of Soviet programs. Rather, the Soviet buildup should have signaled the end of any dreams for a useful American counterforce capability, since this buildup also greatly enhanced Soviet second-strike capability by multiplying the number of protected warheads the United States would have to attack successfully. The most effective response to Soviet counterforce capability is to remove it by enhancing the survivability of American forces. This negates the enormous Soviet counterforce investment, at much smaller cost to the United States.

The Administration's emphasis on counterforce conflicts with its efforts to control the strategic nuclear arms race. Counterforce drives the arms race: neither side can allow the other to gain a meaningful counterforce capability, so counterforce programs on both sides generate answering second-strike programs on both sides, and vice versa. Forces must modernize and arsenals must expand, because neither side can let the other reach its goal. Nuclear arsenals on both sides now vastly exceed overkill because both sides sought

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69. A source for Soviet military statements on intercontinental thermonuclear war is Joseph D. Douglas, Jr. and Amoretta M. Hoeber, *Soviet Strategy for Nuclear War* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1979).

counterforce capabilities, which bred ever-larger forces, which then created a larger counterforce target set for the other side, which bred still larger forces on the other side.

The nuclear arms race would be best controlled by first controlling counterforce. If the superpowers forswore counterforce, the rationale for nuclear arms-racing would largely disappear, since programs on both sides would no longer create new requirements for the other. Conversely, meaningful arms control is very difficult if the superpowers pursue counterforce seriously, because counterforce programs on both sides force both sides to keep building up. Under these circumstances, arms control agreements merely ratify decisions to build ever-larger arsenals. In short, the Reagan Administration's emphasis on counterforce lessens the possibility that meaningful arms control can be achieved.

What direction should American strategic programs take? Three requirements should take priority. First, American second-strike capability requires reliable, survivable strategic C^3I, so weaknesses in it must be corrected. Second, American force improvements should emphasize "enduring" new systems, since the United States now lacks a satisfactory nuclear delivery system that could survive the unlikely but nevertheless important possibility of months of controlled nuclear war. Third, Minuteman ICBMs eventually must be replaced if the U.S. is to maintain a triad of diverse, secure retaliatory forces at current levels of second-strike capability. An ICBM replacement could perhaps be found more easily if the ICBM force were relieved of its counterforce mission, since this mission reduces the number of ways the missiles can be based. Basing modes might exist that diminish the ICBM "time-urgent, hard-target kill" capability, but that do secure the ICBMs from Soviet preemptive attack (for example, deep burial arrangements[70] or "miniman" road-mobile small ICBMs). Hence the vulnerability of American forces might be cured more easily if planners put less emphasis on making Soviet forces vulnerable. As a general matter, resources should be shifted from counterforce programs to meet these needs.

OFFENSIVE CONVENTIONAL FORCES AND OPERATIONS

The overall cast of Reagan Administration strategic thought is more offensive than that of past administrations. Thomas Reed, a former Reagan adviser,

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70. On deep burial see Congress of the United States, Office of Technology Assessment, *MX Missile Basing* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), pp. 269–274.

dismissed the old policy of containment, declaring that the United States now focuses on prevailing over the Soviets.[71] Defense Secretary Weinberger warned against "the transposition of the defensive orientation of our peacetime strategy onto the strategy and tactics that guide us in the event of war."[72]

In nuclear planning the Administration stresses counterforce, while in conventional programs it has adopted a new, more offensive warfighting strategy. Defense Department documents declare that American conventional forces should be "capable of putting at risk Soviet interests, including the Soviet homeland," and emphasize "offensive moves against Warsaw Pact flanks."[73] Navy Secretary John Lehman advocates "getting at the Soviet naval threat at its source."[74] Defense Secretary Weinberger would destory Soviet bombers "by striking their bases" and attack Soviet "naval targets ashore," and maintains that "the principle of non-aggression would not impose a purely defensive strategy in fighting back" against an aggressor.[75] He speaks of a "counteroffensive against [Soviet] vulnerable points . . . directed at places where we can affect the outcome of the war."[76] Most discussion concerns possible strikes against Soviet naval and air bases on the Kola peninsula (northeast of Finland, on the Barents Sea) or at Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk, in East Asia. These bases would be hit by carrier-based aircraft, or possibly by long-range strategic bombers. The Administration has programmed new conventional forces to match this offensive strategy, chiefly two new nuclear-powered aircraft carrier task forces.

