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Second-Guessing the Experts: Citizens' Group Criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency's Estimates of Soviet Military Policy

THE ALDRICH AMES spy case, first revealed to the public in 1994, has focused new attention on the quality of the US Central Intelligence Agency's information about the Soviet Union during the cold war. Three unusual aspects of the case have so far attracted the most attention: the magnitude of Ames's betrayal of Soviet agents working for the CIA; the KGB's use of double agents to pass on to the CIA deliberately false as well as accurate intelligence; and the fact that the CIA knowingly passed such misinformation to Congress to obtain congressional approval of the annual US military budgets. According to John Deutsch, then director of central intelligence, these CIA reports 'had a substantial role in framing the debate' over the appropriate response to Soviet military policy for nearly ten years after 1985 when Ames began working for the Russians. The 'net effect', he argued, 'was that we overestimated their capability'.[1]

Discussions of the Ames case tended to overlook the fact that US intelligence estimates of Soviet military power caused controversy at the time they were issued, before their tainted sources were widely known.[2] Advocates of confrontation with the Soviet Union typically argued that the CIA underestimated Soviet military strength, while advocates of restraint argued that the CIA exaggerated it. Much of the debate about intelligence on the Soviet Union was conducted in public by citizens' groups ranging from supporters of arms control to supporters of a major US military build-up. In this respect, the controversy about the CIA's competence provoked by the Ames case was far from unique. Rather, it was the last episode in a long history during the cold war of second-guessing the CIA's estimates of Soviet military power.

The opening of some of the secret archives in Moscow, the flood of memoirs by and interviews with former Soviet political and military officials, and the declassification of the CIA's own National Intelligence

1 Tim Weiner, 'CIA's Chief Says Russians Duped the US', *New York Times*, 9 Dec. 1995.
2 Tim Weiner, 'CIA Admits Failing to Sift Tainted Data', *New York Times*, 1 Nov. 1995.

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Estimates (NIEs) of the Soviet Union enable us to evaluate more closely the criticism of US intelligence on the Soviet Union during the cold war. Such an evaluation, based on the Russian sources, fills an important gap in the historiography of post-war US intelligence.[1] This article will examine several key episodes during which citizens' groups challenged the evaluation by the US intelligence community of Soviet military capabilities and intentions. The cases spread across the cold war, from the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb in 1949 to Soviet responses to the US Strategic Defense Initiative in the mid-1980s. The cases are chosen both for their importance to the history of the cold war and for the variety of the criticism offered by citizens' groups.

Unlike the White House, Congress, or the Pentagon, citizens' groups, who ultimately paid through their tax dollars for intelligence on the Soviet Union, were never intended to be told the contents of the CIA's highly classified reports containing its estimates of Soviet military policy. Nevertheless, throughout the cold war, citizens' groups of various kinds maintained a keen interest in the subjects of those reports.

Such public interest should not be surprising. Perceptions of Soviet military capabilities and intentions influenced US national security policy; they also helped to determine the size of the US military budgets, and, thus, indirectly influenced domestic spending priorities. The international challenge of Communism, moreover, affected the tone of domestic US politics, most notably during the McCarthy era.[2] Whether citizens' groups were more interested in national and international security, or the quality of political, social, and economic life at home, they had reason to be concerned about the CIA's evaluation of the Soviet threat.

This article begins by characterizing the types of citizens' groups that took an interest in intelligence and Soviet military policy. It explains the designations given to them and the shortcomings of describing them in this way, and summarizes the types of critiques they made. It then analyses a series of examples of activity by citizens' groups who tried to influence either the intelligence estimates themselves, or more often, the policies based on them.

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Although the division of citizens' groups into two distinct categories risks oversimplification, groups that challenged official estimates of the Soviet

1 For a review, see John Ferris, 'Coming in from the Cold War: The Historiography of American Intelligence, 1945-90', *Diplomatic History*, xix (1995), 87-115.

2 Athan Theoharis, 'The Threat to Civil Liberties', in *Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Chicago, 1971), pp. 266-98; Eugene Rochberg-Halton, 'Cold War's Victims Deserve a Memorial', *New York Times*, 10 March 1990; and Christopher Lasch, 'The Costs of Our Cold War Victory', *New York Times*, 13 July 1990.

Union during the cold war are usually divided into 'hawks' and 'doves'. Typically, hawks assumed that the CIA underestimated Soviet capabilities and goals, whereas doves assumed that Soviet capabilities were overestimated and the threat exaggerated. Hawks usually favoured competition – higher military spending and more weapons – whereas doves usually preferred co-operation: arms control, lower military budgets, and fewer weapons.

Among the prominent hawkish groups were the two Committees on the Present Danger (the first founded in 1950, the second in 1976), the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, and the Coalition for Peace through Strength.[1] One of the most significant and long-lasting dovish groups was the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), founded in 1945. This élite group was supplemented in 1957 by a mass-based organization, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), and in the early 1960s by the Council for a Livable World, an arms-control lobbying group that targeted politicians.[2]

The two types of group made a number of similar criticisms of US intelligence. As both of them sometimes suspected that the government was not giving the full picture of Soviet military capabilities or the relative US-Soviet balance, they demanded that more information should be made available for public deliberation.[3] Both criticized the CIA on methodological grounds, for failing to make clear its assumptions, for lack of consistent, time-series estimates, and for its reluctance to re-examine past incidents, and to admit and to account for its mistakes.[4]

1 The last two organizations were not strictly 'citizens' groups', because both included serving politicians as members and the Coalition for Peace through Strength received substantial financial support from, and frequently acted as a lobbying arm of, major military contractors. See *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, ed. Charles Tyroler II (McLean, 1984); Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston, 1983).

2 Alice Kimball Smith, *A Peril and a Hope: The Scientists' Movement in America, 1945-7*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1971); *Toward a Livable World: Leo Szilard and the Crusade for Nuclear Arms Control*, ed. Helen S. Hawkins, G. Allen Greb, and Gertrud Weiss Szilard (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), pp. 425-84; Milton S. Katz, *Ban the Bomb: A History of SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, 1957-85* (New York, 1986); Lawrence S. Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953* (Stanford, 1993).

3 Not all hawks wanted to make more information available. Some, such as Edward Teller, often sought to use their alleged personal knowledge of secret information as a trump card in debates. Exposing more intelligence information to the public would have risked exposing such techniques as mere bluff. For an early example, see Katherine McGraw, 'Teller and the "Clean Bomb" Episode', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, xliv (1988), 32-7. In 1988, Teller sought to dismiss Andrei Sakharov's criticism of US pursuit of strategic defences by pointing out that Sakharov's security clearance had been revoked two decades earlier. See William J. Broad, *Teller's War: The Top-Secret Story behind the Star Wars Deception* (New York, 1992), pp. 257-9. Another example of Teller's style is found in his debate with Frank von Hippel, reprinted in Frank von Hippel, *Citizen Scientist* (New York, 1991), pp. 71-85.

4 Comments of Nicholas Daniloff, Randall Forsberg, and Roy Godson at a conference on 'Estimating

A second way of characterizing the citizens' groups is on the basis of their members' experience in government – were they 'insiders' or 'outsiders'? By definition, the groups discussed here are 'outsiders', because they do not include serving government officials. But some members of many of the groups had knowledge of some aspect of intelligence, owing to their previous government service. This was especially true of hawks such as the two Committees on the Present Danger (CPD). Their influence derived, arguably, from the fact that their list of members included both former government advisers, such as Vannevar Bush and J. Robert Oppenheimer (CPD-1), and former officials, such as Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze (CPD-2). It was also true of the conservative think-tanks that analysed military and intelligence issues, such as the Heritage Foundation or the American Enterprise Institute.

Former insiders were also well represented among the doves. The FAS, for example, originally called the Federation of Atomic Scientists, was founded by scientists from the Manhattan Project. Former presidential science advisers, including George Kistiakowsky and Jerome Wiesner, much of whose work in the White House had involved military matters, became actively involved in public debates over such issues as anti-ballistic missile defences and strategic arms control; they played important roles in the Council for a Livable World.[1] Lobbying groups, such as the Arms Control Association, and public policy research organizations, including the Institute for Policy Studies and the Brookings Institution, became home to dovish critics of US policy who represented a wide range of previous 'insider' experience. They included former civilian officials in the Pentagon (Richard Barnet, Daniel Ellsberg, Paul Warnke), US Army intelligence analysts (William Arkin, Paul Walker), CIA officers (Herbert Scoville, Jr., Raymond Garthoff), and even a former Minuteman missile launch control officer (Bruce Blair). The Center for Defense Information, a consistent critic of US estimates of Soviet military power, was founded, directed, and partly staffed by retired, senior military officers.

Former insider status was not a prerequisite, however, for influence over policy towards the Soviet Union or the interpretation of military intelligence. One could argue, for example, that Richard Pipes, a professor of

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Soviet Military Power, 1950-84', Harvard University, 2-3 Dec. 1994.

