

Our Strategic Weakness

The Military Unbalance: Is the U. S. Becoming a Second-Class Power?

New York: The National Strategy Information Center, 1971. 65 pp. \$1.00.

Soviet Military Trends: Implications for U. S. Security, by William R. Kintner and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff,

Washington, D. C.: The American Enterprise Institute, 1971. 50 pp. \$3.00.

THERE IS a growing unease among many students of military technology and national security about the ability of the United States to defend itself. These two excellent publications outline the source of this concern and its implications in clear and chilling detail. The booklet prepared by the National Strategy Information Center is primarily factual. The first and largest of its three sections is a reprint of a "Supplemental Statement" by several members of the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel and entitled "The Shifting Balance of Military Power." A succinct review of the major weapons systems is presented, showing a dramatic decline in U.S. defenses *vis-à-vis* the USSR in almost every area from bombers and missiles to naval capabilities. The most disturbing aspect of all, as the report states, is the disparity between the two countries with respect to research and development, the current efforts from which future technological advances emerge. The USSR, with about half the gross national product of the U.S., is now spending more, in absolute terms, on military research than is the U.S. The report then examines the portentous implications of such a policy of strategic inferiority, pointing out that the U.S. has always relied on technological superiority to compensate for inferiority in land troops and tactical weapons. There follows a brief analysis of the SALT and other negotiations and the path to strategic recovery. The conclusions demand our special attention:

The most ominous danger of being second rate in the nuclear age is that it multiplies the chances—not of peace—but of nuclear war. . . .

The road to peace has never been through appeasement, unilateral disarmament or negotiation from weakness. The entire recorded history of mankind is precisely to the contrary. . . .

Following this report is the testimony before Congress of two experts on the Soviet Union. Dr. Richard Pipes of Harvard examined four keys to Soviet foreign policy:

1. the cultural background of the Soviet elite;
2. the elite's claim to legitimacy;
3. its class interests;
4. its colonial experience.

The Soviet elite thinks in terms of competition and conflict rather than of international community. This trait is strongly reinforced by the messianic ideology of communism. Dr. Pipes pointed out that while the communist and technological elites have prospered, this has not been true for the population at large:

In terms of essentials—food, clothing, and housing—the Soviet population as a whole is worse off than it was before the Revolution and in the 1920's. If one considers such intangibles as access to information and the right to travel as elements of the standard of living—as they should be—then, the Soviet citizenry is positively destitute.

The non-Russian colonial nations, which constitute about half the total population of the USSR, remain frustrated and are "a volatile and unreliable element." Dr. Pipes observed that traditional Russian policy has been one of exploiting opportunity and he concluded by saying that:

On balance, the development of modern military technology will probably intensify the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet elite. It is likely to increase its

self-confidence and encourage it to pursue targets of opportunity wherever they present themselves with greater boldness than before.

The testimony of Dr. Leonard Shapiro analyzed the major characteristics of Soviet foreign policy and the role of NATO in thwarting communist objectives despite several major advantages the communists have in foreign policy-making. In discussing "What the Western Response Should Be" he tells us that "it is important to remember that Soviet leaders sometimes make disastrous mistakes." The booklet concludes with a brief, but very pertinent essay by Frank Barnett on "The Case for Interdisciplinary Education in National Security Affairs."

The Kintner-Pfaltzgraff report takes up the subject where the NSIC booklet ends. First, there is a brief review of the decline and eclipse of American strategic superiority, wherein the authors emphasize that "nuclear parity" really means overall U.S. inferiority because of local force configurations and the USSR's possession of a counterforce first-strike arsenal. They examine the alternative foreign policy emphases which may result from the new Soviet superiority. A "strategy of opportunity" would lead to an attempt to replace American influence with that of the USSR by means leading to a big power confrontation. Political gains will be aggressively extracted from the strategically inferior United States. A "strategy of caution" would also aim at the Soviet replacement of U.S. global influence but without leading to confrontation. America's "vital national interests" would not be directly threatened, although a constant erosion of power would occur. Finally, a still grim but somewhat more optimistic option is seen in the "strategy of condominium" whereby Soviet-U.S. strategic "parity" would lead to an attempt to share influence through a more conciliatory approach. While the USSR would still make substantial inroads in many parts of the world,

such a policy would lead to an "era of negotiations" and would bring a considerable though short-term stability to the world.

Messrs. Kintner and Pfaltzgraff then proceed to examine how these various policy strategies would play themselves out, first on a regional basis and then according to various global issues. They conclude that the Soviet Union will probably use a mixture of all three strategies, with a predominance of the more aggressive strategy of opportunity. Specific situations will dictate the choice of strategy although the long-run objective of global domination will remain constant. The formal report (both booklets have very valuable appendices) ends with a grim statement:

Growing American incapacity and irresolution before Soviet advances is already making the United States a questionable partner for those who must risk our friendship as an alternative to accommodation with the Soviet Union. The United States can have no policy save retreat if it is unable or unwilling to maintain political commitments with a defense capability sufficient to deter the Soviet Union from *political* exploitation of the vast Soviet military establishment.

. . . The United States may have forgotten the maxim that there is room for only one at the top. Leonid Brezhnev's declaration to the 24th party congress—"the total triumph of socialism the world over is inevitable"—reminds us that the Soviet Union wants to be that one.

Reviewed by ROBERT A. SCHADLER