Two criticisms can be leveled against this strategy. First, only a huge fleet of carriers could safely attack the Soviet homeland, because Soviet land-based aircraft could destroy a smaller American fleet as it approached. Even

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71. "Revised U.S. Policy Said to Focus on 'Prevailing' Over the Russians," *The New York Times*; and Reed, "Details of National Strategy," p. 17.
72. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-16. The *1984 Annual Report* places substantially less emphasis on offensive operations than does the 1983 report. Press accounts indicate that the new Defense Guidance is also more restrained. Yet statements by Administration officials and the direction of the Reagan defense program indicate that basic Administration policy has not changed. The greater restraint of the *1984 Annual Report* may be more a reaction to the public alarm caused by earlier Administration statements than a major change of view. One Administration official explained that in the new Defense Guidance "the words are the only thing that has changed. We just didn't want to get beat over the head by our political enemies." Wood, "Pentagon Tames Rhetoric."
73. Halloran, "Pentagon Draws Up First Strategy," p. 12.
74. "Lehman Seeks Superiority," p. 547.
75. *Annual Report 1983*, p. III-21; *Annual Report 1984*, p. 33.
76. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-16. See also p. III-21.

with two new carriers, American carrier forces would probably be too weak to mount such a strike. Overall, a counteroffensive strategy is a bottomless pit, since it generates very demanding missions that cannot be achieved without huge expense, if they can be achieved at all. Indeed, the notion of an offensive conventional strategy does not square with Administration warnings of weakness: if America is so weak, how can it think of taking on such ambitious new missions?

Second, a counteroffensive strategy defeats the basic purpose of American conventional forces—the control of escalation. If it succeeds, a counteroffensive would jeopardize assets essential to Soviet sovereignty, or appear to do so, raising the prospect of a Soviet decision to escalate from conventional to nuclear war. For instance, the Soviets base vital elements of their second-strike capability at Murmansk—over half their ballistic missile submarine force and its command apparatus. American strikes against nearby Soviet naval bases and forces could threaten the submarines and provoke desperate Soviet decisions—nuclear strikes against American carriers, for example—if the base could not be defended any other way.[77] The chief purpose of American conventional forces is to provide a buffer between conventional and nuclear war, but an offensive operational strategy would use this force in a way that defeats this fundamental aim.

INTERVENTION FORCES

A significant portion of the American defense effort is now allocated to forces best suited for Vietnam-style or Dominican Republic-style interventions in Third World countries. These forces could be used against the Soviet Union, but they are not ideally suited for that purpose.

Two attributes distinguish intervention forces from others. First, they are highly mobile. Anti-Soviet forces usually need not be highly mobile, since the locations of possible Soviet threats are known, and defending forces usually can be put there in peacetime, as in Western Europe. Clearly the United States needs some mobile forces to deal with the Soviets, especially in the Persian Gulf. The question is, how many? Today the United States has more mobility forces than anti-Soviet contingencies demand, especially more aircraft carriers (unless these are used offensively, in which case it probably does not have enough; see above). Second, intervention forces are

77. On the risk of escalation raised by offensive conventional operations, see Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War."

lightly armed. Light forces are useful for some anti-Soviet contingencies, for instance, operations against Soviet supply lines in the Iranian mountains. But generally this type of force, best suited for fighting lightly armed opponents (guerrillas, for example), is not appropriate for fighting Soviet forces, which are heavily armed. Again the question is: how many light forces are needed?

Total American mobility forces and unarmored ground forces include the thirteen Navy aircraft carriers, one airborne and one air-mobile Army division, one air cavalry brigade, four regular Army light infantry divisions, Special Forces units, three Marine divisions and associated ships and air wings, airlift and sealift forces, and C.I.A. covert operatives. A war against the Soviets in Europe or the Persian Gulf would productively engage most of these forces, but not all. Some American aircraft carriers (perhaps ten, including those in overhaul) would be required to attack Soviet forces in Iran and guard the Atlantic and Pacific sea lanes, but some carriers would be left over (perhaps three; five with the Reagan program).[78] Possibly six of the nine American light ground divisions would be engaged in Iran or tied down in Norway or Korea, with three left over.

Thus, overall, the United States appears to have substantial superfluous intervention capability, to which the Reagan Administration plans to add even more, with new carriers, new "forcible-entry" amphibious assault ships, and new airlift. The Administration also indicates a revived interest in intervention by rejecting a "one-and-a-half-war" strategy, instead suggesting the United States prepare to fight on several fronts simultaneously.[79] This represents a shift toward intervention, since more "half wars" in addition to Korea would probably be fought in the Third World.