1 On scientists' participation in the ABM debates, see Anne Hessing Cahn, 'American Scientists and the ABM: A Case Study in Controversy', in *Scientists and Public Affairs*, ed. Albert H. Teich (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 41-120; and the larger study upon which it draws, 'Eggheads and Warheads: Scientists and the ABM' (Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, 1971). See also Paul Doty, 'Science Advising and the ABM Debate', in *Controversy and Decision: The Social Sciences and Public Policy*, ed. Charles Frankel (New York, 1976), pp. 185-203. On Kistiakowsky's White House experience, see George B. Kistiakowsky, *Scientist at the White House: The Private Diary of President Eisenhower's Special Assistant for Science and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976).

history at Harvard University and prominent member of the Committee on the Present Danger, was most influential in the 1970s, before he entered government service during the Reagan administration. For many, Pipes's status as an outsider lent credibility in 1976 to his criticism of the CIA as head of 'Team B', the government-sponsored project that challenged official estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions, using the intelligence community's own data.[1]

Many of the most effective dove critics of official estimates and analysis had no experience of government intelligence work. Whereas virtually all of the former insiders were men, many of the outsiders, such as Randall Forsberg, Mary Kaldor, and Jane Sharp, were women. Several of them began their work at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which was founded in 1967 explicitly to provide independent data and analysis of military forces and policy.

Citizens' groups who sought to second-guess the CIA during the cold war were clearly diverse, resembling one another only as consumers and critics of intelligence intended mainly for government use. Usually, they derived their information from material that the government chose to make public, from 'leaks', or from their members' previous government service.[2] How, then, did they seek to challenge the official estimates of the Soviet Union?

Critics of the CIA, who disputed its estimates of Soviet strength or relative US-Soviet capabilities, often objected not to the actual numbers themselves, but to the relative weight assigned to the indicators chosen. The classic dispute arose over the question of what mattered most in strategic nuclear power. One side emphasized the numbers of nuclear warheads and the accuracy of their delivery, in which the United States had always held a large advantage. The other side emphasized 'throw

1 The report itself is now declassified: 'Soviet Strategic Objectives: An Alternative View', Report of Team 'B', NIO M 76-021J, Dec. 1976, in *Intentions and Capabilities: Estimates on Soviet Strategic Forces, 1950-83*, ed. Donald Steury (Washington, 1996), pp. 365-90. For the politics of the report, see John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate: US Intelligence Analysis and Russian Military Strength* (New York, 1982), pp. 248-57; and articles by Anne Cahn and John Prados under the title 'Team B: The Trillion Dollar Experiment', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, xlix (April 1993), 22-31.

2 Outright disclosure of classified information by former insiders was relatively rare, but both hawks and doves occasionally did it. In one notorious case, David Sullivan, a CIA analyst, released highly classified information to members of Senator Henry Jackson's staff, including Richard Perle, and was fired for it. Once 'outside', he continued to leak, and continued to get fired. See Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, rev. ed. (Washington, 1994), pp. 677-8; and Prados, *Soviet Estimate*, pp. 243-4. The most famous case of a dove leaking classified information was Daniel Ellsberg's delivery of the Pentagon's classified history of the Vietnam War (of which he was co-author) to the *New York Times*. Ellsberg, in interviews and public speeches, some of which I attended, also disclosed information from intelligence estimates of the Soviet Union that was still technically classified; for example, the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles that the Soviet Union possessed during the early 1960s.

weight', the explosive force that a missile warhead was capable of creating, an indicator that favoured the Soviets, with their larger missiles. Other criticism focused not on the CIA's estimates of Soviet capabilities, but rather on its assumptions and conclusions about Soviet intentions. Did the Soviet Union, for example, accept the notion of mutual nuclear deterrence or did it 'think it could fight and win a nuclear war'?[1]

In some cases, the critics of CIA estimates of Soviet capabilities were at a disadvantage because most of their information ultimately came from the US government: they could not be certain whether information unknown to them might affect their analysis. In other cases, however, the dispute about capabilities did not depend on information gathered through intelligence. Given broad knowledge of Soviet nuclear physics and of Soviet engineering and industrial capacity, for example, US atomic scientists immediately after the Second World War could estimate fairly accurately when the Soviet Union might be capable of producing its first atomic bomb. As many of the scientists pointed out at the time, the most important 'atomic secret' was that the bomb could in fact be built and would work; the United States divulged that secret at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Decades later, several of the same scientists, joined by a younger cohort, could effectively challenge official statements about the probable Soviet response to the Reagan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, without access to any secret information about Soviet military programmes. Their knowledge of physics, combined with publicly available information, was adequate.

Critics of official views of Soviet intentions were often at no disadvantage relative to the CIA. An assiduous reader of *Pravda*, or even the *New York Times*, was frequently no worse at predicting or evaluating Soviet behaviour than the intelligence agencies, with their worldwide network of informants and their high-tech methods of surveillance – but not necessarily any better.[2] Some outsiders claimed the advantage over insiders of having lived in the Soviet Union, pointing out that some senior officials responsible for intelligence about the Soviet Union had never even visited the country.

Some outsiders began simply by trying to compile the data that were not readily available from the government. Forsberg, for example, while

1 Exemplars of the competing views are Raymond L. Garthoff, 'Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy', *International Security*, iii (1978), 112-47; and Richard Pipes, 'Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War', *Commentary*, lxiv (1977), 21-34.

2 For an argument that reliance on open political sources is superior, see Richard Pipes, 'Intelligence in the Formation of Foreign Policy', in *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980s*, ed. Roy Godson (Lexington, 1986), pp. 41-5. His sources led Pipes to believe, among other things, that 'it is really not so important who succeeds Chernenko' as leader of the Soviet Union (p. 43).

working in Stockholm, started an annual review of the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and Soviet Union, presented as a ten-year time series.[1] This project, and later ones undertaken by her Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies and by similar public-interest organizations, were premised on the need for accurate, publicly available information about the military forces of potential adversaries.[2] Forsberg argued that the lack of a 'net assessment', evaluating US capabilities in light of probable threats, hindered the democratic formulation of US foreign and security policy. In her view, the maintenance of large, standing military forces, a worldwide network of bases, and an expensive programme of military research, development, and production could be justified, in a democracy, only by public discussion of actual and potential military threats. She claimed that the amount of information available about Soviet military capabilities during the cold war was inadequate for such a discussion, even though official publications, such as the secretary of defence's annual report and the joint chiefs of staff's 'posture statement', were more informative than the comparable material, where it existed at all, supplied by other governments.[3]

Some outsider critics of the intelligence estimates focused not on providing alternative or more comprehensive data, but on improving the process of analysis. During the late 1970s, for example, an organization called the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence sponsored a series of conferences that analysed past intelligence failures and suggested ways for improving analysis in the future. It published several volumes under the rubric *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980s*, edited by Roy Godson.[4] The thrust of the consortium's critique is 'epistemological': Godson argues that intelligence analysts must be conscious of what they know and do not know; recognize the 'otherness' of the societies they study; and avoid 'mirror-imaging' and ethnocentrism. They must also beware of attempts at deception: 'We are not studying societies as academics; we are studying societies that are trying to influence us.'[5] Although such sentiments may seem uncontroversial, and are likely to be shared by both hawks and

1 They were published between 1974 and 1982 in the annual *SIPRI Yearbook*.

2 Other IDDS publications include *Soviet Missiles*, ed. Barton Wright (Lexington, 1986); and *Soviet Aircraft*, ed. Neta Crawford (Lexington, 1986). I should mention here that I served on the advisory board of the World Weapons Database project that sponsored these studies. In addition, the Natural Resources Defense Council sponsored the important *Nuclear Weapons Databook* series of volumes, edited by Thomas Cochran, William Arkin, and Robert Norris, and published by the Ballinger Division of Harper & Row.

3 Comments by Randall Forsberg at a conference on 'Estimating Soviet Military Power'.

4 The volumes were published variously by Lexington Books and the National Strategy Information Center.

5 Comments by Roy Godson at a conference on 'Estimating Soviet Military Power'.

doves, in the politically charged atmosphere of the late 1970s, particularly in the debates over strategic arms control and military strategy, the Consortium and like-minded groups pointed to Soviet deception and violation of arms treaties in order to raise the alarm over what they perceived as US complacency.[1]

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The declassification of US documents such as the CIA's National Intelligence Estimates enables us to examine the extent to which the citizens' groups' assessment of Soviet capabilities and intentions differed from the government's.[2] Soviet memoirs and archival sources allow us to compare official and public US perceptions of Soviet intentions with what actually happened. Three case studies follow here. The first analyses the debate over Soviet intentions and capabilities, and the appropriate US response, in the wake of the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The second analyses the debate over arms control from the mid-1950s through the 1970s. The third analyses the competing evaluations of the likely Soviet response to the Strategic Defense Initiative announced in 1983.