How should the American requirement for intervention forces be assessed? If containment criteria are applied, two questions are paramount: (1) How much would potential Soviet conquests in the Third World enhance Soviet

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78. A force of ten carriers would give the United States eight carriers for combat missions in wartime, since two carriers would normally be in overhaul. By one estimate, two carriers are required to defend the sea lanes in the Atlantic and two to defend the Pacific sea lane. See Congressional Budget Office, *Navy Budget Issues for Fiscal Year 1980* (Washington, D.C.: CBO, March 1979), pp. 41–42. This would leave four carriers for anti-Soviet missions in the Persian Gulf or the Mediterranean. The wartime requirement for carrier battle groups in the Mediterranean seems questionable, since NATO land-based reconnaissance and fighter aircraft based in Spain, Italy, and Turkey—all NATO members—are capable of covering most of the Mediterranean. This leaves four carriers available for the Persian Gulf area.

79. *Annual Report 1983*, p. I-15.

power? (2) How much would Soviet influence in the Third World increase if the United States were not prepared to intervene? The answers to these questions rest chiefly on three factors: Western dependence on Third World raw materials, the military value of basing rights in Third World states, and the degree of cohesion in the world communist movement. Feasibility should also be kept in mind. At what cost, in dollars and morale, can American forces suppress guerrilla insurgencies in foreign cultures?

First, Western dependence on Third World raw materials should be restudied carefully, not simply assumed. The West should ask how much economic damage Western economies would suffer if they lost access to given supplies from given countries, measuring damage in terms of declining economic growth rates, rising unemployment, higher rates of inflation, and the cost of measures—such as domestic production, product substitution, conservation, stockpiling, or purchase from other foreign suppliers—that would have to be initiated if supplies were lost.[80] Instead, dependence is usually proven by listing raw materials that the West imports, as if trade and dependence were one and the same thing. It is not the volume of trade but rather the cost of halting trade that matters. American dependence on a given country or commodity equals the damage the American economy would suffer if trade in that commodity or with that country were cut off.

In fact, the claim that Western states are dangerously vulnerable to Third World raw material embargoes is quite weak. The United States and its allies depend heavily on foreign oil, but oil is the exception. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has been the only successful international cartel—a telltale sign that Western dependence on other products is low. The West imports many other products from Third World countries, but most of these materials can be synthesized, replaced by substitutes, or acquired from alternate sources. Otherwise, successful cartels would exist already in those materials as well.

Second, the value of Third World military bases cannot be assessed unless American strategy is spelled out clearly; therefore, the vagueness of current American strategy makes judgment hard. Bases matter if Soviet or Western

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80. On measuring interdependence, see Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Myth of National Interdependence," in Charles P. Kindleberger, ed., *The International Corporation* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1970), pp. 205–223; and Waltz, *Theory of International Relations* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 138–160. Patterns of U.S. mineral imports are summarized in Michael Nacht, "Toward an American Conception of Regional Security," *Daedalus*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (Winter 1981), pp. 14–16.

bases in the Third World can affect the United States' ability to execute its overall military strategy. Thus the danger posed by Soviet bases in Third World areas cannot be assessed without knowing how much harder they make American strategy to execute, and this cannot be assessed without knowing what that strategy is.

The effect of the nuclear revolution should be remembered when the strategic importance of the Third World is assessed. The notion that events in Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, or other jungle areas could tip the world balance of power is even more doubtful in a world of second-strike capabilities. Nuclear weapons make conquest much harder, and vastly enhance the self-defense capabilities of the superpowers. This should allow the superpowers to take a more relaxed attitude toward events in third areas, including the Third World, since it now requires much more cataclysmic events to shake their defensive capabilities. Whatever had been the strategic importance of the Third World in a nonnuclear world, nuclear weapons have vastly reduced it.

Finally, the United States should carefully assess how formidable the Soviet threat to the Third World really is. Direct Soviet threats are often exaggerated because Soviet intervention capabilities are deemed larger than they actually are. Likewise, indirect Soviet threats via Soviet revolutionary "proxies" are measured in simplistic fashion.

Cold War experience teaches that the Soviets do not expand via national revolution, but by the force of the Soviet army. Time and again, Soviet influence has proven ephemeral wherever its army was not introduced, even where Soviet "proxies" won control. The notion that Third World leftists are loyal Soviet minions seldom proves correct, except when American policies help make it true, as with Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, and earlier with China.

The bitter nationalisms that tear the Third World make it harder for both the Soviet Union and the United States to establish durable influence. In the end this actually serves Americans' interests, since their chief purpose is to keep the world free from Soviet control, not to rule it themselves. This means the United States should view Third World nationalism as an asset rather than a danger, and that the United States can usually contain the Soviets in the Third World simply by leaving things alone.

Advocates of intervention forces often suggest that the U.S. needs them to halt Soviet "geopolitical momentum," a tide of Soviet influence supposedly sweeping the Third World. In fact Soviet "geopolitical momentum" is a myth; over the past two decades the Soviets have barely held their own ground,

even perhaps lost ground.[81] While in the last decade the Soviets have gained influence in Afghanistan, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Grenada, Nicaragua, Libya, Cape Verde, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, they have lost influence in China, Japan, Egypt, Indonesia, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Guinea, and Equatorial Guinea. Overall, Soviet losses since 1960 probably outweigh Soviet gains.

The debate on U.S. military intervention should not be a matter of hawks versus doves, but of clear strategy. Soviet military power is the principal danger the West faces. American forces should confront this power directly. The United States should realize that it weakens itself and indirectly strengthens the Soviets if it diverts its energy toward less relevant Third World contingencies.

THE LONG CONVENTIONAL WAR

The Reagan Administration has removed the limit on the time American conventional forces must be able to hold a Soviet conventional attack in Europe or the Gulf. Secretary Weinberger warns against the "short war fallacy,"[82] and explains that the United States must prepare to mobilize for a long World War II-style conventional war.[83] This revises the assumption of the 1960s that American conventional forces would only provide a "pause" for negotiation, after which the West would escalate, and puts a bigger demand on American conventional forces.

This shift in strategy may be a reasonable move, but the change must be carried out carefully. First, a long conventional war strategy will not succeed if America's allies do not accept it and design their forces accordingly. Otherwise allied forces in Europe will collapse in a few weeks which would break down the whole NATO defense, even if American forces could fight on. But Western Europe has not accepted the new long-war strategy, nor bought the stocks of ammunition and spare parts necessary to support extended combat. The U.S. cannot make this new strategy work simply by spending more; it also must sell the strategy to its European allies. In short, we need a debate within the alliance on NATO strategy before the U.S. spends more toward a "long war" capability.

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81. "Soviet Geopolitical Momentum: Myth or Menace? Trends of Soviet Influence Around the World From 1945 to 1980," *Defense Monitor*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (January 1980).
82. *Annual Report 1983*, pp. I-16, I-17.
83. *Annual Report 1983*, pp. I-13, I-14.

Second, American planners should not confuse a requirement for a conventional long-war capability with a prediction that a Third World War would actually be either long or conventional. Today there is a dangerous tendency to speak as if World War III would resemble World War II, on the hopeful assumption that efforts to control the war will succeed. This is a dangerous delusion. We cannot eliminate the risk of nuclear escalation from any East–West conventional war. A global conventional war would present enormous problems of management and coordination. Even during the Cuban missile crisis, American leaders could not fully control, or even understand, all the operations in which American forces were engaged.[84] An East–West conventional war would be vastly harder to manage. American planners should take every step they can to lower the risk of escalation, but they should never believe that these steps make a conventional war easy to control. If they underestimate the risks of nuclear war they invite a frivolous attitude toward war. Moveover, they lose the deterrent benefits of the danger of nuclear war if their declaratory policy leads the Soviet Union to think it can safely use conventional force without risking nuclear escalation. If the risk of escalation is real, American declaratory policy should communicate this clearly.

Third, if American planners take long conventional war seriously, the rest of American strategy should be consistent. Strategies and forces which raise the risk of nuclear escalation should be kept to a minimum. Instead the Reagan defense program emphasizes counterforce and offensive conventional forces and operations, which heighten the risk of nuclear escalation. Thus the Administration plans a long conventional war but then negates this effort with steps that diminish the odds that any war could be kept conventional.

LESS ALLIED CONTRIBUTION

The United States now carries a disproportionate share of the NATO defense spending burden, yet the Reagan defense program would shift the burden even further toward the U.S. In 1980 the United States spent 5.5 percent of its gross national product on defense, while its thirteen NATO allies only

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84. See John Steinbruner, "An Assessment of Nuclear Crises," in Franklyn Griffiths and John C. Polanyi, eds., *The Dangers of Nuclear War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 35–40; and Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 130, 136–143.

spent an average of 3.4 percent of GNP.[85] Among major American allies, only Britain spends nearly as much, 5.1 percent, as the United States. These figures understate the European defense effort by failing to correct for the low salaries that the Europeans pay their conscripted manpower; but even if we eliminate this bias by pricing NATO manpower at American pay scales (which adds 22 percent to European budgets),[86] average European spending comes to only 4.1 percent of GNP, or 75 percent the size of the burden carried by the United States in 1980.