The end of the US atomic monopoly with the test of the first Soviet atomic bomb in August 1949 led to the re-evaluation of Soviet capabilities and intentions and to recommendations for changes in US strategy. A debate ensued over two related issues: the extent to which the United States should undertake a major military mobilization and whether the most vital US security interests lay in Europe, in Asia, or in 'fortress America'. Although dramatic events abroad – the victory of the Communist forces in the Chinese civil war and, in particular, the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 – influenced the outcome of the debate, so did the citizens' groups. One group in particular – the Committee on the Present Danger, founded in late 1950 – is sometimes credited with shifting both élite and mass attitudes towards the acceptance of a large increase in military spending and a more assertive response to the Soviet challenge.[3]

1 For a review of the issues, see the Godson studies; Tyroler, *Alerting America*; and the discussion in Prados, *Soviet Estimate*.

2 Many of the CIA documents cited in this article were declassified in 1993 and 1994 in connection with a conference held at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in Dec. 1994, co-sponsored by the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence. I am grateful to Ernest May for inviting me to participate in the conference and for allowing me access to his copies of the documents. According to the CIA, the documents are now available to researchers at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md., in Record Group 263, the Records of the Central Intelligence Agency. Hereafter, documents from this collection are referred to as CIA-CSI. For studies of the national intelligence estimates written before the recent declassification of materials that have stood the test of time, see Prados, *Soviet Estimate*; and Lawrence Freedman, *US Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat* (London, 1977).

3 This discussion is based mainly on Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present*

The committee was founded by prominent public figures, most of whom had served in the government, to advocate, as one of its leading members put it, 'a vast program of rearmament and mobilization'.[1] Many of the members had long been concerned about a Soviet military threat to Europe; some were driven to action by the outbreak of the Korean War. For James B. Conant, the president of Harvard University and the committee's chair, 'the aggression of the North Koreans established a new pattern.' As he put it in a radio address in early 1951, 'it could hardly be argued any longer that the dwellers in the Kremlin never intended to use military means to gain their objective.'[2] Tracy S. Voorhees, a former under-secretary of the army and another of the committee's founding members, wrote in a widely distributed magazine article just a month after the outbreak of the war, that a 'Korea' was just as likely to happen in Europe.[3]

The committee, echoing the former British prime minister, Winston Churchill, argued that only the US monopoly of atomic weapons had deterred the Soviets from invading western Europe immediately after the war. As soon as the Soviet Union had developed an atomic capability, Europe's security would be at risk.[4] As Conant put it, 'a few years hence the handful of men who rule Russia may decide that the power of our strategic air force has been largely cancelled out. If at that time Europe is defenseless on the ground, the Russian hordes will begin to move ... Conceivably the masters of the Soviet Union have already decided to start World War III and given the necessary orders.'[5]

The CIA initially offered a rather moderate assessment of Soviet intentions, despite the atomic test of August 1949. The CIA first set out its views of the implications of the Soviets' possession of atomic weapons in a draft report ORE 91-49 submitted on 10 February 1950 to an inter-agency group representing the intelligence services of the state department, the army, navy, and air force, and the Atomic Energy Commission. Only the last agreed with the CIA's conclusions; the military and the state department voiced numerous and varied objections. The CIA published its findings as an interim report, with dissents appended, in April.[6]

Danger and the Politics of Containment (Boston, 1983); and James G. Hershberg, *James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age* (New York, 1993), esp. ch. 25.

1 James B. Conant, 'The Present Danger', radio address, 7 Feb. 1951, Harvard University, Widener Library.

2 Ibid., p. 4.

3 Tracy S. Voorhees, 'To Prevent a "Korea" in Western Europe', *New York Times Magazine*, 23 July 1950, pp. 10ff.

4 Winston Churchill, 'The Peril in Europe', a political party broadcast, 26 Aug. 1950, in *The Collected Works of Sir Winston Churchill* (London, 1975), xxix. 29.

5 Conant, 'Present Danger', pp. 7, 17.

6 Central Intelligence Agency, 'Estimate of the Effects of the Soviet Possession of the Atomic Bomb upon the Security of the United States and upon the Probabilities of Direct Soviet Military Action',

The CIA argued that, despite the emerging Soviet atomic capability, 'there would appear to be no firm basis for an assumption that the USSR presently *intends* deliberately to use military force to attain a Communist world or further to expand Soviet territory *if this involves war with a potentially stronger US*.'[1] The agency assumed that the Soviet Union would continue to seek world domination, but through measures short of any war that would risk direct confrontation with the United States. Nonetheless, in a highly qualified statement, the agency conceded that the loss of the US nuclear monopoly might increase the risk of war: 'Although, in general, it appears unlikely that the possession of the atomic bomb will alter the basic considerations – as outlined above – which underlie Soviet policy, a Soviet capability for effective direct attack upon the continental US must be considered to increase the danger that the USSR might resort to military action to attain its objectives.'[2]

Thus, although the CIA would not predict 'whether the possession of the bomb will tend to make Soviet leaders more reasonable or more intransigent', it did concede that once the Soviet Union had acquired a stockpile of atomic bombs, 'it may be willing to assume greater risks in its diplomatic disputes with the West. Taking such risks could lead to war by miscalculation.'[3]

In one forceful statement, however, the CIA directly undercut one of the key assumptions the CPD was to make about the role of a US nuclear deterrent: 'It has been asserted that only the existence of the US atomic bomb prevented the USSR from carrying out an intention to continue its military advance to the Atlantic in 1945. There can be no doubt that the US atomic bomb had a sobering and deterrent effect on the USSR. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the USSR had any such intention in 1945 *or subsequently*.'[4] The agency was contradicting Churchill's claim, widely accepted then and now, that only US nuclear weapons had deterred a Soviet invasion of western Europe.

The military intelligence services and the state department objected to the CIA's equivocation and particularly to its attempt to play down the likelihood of direct Soviet military aggression. The strongest dissent, however, came from the air force, which called the report 'dangerous as an intelligence basis for national policy' on account of its disregard of 'the fact that Soviet policy above all aims at preparing for the show-down war

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ORE 91-49, 6 April 1950 [Independence, Missouri, Harry S.], Truman Library, P[resident's] S[ecretary's] F[iles], Intelligence File, folder: CIA Reports, ORE 1949, No. 90-100.

1 Ibid., p. 4, original emphasis.

2 Ibid., p. 5.

3 Ibid., p. 23.

4 Ibid., p. 18, emphasis added.

against the United States' and its failure 'to recognize that we are at war right now'.[1] The tone of these remarks resembles the CPD's and obliged the CIA, responsible as it was for developing a consensus position, to take a more alarmist view of the Soviets.

The CIA clearly failed to achieve a consensus around its moderate projections of Soviet behaviour. ORE 91-49, with twenty-eight pages of analysis and another half-dozen pages of dissent, was superseded on 9 June 1950 by a curt three-page report of a joint ad hoc committee representing the various intelligence agencies. This report, ORE 32-50, concluded unequivocally that 'the possibility of direct military conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States is increased as a result of Soviet possession of atomic weapons.'[2] The only dissent came from the office of naval intelligence:

> The reader is actually led to infer that the only factor under Soviet control which would influence a decision to attempt a surprise and crippling atomic attack on the U.S., is possession of what they estimate to be a requisite number of atomic bombs to accomplish the task. It is inconceivable that the Soviets could arrive at such a decision without regard to political or economic factors and all the other military factors, offensive and defensive.[3]

North Korea's invasion of the South, which took the CIA by surprise, caused it to reinterpret Soviet intentions – and even capabilities – in a way that it had not done after the atomic bomb test in August 1949. Contrary to its previous predictions of likely Soviet behaviour, the CIA interpreted North Korea's action as deliberate military aggression planned and directed from the Kremlin. Moreover, it suggested that the invasion might be a Soviet-inspired diversion, intended to distract the West's attention from Europe. Several CIA reports discussed the possibility that the Soviets would take similar action in divided Germany, and wondered whether the Soviet-directed build-up of the East German *Volkspolizei*, the militarized police force, could be used to spearhead an invasion westwards, under the guise of 'civil war', to reunify Germany by force, as the North Korean army had tried to do in Korea.[4] These themes were paralleled in the public debate at the same time or later, particularly in the speeches and writings of

1 Ibid., p. 35.
2 Central Intelligence Agency, 'The Effect of the Soviet Possession of Atomic Bombs on the Security of the United States', Report by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee, ORE 32-50, 9 June 1950, Truman Library, PSF, Intelligence File, folder: CIA Reports, ORE 1950, no. 32-58, p. 3.
3 Ibid., p. 4.
4 See, e.g., ORE 34-50, 'Probable Developments in Eastern Germany by the End of 1951', 28 Sept. 1950, CIA-CSI; CIA Intelligence Memorandum No. 323-SRC: 'Soviet Preparations for Major Hostilities in 1950', 25 Aug. 1950, Truman Library, PSF, Intelligence File.

the CPD. The invasion of Korea, therefore, rather than the citizens' groups, had led the CIA to revise its views.