This unequal arrangement arose after World War II, when the United States guarded against the Soviets while the Europeans repaired war damage. Americans assumed that the Europeans eventually would take on the main share of the burden once their economies recovered. No one expected the United States to carry the main burden indefinitely. Yet Europe still carries a lighter load today, even though the West Europeans now have a combined GNP larger than the U.S., their economies grow at a faster rate, and their standard of living is almost as high.

The Reagan defense plan will widen the gap between American and allied defense spending even further. Properly speaking, this decision does not mean the United States takes on a new "mission"—rather, the United States would carry a bigger share of responsibility for existing joint NATO missions—but it adds up to the same thing. In taking on a bigger share of the NATO defense burden the United States asks its forces to perform traditional missions with less allied assistance, which is a more difficult overall task.

If, as planned, the Administration increases American spending to 7.4 percent of GNP, non-United States NATO military spending will dwindle to 56 percent the size of the burden carried by the United States, even if non-United States NATO manpower is priced at American rates (46 percent if it is not). Moreover American willingness to carry such a heavy share of the NATO burden gives other NATO states even less incentive to spend more, so the American share of the NATO burden may grow still heavier if European defense programs stagnate or decline in response to the Reagan program. Because the Americans will do more of the work, the Europeans will have even more reason to take a free ride on the U.S.

In Europe's defense it might be argued that the United States outspends

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85. IISS, *The Military Balance 1981–1982*, pp. 27–39, 112. Spain, which joined NATO in 1982, is excluded.
86. Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1981*, p. 37, col. 3.

its allies because it spends more extravagantly, or spends on missions not vital to containment, such as Third World intervention. If the main trouble is American wastefulness, not European lassitude, then the solution is a leaner American defense policy, focused more clearly on the Soviet Union, as European defense policies are. But there is no legitimate reason why the American share of NATO burdens should substantially exceed allied spending in the long run.

Americans' Perceptions of Their Weakness: Built on a Myth

The Administration's defense program has won public approval largely because it could draw upon the widespread myth of American military weakness. If Western forces can in fact achieve their main missions today, what explains this American sense of impotence? Three causes contribute.

First, statistical games substitute for proper measures of national military strength in the public debate about defense. Congressman Les Aspin once described the "Games the Pentagon Plays"—false measures that support Pentagon arguments for preferred policies.[87] These games still confuse and mislead the public on both the size of the Soviet threat and the best solution for defense problems.

In the "numbers game," the sizes of selected Soviet and American forces are compared, always showing the United States lagging. Areas of Western numerical or qualitative superiority are ignored, and differences in the needs of each side are obscured. Thus, we often hear that the Soviets have more tactical aircraft (although American aircraft are much better, and total American tactical air capability is probably greater); more attack submarines (although American submarines are much more capable); more naval warships (although American ships are much bigger, more expensive, and more capable); and so forth. The only question that really matters—"Can the U.S. carry out its strategy?"—is not asked. Yet such misleading analysis is abundant in Secretary Weinberger's *Report to the Congress*, in the Joint Chiefs' *Military Posture* statement,[88] and in newspaper and magazine reporting on defense matters.

In the "trend game," alarming trends are presented without baseline fig-

87. "Games the Pentagon Plays," *Foreign Policy*, No. 11 (Summer 1973), pp. 80–92.
88. Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *United States Military Posture for FY 1983* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982).

ures or explanations. Thus we often hear that the U.S. Navy has fallen from 1,000 ships to fewer than 500; it is not explained that the Navy shrank because many ships built for World War II were finally scrapped in the 1960s and 1970s and because the Navy shifted from smaller to larger ships, so it now builds fewer ships of greater tonnage. In fact, the United States has outbuilt the Soviet Union by three to one in warship tonnage since 1960, while NATO as a whole outbuilt the Soviets by nine to two.[89]

In the "go it alone game," Soviet and American forces are compared head to head, as if the United States had no allies and the Soviet Union no other enemies. Thus we often hear of Soviet advantages over the United States in categories where actually NATO holds the lead over the Warsaw Pact, such as military manpower or defense spending. Such comparisons dismiss the success of the entire postwar European and Japanese economic recovery programs, the express purpose of which was to build up American allies so they could defend themselves.