During the year following the outbreak of the war, the CIA upgraded Soviet capabilities and reassessed Soviet intentions. In NIE-3 of 15 November 1950, as in the earlier estimates, the Soviet leaders' 'ultimate objective' was identified as 'a Communist world controlled by themselves'. A new list of seven 'immediate objectives' included such things as the intention 'to establish domination over Europe and Asia', even though it was 'improbable of achievement without resort to armed force'. The CIA now suggested that the Soviet Union would consider provoking a war with the West in the near future as the balance of power shifted in its favour:

> In the belief that their object cannot be fully attained without a general war with the Western Powers, the Soviet rulers may deliberately provoke such a war at the time when, in their opinion, the relative strength of the USSR is at its maximum. It is estimated that such a period will exist from now through 1954, with the peak of Soviet strength relative to the Western Powers being reached about 1952.[1]

Conant echoed these views a month later in *Look* magazine: 'In the uncertain technological arms race now in progress, the dwellers in the Kremlin may consider themselves the winners on paper somewhere in the period 1952-54 and having made this decision will start a global war if they can be sure of marching to the Channel ports.'[2]

A CIA Special Estimate prepared in October 1951 attributed to the Soviets vast military capabilities as well as aggressive intentions. The report declared that the Soviet Union 'has sufficient armed forces to undertake' military campaigns against western Europe, the Balkans, the Near and Middle East, Japan, and Korea; air attacks against Britain; submarine and air attacks against Western sea routes; and 'aerial attack (conventional and atomic) against Canada and most of the United States'. The Soviet Union could launch all of these offensives 'simultaneously', with 180-200 divisions, more than 11,000 tactical aircraft, and 850 light and medium bombers, and 'still retain an adequate reserve'.[3]

The new evidence – and much of the old as well – offers no support for the notion that North Korea invaded South Korea at Joseph Stalin's suggestion. Historians have clearly traced the proposal to the North

1 CIA, NIE-3: 'Soviet Capabilities and Intentions, 15 November 1950', pp. 1-2, excerpted in *Selected Estimates on the Soviet Union, 1950-9*, ed. Scott A. Koch (Washington, 1993), p. 169.
2 James B. Conant, 'A Stern Program for Survival', *Look* (Dec. 1950), quoted in Hershberg, *Conant*, p. 491.
3 CIA, Special Estimate, 'The Strength and Capabilities of Soviet Bloc Forces to Conduct Military Operations against NATO', SE-16, 12 Oct. 1951, Truman Library, PSF, Intelligence File, Folder: SE Special Estimate Reports, no. 10-18, box 258, pp. 18-19.

Korean leader, Kim Il Sung. In Kathryn Weathersby's words, 'this was Kim Il Sung's war; he gained Stalin's reluctant approval only after persistent appeals (48 telegrams!).'[1] Nor does it seem likely that the Soviet Union's possession of atomic weapons encouraged it to take greater risks than it otherwise would have done. As late as 1951, the Soviet Union had tested only one atomic bomb and lacked an intercontinental delivery capability. As David Holloway recently argued: 'Stalin's support for Kim was a miscalculation, not a sign that Soviet policy had been emboldened by the atomic bomb.'[2]

Soviet intentions towards Europe are harder to discern, because they do not involve a set of specific decisions as the invasion of South Korea did. The same holds true for the putative plans of the Soviet leaders to start a global war 'at the time when, in their opinion, the relative strength of the USSR is at its maximum', as the CIA reports put it. Clearly the capabilities attributed to the Soviet armed forces in studies such as SE-16 were considerably exaggerated, particularly their air power and atomic weapons.[3] Moreover, although the archives have yielded ample evidence of Soviet perfidy and egregious behaviour on other issues, nothing has turned up to support the idea that the Soviet leadership at any time planned to start a third World War and to send the 'Russian hordes' marching westwards.

In the immediate post-war period, the Soviet army in Germany was configured for defensive operations, rather than the quick 'march to the Channel' that Churchill, Conant, and others expected. The Soviet Army's Operational Plan No. 52 of November 1946, originally classified 'top secret – of special importance', envisioned the deployment of forces in three defensive belts, 50, 100, and 150 kilometres inside the border of the Soviet occupation zone.[4] As late as 1948, Soviet training emphasized the strategic defensive, followed, if possible, by counter-offensives.[5] The offensive

1 Kathryn Weathersby, 'New Findings on the Korean War', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, issue 3 (Fall 1993), p. 14. See also Weathersby, 'Korea, 1949-50: To Attack or Not to Attack? Stalin, Kim Il Sung, and the Prelude to War', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, issue 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 1-9, and the translated documents appended. An extensive collection of relevant articles and documents is provided in 'The Cold War in Asia', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, issues 6-7 (Winter 1995-6).

2 David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-56* (New Haven, 1994), p. 283. Much of ch. 13 is devoted to the Korean War.

3 Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*. For an insider's account of the state of Soviet aircraft and missile development, see Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev: Krizisy i rakety* [Nikita Khrushchev: Crises and Rockets] (Moscow, 1994); and his 'Nikita Khrushchev i voennoe stroitel'stvo v 1953-64 godakh' [Nikita Khrushchev and Military Construction in 1953-64], paper prepared for a conference on the centenary of Khrushchev's birth held at Brown University, 1-3 Dec. 1994.

4 'Operativnyi plan deistvii gruppy Sovetskikh okkupatsionnykh voisk v Germanii, 5 noiabria 1946 goda' [Operational Plan of Action of the Group of Soviet Occupation Troops in Germany, 5 November 1946], *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 2 (Feb. 1989), pp. 26-31.

5 'Plan komandirskikh zaniatii po operativnotakticheskoi podgotovke v polevom upravlenii gruppy

posture of the Soviet armed forces in Europe was taken later, after the founding of NATO and the reliance on nuclear weapons by the West.

Nor has the spate of increasingly frank memoirs – and we now have 'memoirs' of sorts even from members of Stalin's inner circle – supported the notion that the Soviet Union had a plan for worldwide military aggression. In reminiscences prompted by a sympathetic interviewer, neither Viacheslav Molotov nor Lazar Kaganovich, two of Stalin's most ruthless henchmen and foreign-policy hardliners, revealed any plans by the Soviet Union to engage in large-scale attacks.[1]

Not every official shared the dire views of Soviet capabilities and intentions of the CIA and the CPD. A notable dissenter was Rear Admiral Leslie Stevens, who had served in Moscow as a naval attaché from 1947 through 1950. Although he did not speak as an outsider, his criticism of the CIA was based on the same premiss as the subsequent criticism by citizens' groups of official intelligence estimates: that they depicted a Soviet Union unrecognizable to anyone who had spent time there. Stevens, in a speech to the National War College in January 1951, quoted the second paragraph of NIE-3, on Soviet motives and ultimate objectives, without identifying it, then compared the CIA's estimates of Soviet capabilities with his own, based on personal observation: 'Our estimates are based on such meager information that they necessarily involve many conscious and unconscious assumptions. The sum total of our estimates is not consistent with what I have experienced in Russia, and I believe that it comes from piling incorrect assumptions and inferences one on another.'[2] In Stevens's view, the Soviet Union was 'still an unbelievably primitive country, 15 to 50 years behind us in nearly every respect. I cannot believe that the Soviet Union has the genuine capability of bursting out simultaneously in all directions against the resistance that the West, militarily weak as it is, is capable of showing, and I believe the Soviets are realistically aware of it.'[3]

Unlike the CIA, Stevens did not interpret the Korean War as the signal for a general Soviet-directed onslaught on the West. Nor did the war lead him to change his mind about Soviet capabilities:

Sovetskikh okkupatsionnykh voisk v Germanii na 1948 god' [Commanders' Work Plan for Operational-Tactical Preparation in Field Exercises of the Group of Soviet Occupation Troops in Germany for 1948], *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 8 (Aug. 1989), pp. 24-6. For an excellent discussion of these materials, see Gilberto Villahermosa, 'Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised: Deja Vu All Over Again', *Soviet Observer*, ii (Sept. 1990), 1-5.

1 Feliks Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym* [One Hundred Forty Conversations with Molotov] (Moscow, 1991); Chuev, *Tak govoril Kaganovich* [As Kaganovich Said] (Moscow, 1992). See also Kaganovich's recently published memoirs, *Pamiatnye zapiski* [Memorable Notes] (Moscow, 1996).

2 Rear Admiral L. C. Stevens, 'A National Strategy for the Soviet Union', text of an address delivered to the National War College on 25 Jan. 1951, Truman Library, PSF, Records of the NSC, box 19, Folder: Speech – Adm. L. C. Stevens, p. 19.