Instead, a proper assessment measures forces against missions, under politically realistic scenarios. Strategic nuclear capabilities on each side are measured by asking how many warheads *can't* each side destroy and what damage can these warheads wreak on the enemy society? American second-strike capability equals the damage surviving American warheads can inflict on Soviet society, while American counterforce capability is the inverse of the damage that surviving Soviet warheads could inflict on American society. Comparing warheads, megatons, throwweights, missiles, and bombers tells us very little if these are not converted into measures of capacity to destroy people and industry. We seldom see such measures, partly because they undercut arguments for counterforce by demonstrating the futility of building more counterforce.

A conventional theater balance cannot be measured without a thorough campaign analysis. At a minimum such an analysis should incorporate data measuring (1) the total firepower available to both sides, (2) the rate at which both sides can mobilize this firepower and move it into the theater of action, (3) the ability of each side to interdict the other's movement, (4) the advantage that geography gives the attacker or defender, and (5) the amount of warning both sides can expect. Yet defense analyses in the press and popular journals almost never discuss defense problems in these terms.

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89. Congressional Budget Office, *Shaping the General Purpose Navy of the Eighties: Issues for Fiscal Years 1981–1985* (Washington, D:C.: CBO, 1980), p. 44.

Second, the defense debate often confuses political and military factors and too quickly suggests military solutions for political or diplomatic problems. Debates on hardware often turn on differences over the quality of American statesmanship and diplomacy. Thus pessimists often base arguments for more defense spending on scenarios that assume Western statesmen will not use the warning they receive of a Warsaw Pact attack or that assume the United States cannot persuade allies to cooperate in their own defense. Pessimistic scenarios for war in the Persian Gulf, for instance, sometimes assume the European states will not permit American aircraft to refuel in European countries, although vital European intersts would be at stake. A better answer, though, is for American leaders to provide the leadership that these scenarios assume is missing. Moreover, it often turns out that no amount of spending can cure the problems created by weak leadership. America's defense requirements are enormous if we assume its leaders are fools and its allies are malicious or self-destructive. These are problems that more spending cannot easily solve.

Third, American assumptions have shifted from a less demanding to a more demanding grand strategy during the past decade. The drift toward counterforce, intervention, multiple simultaneous contingencies, long conventional war, and offensive conventional operations creates much more demanding military requirements. In our judgment, Western military forces have maintained or even increased their capability to pursue their basic missions over the past decade, but American forces are now measured against harder missions, which makes the U.S. *feel* weaker because the proposed jobs are harder.

What Reforms Make Sense?

Although American capabilities are widely underestimated, American forces nevertheless suffer some real shortcomings. These weaknesses are best alleviated by reforming current forces rather than spending more across the board. Emphasis should fall on selective spending increases, aimed at solving defined problems, or on structural adjustments. In both Europe and the Persian Gulf, relatively inexpensive reforms can make current forces more capable.

With regard to American forces for Europe, five reforms should take priority. First, American weapons design practices need adjustment. The United States still "gold-plates" too much equipment: it passes over cheaper, simpler

designs in favor of expensive, complex ones that are only marginally more capable. This happens because the military often demands state-of-the-art in the technology it buys—for instance, the world's first gas turbine engine to make the new M1 tank the fastest in the world. Frequently the military also demands that one weapon be capable of performing several missions; so the Navy's new F-18 fighter must be a superior air-to-air fighter *and* a superior ground attack aircraft. These requirements can drive costs up dramatically. Some analysts estimate that the last 5 percent of performance in American equipment often results in a 50 percent cost increase.[90] This gold-plating leaves the United States without enough equipment in areas where quantity matters more than quality. Gold-plated equipment also makes the readiness problem worse, because its use and maintenance requires scarce, expensive, highly skilled manpower and greater quantities of more costly spare parts.

Unfortunately, the Reagan defense program moves in the direction of more, rather than fewer gold-plated systems—more fancy F-14 and F-15 aircraft, more elaborate SSN-688 "Los Angeles" class nuclear attack submarines, and more nuclear aircraft carrier task forces and their complex Aegis air defense cruisers.[91] Overall, the Administration is moving toward a force that is too complex.

Second, efforts now underway to improve overall combat readiness should be continued. Congress likes to fund glamorous new weapons systems but neglects maintenance for older systems. As a result, much American military equipment is not ready for action on short notice.

In the short run, Reagan programs will improve this situation by increasing fuel and ammunition stocks and improving training and maintenance. These efforts should continue. But in the long run, Reagan programs will make the readiness problem worse, since Reagan forces are so gold-plated they will be even harder to operate and maintain. One result of the Reagan buildup, in fact, may eventually be a new readiness crisis.

Third, more military equipment should be pre-positioned in Europe. Pre-positioning permits the United States to send reinforcements to Europe more quickly, since less equipment must be moved across the Atlantic. This

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90. Jacques Gansler, *The Defense Industry* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980), p. 279. For more on gold-plating, see Jack N. Merritt and Pierre M. Sprey, "Negative Marginal Returns in Weapons Acquisition," in Richard G. Head and Erwin J. Rokke, *American Defense Policy*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 486–495.
91. Reagan programs are summarized in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, April 12, 1982, p. 64.

strengthens the United States in Europe and the Persian Gulf because American airlift and sealift forces are freed for use in the Middle East. The same concept applies to fighter aircraft: the more basing facilities are built in Europe in peacetime, the less equipment must be moved in wartime.

Fourth, the United States should move faster to ready its civilian airlines to transport military equipment and supplies in wartime. Civilian wide-body passenger jets can be modified at modest cost to serve as military cargo planes in wartime. A cargo-convertible "CRAF" (civilian reserve air fleet) is much cheaper than buying a purpose-built military transport aircraft. The Reagan Administration is trying to move forward with CRAF modifications, but the airline industry has not been cooperative. At the same time, however, the Administration plans an expensive new air transport, the C5N. Pressing ahead with CRAF is a better idea.

Finally, Washington should consider shifting more Army manpower from support to combat roles. The "teeth-to-tail" ratio still seems too low. An American combat division with all its support personnel includes roughly 48,000 troops. To deploy comparable numbers of weapons, the Israelis and West Europeans use only 30,000–35,000 soldiers and the Soviet Union only 22,000–25,000. The Soviets probably lack sufficient logistics and support, while we have too much.

Allied reforms and improvements would do even more to strengthen European defense than would American reforms. Four programs should take priority. First, trained West European military reserve manpower should be organized into reserve units, to fill the need for extra forces that can be held back from the front to cope with a possible Warsaw Pact armored breakthrough. Today many of these reserves are used inefficiently, as individual replacements for casualties in units already in action. Restructuring West European reserves should be at the top of the NATO agenda.

Second, the allies' war reserve stocks—ammunition, parts, and replacement equipment—are much lower than those maintained by the United States. They should be increased. Otherwise European forces will collapse early in the war, nullifying the purpose of American stocks. Third, West European ground forces should be armed more heavily. Latest figures indicate they have only half as many major weapons per thousand men as Soviet and American units.[92] Fourth, NATO and Japan should pay their airlines to

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92. Congressional Budget Office, *U.S. Air and Ground Conventional Forces for NATO: Firepower Issues* (Washington, D.C.: CBO, March 1978), p. 14.

develop cargo-convertible CRAFs. This would increase the potential speed of American reinforcement in Europe and also free American military aircraft capabilities if a simultaneous crisis arose, for example, in the Persian Gulf.

Western capabilities in the Persian Gulf could also be increased at relatively low cost. American intervention forces should be tailored more specifically for Persian Gulf contingencies. The Marines and Army airborne and airmobile units should be better equipped for armored war, with light armored vehicles. More American equipment should be pre-positioned on ships, in Australia, or at the American Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean. The NATO allies and Japan should be better prepared to defend themselves, since this frees American military power for the Persian Gulf. American allies should also be prepared to move their own forces into the Gulf if the need arises. The defense of the Gulf is an allied problem: Washington should demand an allied effort. Finally, Washington should quietly discuss pre-positioning equipment in the Persian Gulf states. If Gulf governments do not want a visible American presence, pre-positioning could take the form of extra stocks and equipment for the Gulf states' armies, which Western forces could use in an emergency.

Conclusion

The Reagan Administration proposes some needed new measures, but the overall direction of its defense policy has not been adequately explained, and the scope of its programs seems excessive and ill-directed. This is not to say that the Administration record on defense is all bad. It deserves credit for its efforts to increase short-term readiness, to rationalize procurement with multi-year contracts, to restructure American forces for Persian Gulf defense, and to improve strategic C^3I. But the basic direction of Reagan's defense policy seems mistaken.

The strategy implicit in Administration programs and statements is unrealistically demanding. Insofar as the Administration seems to have a grand strategy, it appears to incorporate requirements for fighting wars of every kind, all at once—global conventional war against an unspecified range of adversaries, offensive conventional operations against the Soviet homeland, and a victorious nuclear war against the Soviets. This is quite a tall order. Both counterforce operations and offensive conventional operations generate open-ended requirements that simply cannot be met.

In fact, press accounts suggest Reagan defense planners believe they can-

not achieve their strategy without another enormous military buildup once the current one is completed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have reportedly warned they would need an additional $750 billion to carry out the missions specified by the Administration, beyond the $1.6 trillion budgeted for defense in the 1984–88 Administration five-year plan.[93] In short, the Administration strategy simply costs too much.