3 Ibid., p. 16.

I believe that Soviet capabilities are strained even in peacetime, that they are relatively close to her ultimate potential, and that the supporting of even the Korean war is, therefore, much more of a strain upon her ultimate potential than it is on ours. In my opinion, the national strategy of the Soviet Union not only would not contemplate the scope of operations commonly credited to her, but does not contemplate any global war of her own choosing under the conditions that now obtain in the world, and which should continue to obtain as long as the West continues to demonstrate that the basic Communist philosophy is false.[1]

Stevens's speech might be worth quoting at such length simply for being one of the most articulate critiques of the CIA's appraisal of the Soviet Union, insider or outsider. More important, however, it seemed to earn presidential approval. The president's special assistant, Averell Harriman, sent a copy of the speech to the president, Harry S. Truman, calling it 'one of the most important statements about the Soviet Union that I have read, particularly as it relates to Soviet military intentions'. Four days later, in a reply, Truman described the speech as 'the best statement on Soviet military intentions that I have seen'.[2] Yet, long before Stevens drafted the speech, Truman had endorsed policies founded on the CIA's estimates and consistent with the prescriptions of the CPD. The committee's speeches and articles closely resemble the controversial national security council document, NSC-68, that Truman approved in May 1950.[3]

If Truman agreed with Stevens's assessment of the likelihood of a major war begun by the Soviet Union, he chose, in public, to paint a starker picture. The contradiction is explained by Truman's persistent ambivalence towards the programme set out in NSC-68, particularly the quadrupling of the military budget. The authors of NSC-68, expecting that the president and Congress would be reluctant to pay for such a vast military mobilization, deliberately exaggerated the Soviet threat, to 'bludgeon the mass mind of "top government" ', in Dean Acheson's memorable phrase.[4]

Promoters of NSC-68 also had to persuade politicians and the public of the need to spend vast sums of money to defend western Europe. To address that task, the state department convened in February and March 1950 a group of consultants, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, the renowned physicist, and Robert Lovett, a prominent international banker who was to become Truman's secretary of defence. Lovett argued that a

1 Ibid., pp. 20-1.
2 Memo, Harriman to Truman, 8 Feb., and Truman to Harriman, 12 Feb. 1951, Truman Library, PSF, subject file, box 187, folder: Russia, 1949-52.
3 Paul Y. Hammond, 'NSC-68: Prologue to Rearmament', in Warren Schilling, Paul Hammond, and Glen Snyder, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York, 1962), pp. 271-378; Samuel F. Wells, 'Sounding the Tocsin: NSC-68 and the Soviet Threat', *International Security*, iv (1979), 116-58.
4 Quoted in Hershberg, *Conant*, p. 497.

'vast propaganda campaign' would be needed before NSC-68 could be carried out and that a 'group of paraphrasers' should 'audit and certify our findings and thereby back up the Administration's statement of the facts'. As the administration should not itself appoint the group of 'worthy citizens' (for fear of painting it with a partisan brush), the consultants would form it.[1]

The Committee on the Present Danger played precisely the role that the drafters and supporters of NSC-68 had envisioned for it. Although nominally a group of private citizens, the CPD maintained close contacts with the government. In James Hershberg's words, the CPD's success lay in 'combining outsider standing with insider connections, ostensibly independent, nonpolitical and "non-partisan," yet closely coordinating behind the scenes with, and acting as an unofficial propaganda arm of, the government'.[2] Thus, though a citizens' group, the CPD acted not as a critic of the intelligence community, but literally as 'paraphrasers'. Conant held that 'such a citizens' committee could be really effective only if it were welcomed by the Administration' and made common cause with it.[3] The CIA's success in promoting an alarmist view of Soviet military capabilities and intentions in the wake of the Korean War owes a great deal to the efforts of such like-minded citizens' groups.

* * *

The death of Stalin in March 1953 led to a substantial improvement in US-Soviet relations, a development that the CIA, for understandable reasons, did not expect.[4] Among other initiatives, the new Soviet leaders, led by Nikita Khrushchev, tried to revive the disarmament negotiations that had languished under the auspices of the United Nations since the end of the Second World War.[5] The outcome was a new era of bilateral arms control. In the United States, negotiating with the Soviets proved to be more

1 Hershberg, *Conant*, ch. 25, esp. pp. 498-9; and Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, pp. 44-5.

2 Hershberg, *Conant*, p. 499.

3 Voorhees quotes Conant in Hershberg, *Conant*, p. 499.

4 CIA, Special Estimate, 'Probable Consequences of the Death of Stalin and the Elevation of Malenkov to Leadership of the USSR', SE-39, 12 March 1953, in *Selected Estimates on the Soviet Union, 1950-9*, ed. Koch, pp. 3-7.

5 For accounts by key Soviet participants, see A. A. Roshchin, 'Gody obnovleniia, nadezhd i razocharovanii (1953-9 gg.)' [Years of Renewal, Hopes, and Disappointment (1953-9)], *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1988), pp. 127-47; Roshchin, *Mezhdunarodnaia bezopasnost' i iadernoe oruzhie* [International Security and Nuclear Weaponry] (Moscow, 1980), pp. 119-32; and Oleg Troyanovsky, 'Nikita Khrushchev and the Making of Soviet Foreign Policy', paper prepared for the Khrushchev centenary conference. See also Vladislav Zubok, 'SSSR-SShA: put' k peregovoram po razoruzheniiu v iadernyi vek (1953-5 gg.) [USSR-USA: The Road to Negotiations on Disarmament in the Nuclear Age (1953-5)], paper presented at a conference at Ohio University, Oct. 1988.

controversial politically than debating how to confront an adversary with whom there was no thought of meaningful negotiation.

The new era began in the mid-1950s with negotiations on a nuclear test ban of which citizens' groups, such as the Federation of American Scientists and Norman Cousins's Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, were active supporters. They had brought the issue to the attention of governments after a US hydrogen bomb test in 1954 contaminated the crew of a Japanese fishing boat.[1]

The CIA appears to have been in agreement with the citizens' groups about the wisdom of a test ban. Implicitly, the citizens' groups assumed that the Soviet Union would perceive their call for a multilateral moratorium on nuclear testing to be in its interests. The CIA concurred. It added that the Soviet Union would be unlikely to violate the moratorium lest it earn public opprobrium from the citizens' groups and non-aligned states that advocated the ban, and thereby forfeit the political advantages that had led it to propose the ban in the first place.[2]

The disagreement between the citizens' groups and the CIA arose over the benefits of a moratorium to the United States. The disagreement arose partly from an intelligence problem – how to estimate the relative state of the Soviet and US nuclear-weapons programmes – but partly from differing attitudes towards nuclear weapons and their role in US national security policy. Those who claimed that the United States overemphasized the role of nuclear weapons in its military strategy, and that nuclear deterrence remained effective despite small imbalances between the two sides, tended to advocate a test ban. Those who favoured the pursuit of 'nuclear superiority' through the development of new nuclear weapons, tactical as well as strategic, insisted on the need for continued testing.[3]

1 Robert A. Divine, *The Nuclear Test Ban Debate, 1954-60* (New York, 1978), ch. 1.

2 Memo for the Executive Secretary, National Security Council, from the Director, CIA, on 'Indian Proposal for a World-Wide Moratorium on Nuclear Weapons Tests', 25 May 1954, p. 3 [Abilene, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library], Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-61, box 2, NSC 112/1 Disarmament (6); CIA, Special National Intelligence Estimates: 'Feasibility and Likelihood of Soviet Evasion of a Nuclear Test Moratorium', SNIE 11-7-57, 10 Dec. 1957; and 'The Soviet Attitude toward Disarmament', SNIE 11-6-58, both in *Selected Estimates on the Soviet Union*, ed. Koch, pp. 261-96.

3 That the debates were more about nuclear 'theology' than technology is evident even from the heavily 'sanitized' transcript of the President's Science Advisory Committee, Meeting of the Ad Hoc Panel on Nuclear Test Limitations, Washington, 15 March 1958, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for Science and Technology: Records, 1957-61, box 3: President's Science Advisory Committee (5), Eisenhower Library. One can get a good feel for the nature of the arguments and how much they hinge on particular assumptions. The same is true of subsequent reports prepared for the Kennedy administration. See, e.g., 'Report of the Ad Hoc Panel on Nuclear Testing', 21 July 1961, the so-called Panofsky report [Boston, John F. Kennedy Library], Theodore Sorenson Papers, classified subject files, box 53, folder: Nuclear test ban, report of the Ad Hoc Panel. I thank Paul Passavant for tracking down this document and others from the Kennedy Library.

The next issue to engage the attention of citizens' groups was the desirability of deploying weapons to defend against ballistic-missile attacks. The issue came to public attention in September 1967 when the secretary of defence, Robert McNamara, announced that the United States would deploy an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system, called *Sentinel*, to defend its big cities. The debate over the ABM can be characterized largely, but not solely, as pitting hawks against doves: whereas hawks favoured an ABM system, doves preferred to negotiate limits or a ban on their use. The opponents of ABM, however, were implicitly endorsing the threat of nuclear retaliation as a more effective deterrent than defence: their predecessors in the earlier debates over nuclear policy had opposed the use of all nuclear weapons.

The debate over the ABM also points up the distinction between insiders and outsiders. Many who took part were scientists who had served as high-level advisers at the White House and the Pentagon. Among them, the scientists opposed to the ABM, who worked with such citizens' groups as the Federation of American Scientists and the Council for a Livable World, came disproportionately from the President's Science Advisory Committee and its Military Strategic Panel and acted partly out of resentment that the government had not followed their advice. The insider scientists who supported the ABM by and large had worked for the Pentagon's Defense Science Board or other department of defence panels.[1] They worked with such citizens' groups as the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy, founded in May 1969 by the former secretary of state, Dean Acheson; Paul Nitze, a former state department and Pentagon official; and Albert Wohlstetter, a professor at the University of Chicago who had worked on military intelligence at the RAND Corporation.[2]

The ABM would not have been debated so heatedly had the debate been confined to insiders. As the Pentagon revealed its plans to deploy ABMs at ten sites around the country,[3] however, opposition to the ABM blossomed into a major grassroots movement. Even most of the scientists actively opposed to the ABM, especially the younger ones, who gave speeches, lobbied politicians and officials, and wrote articles, had not worked for the government.[4] Nor were all of the ABM's supporters former insiders. Although Nitze played a key role by donating half of the $15,000 used to set up the Committee to Maintain a Prudent Defense Policy, the

1 Cahn, 'American Scientists and the ABM', esp. pp. 58-62; Cahn, 'Eggheads and Warheads', pp. 54-61.

2 Strobe Talbott, *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace* (New York, 1988), pp. 112-14; Paul N. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost* (New York, 1989), p. 295.

3 Including the author's home town of Reading, Massachusetts.

4 Cahn, 'Eggheads and Warheads', ch. 2.

committee itself was staffed by three graduate-student protégés of Wohlstetter. Two of them, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, later made careers in the government.[1]

Discussion of the intelligence estimates focused on both Soviet capabilities and intentions. Compared with the CIA, the anti-ABM groups typically were more pessimistic, and the pro-ABM groups more optimistic, about the likelihood of the Soviets developing a workable ballistic-missile defence system in the foreseeable future.[2] Thus, the debate was only partly about the interpretation of the intelligence data on Soviet capabilities, all of which came from government sources. The opposing groups were also arguing about what was technically possible. An undergraduate degree in physics would more than suffice to enable any 'outsider' to evaluate the prospects for ABM defence, given widely available information about the relative offensive and defensive potential of both the US and Soviet forces. Indeed, anyone who read *Scientific American* could learn in March 1968 about the state of the art of ABM and related nuclear-weapons technology from two of the foremost experts, Richard Garwin and Hans Bethe.[3] Many former insiders believed 'that there was nothing they had learned from their highly classified briefings that they could not have obtained from reading the *New York Times* or *Aviation Week and Space Technology*'.[4]

The CIA's estimates of the Soviets' ABM programmes had evolved considerably over the years.[5] In 1963, the CIA expected that the Soviets would eventually set up a country-wide defence, but not until they had improved the relatively unpromising first-generation technology.[6] In 1965, agency analysts expressed doubts whether the Soviets were in fact manufacturing lots of ABMs, owing to their cost and doubtful effectiveness.[7] By the time the Soviet Union signed in 1972 the treaty limiting ABM defences, the CIA had decided that 'Soviet defenses against ballistic missile attack are negligible and show no prospect of becoming effective against a major attack.'[8]

Much of the debate about ABMs focused on intentions rather than capabilities; in particular, how the Soviet Union would respond if the United States developed its ABM defences or, alternatively, gave them up. Doves claimed that US deployment would compel the Soviets to develop

1 Talbott, *Master of the Game*, pp. 112-14; Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*, p. 295.
2 Cahn, 'Eggheads and Warheads', pp. 125-9.
3 Richard L. Garwin and Hans A. Bethe, 'Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems', *Scientific American*, ccxviii (1968), 21-31.
4 Cahn, 'American Scientists and the ABM', p. 96.
5 See the summary in Prados, *Soviet Estimate*, ch. 10.
6 CIA, 'Soviet Military Capabilities and Policies, 1962-7', NIE 11-4-63, 22 March 1963, p. 38, CIA-CSI.
7 CIA, 'Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy', NIE 11-4-65, 14 April 1965, p. 16, CIA-CSI.
8 CIA, 'Soviet Strategic Defenses', NIE 11-3-72, 2 Nov. 1972, p. 1; also CIA, 'Soviet Strategic Defenses', NIE 11-3-73, 20 Dec. 1973, CIA-CSI.

an offensive capability, and implied that US self-restraint in defences would lead the Soviets to restrain the growth of their offensive forces. Here the doves erred in their predictions, as the Soviets continued their offensive build-up to the point where they eventually deployed more missiles than the United States. Although hawks took advantage of the error to make broad claims that the doves – and the CIA – persistently underestimated the Soviets' offensive capability,[1] arguably the real error lay in underestimating the effect on the Soviets of the well-publicized US offensive build-up. Despite McNamara's wishful thinking (sometimes reflected in the CIA estimates) that the Soviets would not match the US build-up, they chose to exceed it, at least quantitatively. Nonetheless, the ABM treaty was not irrelevant. Recent first-hand accounts from Russia suggest that, without it, the Soviet offensive build-up would have been even greater, evidence consistent with the doves' claim.[2]

American hawks misunderstood the Soviets' intentions regarding strategic defences. They advocated ballistic-missile defences in the belief that the Soviets regarded defence as one aspect of a comprehensive, 'damage-limiting', 'war-fighting' strategy. The Soviet Union's decision to leave its cities vulnerable to US attack defied the hawks' expectations and was later attributed to the Soviets' inability to compete with US technological prowess once the United States decided to deploy the *Safeguard* ABM system in 1969. Thus, *Safeguard* served as a bargaining chip in the negotiations.[3]

The explanation was never entirely satisfactory, and is even less so in light of recent evidence from Russia, partly because it assumes agreement among the Soviets on the futility of competing with the United States in ABM technology.[4] The expected cost of an ABM race did influence Soviet decision-makers, as the CIA and many doves predicted. But according to G. M. Kornienko, the deputy foreign minister under Andrei Gromyko,

1 The most famous were several articles by Albert Wohlstetter, including 'Is There a Strategic Arms Race?', *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1974), pp. 3-20 and 'Rivals, But No Race', *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1974), pp. 48-81. See also David S. Sullivan, 'Evaluating US Intelligence Estimates', in *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980s*: No. 2: *Analysis and Estimates*, ed. Roy Godson (Washington, 1980), pp. 49-73; and the essays in Tyroler, *Alerting America*. This issue was a key focus of the Team B report as well.

2 Aleksandr' G. Savel'yev and Nikolay N. Detinov, *The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union* (Westport, 1995), esp. chs. 1 and 2.

3 This view is not limited to hawks. For example, John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York, 1973), pp. 156-7, finds the rationale plausible.

4 An unpublished report by four Russian ABM scientists is particularly revealing in this regard: O. V. Golubev, Ia. A. Kamenskii, M. G. Minasian, B. D. Pupkov, 'Proshloe i nastoiashchee Rossiiskikh sistem protivoraketnoi oborony (vzgliad iznutri)' [The Past and Present of Russian Anti-missile Defence Systems (A View from Within)] (Moscow, 1992). I thank David Holloway for giving me a copy of this report. See also Roald Sagdeev, *The Making of a Soviet Scientist* (New York, 1994), esp. p. 273; Bruce Parrott, *The Soviet Union and Ballistic Missile Defense* (Boulder, 1987), pp. 28-35; and for evidence of ABM supporters during the Gorbachev period, A. S. Cherniaev, *Shest' let s Gorbachevym: po dnevnikovym zapisiam* [Six Years with Gorbachev: From Diary Entries] (Moscow, 1993), p. 121.

who took part in both the external and internal negotiations on the ABM, a consensus on the issue was difficult to achieve. Groups in the military opposed the restrictions on ABMs, arguing that the United States supported restrictions only because the Soviet Union was ahead. They dismissed arguments about the economic costs of a race in defensive weapons: 'So, let them build. We'll build, and we'll do it cheaper.'[1]

Nor was *Safeguard* the bargaining chip with the Soviets that the US hawks supposed. Owing to the effects of grassroots opposition on the senate, *Safeguard* was only approved thanks to a tie-breaking vote by the vice-president, Spiro T. Agnew. Kornienko states that the Soviets took account of the unpopularity of the *Safeguard* programme among Americans. They assumed that both the unpopularity and the senate vote obliged the US administration to propose mutual restraint to the Soviet Union in the expectation that the US ABM system might not be built.[2]

The signing of the ABM treaty did little to still the debate over Soviet intentions; in particular, the question whether the Soviets acknowledged the existence of mutual deterrence or sought, by the introduction of missiles equipped with multiple warheads, to achieve a war-winning capability. The debate set the stage for the attack on arms control launched in the mid-1970s by the new Committee on the Present Danger, and on the CIA's estimates launched by Team B.

There are many good accounts of the Team B controversy.[3] Even before the recent declassification of Team B's top-secret report, its main arguments were well known, revealed in publications by members of the Committee on the Present Danger who also served on Team B, including 'team leader' Richard Pipes. The Team B exercise, combined with the efforts of the CPD, is an example of citizens' group activism in which the group was able to develop its critique from inside the government.