Moreover, the Reagan emphasis on counterforce, conventional offense, and intervention seems inconsistent with containment and with U.S. interest in controlling any war that might break out. Containment suggests a military strategy focused on Eurasia and emphasizing defense, not the global, offense-dominated strategy of the Reagan Administration. Escalation control calls for capable defensive forces and a defensive operational strategy rather than the Reagan strategy. This Administration's emphasis on conventional offense, counterforce, and nuclear warfighting raises the risk that a conventional conflict will escalate to a general thermonuclear war.

Eventually the American public may wonder whether NATO really needs such vast new investments, or why the United States should bear such a heavy share of the NATO burden. Then it may be caught with half-completed programs and a Congress unwilling to fund full readiness for a force that is both too big and too complex. A steady defense policy that avoids boom-and-bust spending cycles, but that will stand up to scrutiny in the long run, is a better idea. A spending spree to exploit a fleeting public panic will not strengthen the country in the end.[94]

In fact, wasteful military spending is itself a national security threat, because it contributes to America's national economic decline. This decline in turn both narrows the economic base from which the U.S. distills its military power and curtails its worldwide economic power. The American share of gross world product has fallen steadily since World War II and seems likely to keep falling in the future. Halting this economic decline is a vital national security goal for the United States. The Administration subverts this goal by damaging the American economy with excessive defense spending.

On the arms control front, the Administration's commitment to counterforce works at cross-purposes with efforts to negotiate new limits with the Soviets. Moreover, the initial Administration Strategic Arms Reduction Talks

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93. George C. Wilson, "Pentagon: $1.6 trillion will not do job," *The Boston Globe*, March 8, 1982, p. 1.
94. For a list of possible cuts that might be made in the Reagan program, see Kaufmann, SNP 1983, pp. 86–95.

(START) proposal does not seem to constrain counterforce capabilities on either side, so even if the Soviets accepted the Reagan proposal, the risk of war would not be reduced. Arsenals on both sides would be smaller, but they might be more vulnerable, so in a sense the Administration's START proposal is a step backwards, since second-strike capabilities on both sides might be weakened. Instead, the Administration would be better off to pursue an agreement that focused on controlling counterforce systems, as Congressman Albert Gore has suggested.[95] Qualitative arms control is the best route to quantitative arms control. The size of nuclear arsenals is best controlled by limiting the counterforce programs that drive the arms race.

Finally, the Administration deserves criticism for sowing the defense debate with confusion. Its refusal to specify the strategy that requires the Reagan buildup deprives Congress and the public of the tools they need to analyze defense policy. As a result, the whole buildup proceeds with no clear definition of its purpose, no way to judge its necessity, no criteria to judge whether new forces are meeting real needs or leaving real needs unmet, and no logical stopping point. Moreover, those fragments of strategy that the Administration offers often conflict with one another, creating an overall incoherence. Mutually contradictory notions appear in the same statements—for example, in claims that Soviet forces are so strong that the United States requires a major buildup, but so weak that an offensive American strategy is possible.[96]

In addition, this Administration has done even less than its predecessors to make basic defense information available to the public, and its publications have been even more misleading. The 1983 and 1984 Defense Department Annual Reports to the Congress omit basic data contained in previous annual reports such as the relative spending of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the aggregate tonnages of Pact and NATO fleets, strategic nuclear warhead inventories on both sides, and so forth. Instead, it is filled with alarming charts that imply American weakness but do not clarify where weaknesses really lie.

Public confusion about the basic facts of defense—including an administration's basic goals and strategy—is a major American national security problem. To clarify the defense debate, better public information on defense

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95. Albert Gore, Jr., "The Fork in the Road: A New Plan for Nuclear Peace," *The New Republic*, Vol. 186, No. 18 (May 5, 1982), pp. 13–16.
96. See, for example, Reed, "Details of National Security Strategy."

is essential. Neither the government nor the major academic institutions are doing enough to make data available to news reporters, students, members of Congress, or other citizens concerned about defense policy. Adequate reference books do not exist, and most writing on defense policy is written by experts, to experts. Defense matters, however, are not too complex for lay persons to understand. They merely seem prohibitive because academic experts and government agencies do so little to explain defense issues in simple terms and make basic facts available in accessible form. The mistakes made by the Reagan Administration began with public confusion about facts of history, hardware, and strategy. Clearing up this confusion is the first step toward better defense policy.