The Team B report, ostensibly a secret evaluation of the CIA's estimates of the Soviet Union, was also a weapon in the public struggle over détente and arms control. During the mid- to late-1970s, the field was dominated by the CPD and kindred groups. The peace movement, so active during the Vietnam War and the ABM debate and to re-emerge in the 1980s with the campaign for a nuclear freeze, lay largely dormant.[4]

During the course of debate over the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

1 Personal interview with G. M. Kornienko, Moscow, 28 July 1992.

2 G. M. Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina: svidetel'stvo ee uchastnika* [The Cold War: Testimony of Its Participant] (Moscow, 1994), p. 138. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, p. 150, takes a view close to Kornienko's about the implications of the close *Safeguard* vote.

3 Prados, *Soviet Estimate*, pp. 248-57; Cahn and Prados, 'Team B: The Trillion Dollar Experiment'; Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*.

4 David S. Meyer, *A Winter of Discontent: The Nuclear Freeze and American Politics* (New York, 1990).

(SALT), Pipes once made the curious statement that the Soviet Union did not share US views on arms control because, for the Soviets, 'SALT is not a vehicle for general disarmament – *as it is with us*.'[1] Peace activists stayed at home during the battle for SALT II precisely because nobody viewed the treaty as serving even the long-term goal of disarmament, but rather as endorsing a substantial qualitative and quantitative build-up by both sides.[2] Without the grassroots, nuclear-pacifist contributors to the debate, the CPD jousted only with mainstream supporters of large military programmes and moderate measures of arms control. The Carter administration, excoriated by the CPD, adopted programmes for the development of new nuclear weapons that differed little from those of its successor Reagan administration and, in some cases, were more ambitious. Whereas Jimmy Carter proposed to deploy two hundred MX missiles, only fifty were deployed under Reagan. Carter's nuclear strategy resembled Caspar Weinberger's, without the bellicose rhetoric.

Given the skewed debate, some of the arguments of Team B and the CPD appear extreme and implausible, particularly in light of the new evidence from the Soviet Union. Many arguments about capabilities that seemed so important at the time turned out to be false. The Soviets, for example, had never intended the so-called *Backfire* bomber for an intercontinental role, as the CPD charged.[3] The mobile SS-16 missile, which alarmed both Team B and the CPD, was never deployed in large numbers because it never worked properly; nor was its third stage hidden away in order to achieve a sudden 'break-out' capability by adding it to the two-stage, intermediate-range SS-20.[4] According to one senior officer in the Soviet strategic rocket forces, even the SS-20 itself, which figured so prominently in debates about European security in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was foisted on the service, against its wishes, by the Soviet defence minister, Dmitrii Ustinov, who was a friend of the chief designer, V. N. Nadiradze. The SS-20 was salvaged from the unsuccessful SS-16 in an attempt to salvage the reputation of Nadiradze's design bureau, which had built it. The Soviet commanders thought the missile pointless. Its range of 5,500 kilometres was unnecessarily long to reach European targets, but too short to reach the United States: 'What targets did we need to hit out in the Atlantic Ocean?', the generals wondered.[5]

1 Richard Pipes, 'Why the Soviet Union Wants SALT II', 17 Sept. 1979, in Tyroler, *Alerting America*, ch. 14, p. 168, emphasis added.

2 For a strong, contemporaneous statement of this view, see Alva Myrdal, *The Game of Disarmament: How the United States and Russia Run the Arms Race* (New York, 1978).

3 Team B report, pp. 19, 27-8; Tyroler, *Alerting America*, pp. 37-8, 109. For evidence on the *Backfire*'s intended regional role, see Savel'yev and Detinov, *Big Five*, pp. 45-6.

4 Team B report, pp. 19, 26-7; Tyroler, *Alerting America*, pp. 111-12.

5 Personal interview with General Anatolii Bol'iatko, Belmont, Mass., 3 Dec. 1994. The argument

More important than such misjudgements of Soviet capabilities were Team B's and the CPD's assumptions about the Soviets' intentions. Implicit in the arguments of supporters of arms control, and in many of the CIA's estimates (whence the charge that the agency had an 'arms-control bias'), was the notion that Soviet leaders genuinely sought to stabilize the strategic balance and would welcome the possibility of shifting resources from the military budget to civilian purposes. Team B, the CPD, and Pipes in particular, directly challenged these assumptions. The Team B report ridiculed the CIA for claiming that 'the question of the proper allocation of total economic resources among competing demands, and in particular between military and civilian purposes, has been an active issue at the highest levels of Soviet politics.'[1] Rather, argued Team B, 'there is every reason to believe – on the basis of both the historic [*sic*] record and the very logic of the Soviet system – that the Soviet regime is essentially uninterested in a significant rise of its population's living standards ... Certainly the prospect of acquiring additional resources for the civilian sector is for it no inducement for a reduction of the arms buildup.'[2]

Leonid Brezhnev and his colleagues, like Nikita Khrushchev before them, were concerned, however, about the trade-offs between military spending, economic growth, and consumer welfare.[3] Contrary to the claims of the CPD and Team B, the Soviet leadership did not protect the military in the 1970s from the downturn in the Soviet economy.[4] Disputes between the civilian and military leadership over military spending led to an attempt to hold increases in military spending to the sluggish rate of the economy as a whole.[5] When Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, the outspoken chief

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about Nadiradze's parochial interests and connections to the top leadership was originally made by Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York, 1984) and discounted by other observers, including the author.

1 Team B report, p. 21.

2 Team B report, p. 15.

3 Brezhnev made some candid comments on these issues to the Yugoslav ambassador at Moscow in 1971: Veljko Mičunovič, 'The Moscow Years', *Survey*, xxviii (1984), 93. In 1981, he admonished members of the Central Committee not to underestimate the importance of consumer welfare: 'It is on the strength of how these problems are solved that people largely judge our work. They judge it strictly, exactingly. And this should be remembered, comrades': L. I. Brezhnev, *Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the 26th Congress of the CPSU* (Moscow, 1981), p. 48.

4 For a strong argument that the Soviets had decided to sacrifice economic growth and consumer welfare for military power, see Myron Rush, 'Guns over Growth in Soviet Policy', *International Security*, vii (1982-3), 167-79.

5 Richard Kaufman, 'Causes of the Slowdown in Soviet Defense', *Soviet Economy*, i (1985), and comments by David Holloway and John Steinbruner. Stephen M. Meyer, 'Economic Constraints in Soviet Military Decision-Making', in *The Impoverished Superpower: Perestroika and the Soviet Military Burden*, ed. Henry S. Rowen and Charles Wolf, Jr. (San Francisco, 1990), pp. 201-19; Jeremy R. Azrael, *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command, 1976-86*, RAND Corporation, R-3521, June 1987; Robert Campbell, 'Resource Stringency and Civil-Military Resource Allocation', in

of the general staff, resisted the trend towards limiting military spending, he was dismissed.[1] Arms control did play a role, therefore, in helping the sclerotic Brezhnev leadership rein in the military: the SALT treaties imposed some modest restraints on what would have been a more ambitious deployment programme.[2] Production of most major weapons systems remained steady after 1976, rather than growing relentlessly in the manner Team B and the hawkish citizens' groups predicted.[3]

The most controversial of the CPD/Team B claims concerned the Soviets' intentions in negotiating arms treaties. Pipes and Nitze, in particular, rejected the notion that the Soviets sought to end the nuclear competition with the United States. As Team B stressed, the Soviet Union '*strives for effective strategic superiority in all the branches of the military, nuclear forces included*' ... the Soviet leadership seems to have concluded that nuclear war could be fought and won,' and they 'intend to secure so substantial a nuclear war-fighting advantage that, as a last resort, they would *be less deterred than we from initiating the use of nuclear weapons*'.[4]

The Team B report contrasts purported Soviet views with the US assumption that 'nuclear war is in general regarded as an act of mutual suicide that can be rational only as a deterrent threat.'[5] The view ignored the long history of US strategic planning that assigned to nuclear weapons roles far more ambitious than simple deterrence of a Soviet nuclear attack. US strategy was premised on the threat of first use of nuclear weapons and the need for 'escalation dominance' in the course of a nuclear war.[6] The CPD's claim that 'American notions of nuclear sufficiency and mutually assured deterrence ... postulate that once a certain quantity and quality of strategic nuclear weapons is attained, both sides will understand that

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Soldiers and the Soviet State: Civil-Military Relations from Brezhnev to Gorbachev, ed. Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson (Princeton, 1990), pp. 126-63.

1 For a first-hand account of Ogarkov's ouster, see V. I. Vorotnikov, *A bylo eto tak ... Iz dnevnika chlena Politbiuro TsK KPSS* [But It Was Really Like This ... From the Diary of a Member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] (Moscow, 1995), pp. 45-8. US accounts that got the story basically right include: Coit D. Blacker, *Hostage to Revolution: Gorbachev and Soviet Security Policy, 1985-91* (New York, 1993), pp. 47-51; Thomas M. Nichols, *The Sacred Cause: Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security, 1917-92* (Ithaca, 1993), pp. 119-24; Bruce Parrott, 'Political Change and Civil-Military Relations', in *Soldiers and the Soviet State*, ed. Colton and Gustafson, pp. 65-70.

2 Michael McGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Washington, 1987), p. 269; Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, pp. 206-7.

3 Kaufman, 'Causes of the Slowdown'.

4 Team B report, p. 6. These views are indistinguishable from the public writings of CPD members. See, e.g., Paul Nitze, 'Deterring Our Deterrent', *Foreign Policy*, xxv (1976-7); and Pipes, 'Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War'. Emphasis in original.

5 Team B report, p. 2.

6 David A. Rosenberg, 'The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-60', *International Security*, vii (1983), 3-71; Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York, 1983).

further accumulation or improvement becomes pointless, and act accordingly', was false.[1] US goals in the strategic arms negotiations were based neither on a strategy of 'mutual assured destruction' nor on minimum deterrence.[2] The CPD and Team B set a double standard, one for the Soviet Union, another for the United States. Even after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the United States has found it difficult to renounce the 'further accumulation and improvement' of nuclear weapons, as the continued production of Trident D-5 missiles indicates.

Finally, the CPD and Team B underestimated the degree to which Soviet leaders – including high-ranking military officers – recognized the futility and the destructiveness of nuclear war, and worried about the cost of the arms race. Hawkish citizens' groups had always been sceptical of official Soviet expressions of concern about nuclear war. During the first round of the SALT negotiations, in December 1969, the deputy foreign minister, V. S. Semenov, who headed the Soviet delegation, read out an authoritative statement to the effect that 'we all agree that war between our two countries would be disastrous for both sides. And it would be tantamount to suicide for the one who decided to start such a war.'[3] Although Nitze, as a member of the US negotiating team, heard Semenov's words, he was not convinced by them. The CPD similarly dismissed as propaganda subsequent statements by senior Soviet leaders forswearing the goal of nuclear superiority and embracing 'parity', including an important speech by Brezhnev at Tula in January 1977, just before the Carter administration came into office.[4]

One piece of evidence of the views of at least one Soviet military leader, recently come to light, cannot be dismissed as propaganda intended only for public consumption. In 1964, the head of Soviet military intelligence, General Pavel Ivashutin, sent a top-secret report on nuclear war to the chief of the Soviet general staff, Marshal Matvei Zakharov, in which he put forward views that even Brezhnev's speechwriters might have hesitated to express a dozen years later.[5] Ivashutin argued that 'thermonuclear war

1 Committee on the Present Danger, 'What Is the Soviet Union Up To?', 4 April 1977, in Tyroler, *Alerting America*, p. 13.

2 Schelling argues that SALT I, in particular the ban on ABM systems, was consistent with MAD, whereas much of SALT II and subsequent negotiations were not: Thomas Schelling, 'What Went Wrong with Arms Control?', *Foreign Affairs*, lxiv (1985-6).

3 Quoted in Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, p. 153.

4 For an evaluation of Soviet views, see David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven, 1983), ch. 3.

5 The Tula speech was drafted by Kornienko and L. I. Mendelevich, who cleared it with Marshal V. G. Kulikov, then chief of the general staff, even though in Kornienko's view it sounded somewhat too 'American' (*po-amerikanski*). Ustinov, the defence minister, expressed no objections to the speech, but it definitely displeased Boris Ponomarev, the hardline head of the Central Committee's International Department: Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina*, pp. 171-2.

destroys everything in its path, without sorting it out.' Although the 'imperialist camp' risked greater destruction than the Soviet Union and its allies, such an outcome should not be defined as 'victory'; rather, 'in order to preserve life on earth, the centers of world civilization and culture, it is necessary not to allow thermonuclear war to break out. Everyone on earth, every person, regardless of which camp he belongs to, has the same degree of interest in doing this.'[1] These views, set out during an otherwise cold-blooded 120-page discussion of the waging of war in the missile age intended solely for Zakharov, apparently express Ivashutin's true feelings.

Other evidence of the personal views of Soviet political and military leaders about nuclear war has become available in recent years. Dr Evgenii Chazov, who served as the personal physician to Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko, describes in his memoirs their great distrust of US intentions, especially during the Reagan administration, and their penchant for the rhetoric of 'peace through strength'; nevertheless, even they acknowledged the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war, the burden of military spending, and the need for arms limitations.[2]

Similar evidence of the Soviet leaders' genuine interest in bringing the arms race under control – and the internal resistance they faced – can be found in the memoirs of Brezhnev's senior foreign-policy aide, Anatolii Aleksandrov-Agentov, who describes a stormy five-hour meeting between Brezhnev and his senior military officials and diplomats in early 1970 in which Brezhnev tried to persuade them to make the concessions necessary to achieve an arms agreement with the United States. The diplomats were willing, but the military were not. Finally, Brezhnev turned to the officers and the military-industrial barons and exclaimed, 'Well, good, we won't make any such concessions and there won't be an agreement. A further nuclear arms race will develop. And will you be able to give me here, as commander in chief of the armed forces, a firm guarantee that in the case of such a turn of events we will permanently overtake the United States and the correlation of forces between us will become more favourable for us than it is now?' When no one was willing to give him the commitment, Brezhnev asked: 'What's the matter? Why should we continue to exhaust our economy by continuously increasing military expenditures?'[3]

[1] 'Material o razvitii voennogo iskusstva v usloviiakh vedeniia raketno-iadernoi voiny po sovremennym predstavleniiam' [Material on the Development of Military Art in Conditions of the Conduct of Rocket-Nuclear War According to Current Notions], prepared for Marshal M. V. Zakharov, with cover memorandum from Lt. Gen. P. Ivashutin, 28 Aug. 1964, p. 347. This document, from the ministry of defence archives, is now on deposit at the National Security Archives in Washington. When he received the document, Zakharov was in between tours as chief of the general staff; he was serving as head of the military academy of the general staff and became chief again in Nov. 1964.

[2] Evgenii Chazov, *Zdorov'e i vlast'* [Health and Power] (Moscow, 1992), esp. pp. 90-6, 205-6.

[3] A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva* [From Kollontai to Gorbachev] (Moscow,

Even before Mikhail Gorbachev came into office and developed his 'new thinking' on security policy, some of the fundamental premisses on which it rested were being made by some rather unlikely people. Ogarkov, who steadfastly opposed cuts in military spending, nevertheless argued in 1985 that the two superpowers had 'created a surplus of military and especially nuclear capabilities'. With a bow to McNamara's concept of 'unacceptable damage', he claimed that 'given the quantity and variety of nuclear missile systems that have been achieved, it is simply impossible for an aggressor to destroy with a single strike the analogous systems of the other side.' A crushing retaliatory strike would be inevitable. Ogarkov added that the stockpiles of nuclear weapons accumulated by the two sides 'from a military point of view seem truly absurd'.[1] Even though Ogarkov, at this time, was making the case for investment in advanced-technology conventional weapons instead of nuclear forces, his words do not support the views of the CPD and Team B.

As a political campaign, the Team B exercise, combined with the CPD's public efforts, was surely a success. It contributed to the defeat of the SALT II treaty and the electoral victory of Reagan, in whose administration served sixty CPD members, including Reagan himself.[2] As a picture of Soviet capabilities and intentions, however, the CIA estimates were far more accurate than Team B's, even though they, too, frequently exaggerated capabilities and imputed unwarrantedly aggressive intentions.[3]

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When Reagan announced in March 1983 his intention to develop a space-based ballistic-missile defence (BMD) system, he took most observers, including senior officials in his own administration, by surprise. Among the many issues that engaged the interest of outsider citizens' groups was the question of how the Soviet Union might respond. The CIA, naturally also interested, produced in September a report on 'Possible Soviet Responses to the US Strategic Defense Initiative'. Thus, we can compare the CIA's predictions with those of citizens' groups that both opposed and supported SDI.

It is difficult to tell to what extent the CIA's estimate represented the government's view because, in fact, there was no single government view.

1994), pp. 210-11.

1 N. V. Ogarkov, *Istoriia uchit bditeltnosti* [History Teaches Vigilance] (Moscow, 1985), pp. 88-9. See also S. F. Akhromeev and G. M. Kornienko, *Glazami marshala i diplomata* [Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat] (Moscow, 1992).

2 Tyroler, *Alerting America*, pp. ix-xi.

3 A characteristic report is 'Soviet Strategic Arms Programs and Detente: What Are They Up To?', SNIE 11-4-73, 10 Sept. 1973, CIA-CSI.

Reagan's expectations of the effect of SDI on the Soviet Union were very different, for example, from those of his advisers, Nitze and the national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, who hoped to use the threat of SDI as a bargaining chip to induce the Soviets to make concessions in the arms negotiations. In particular, they hoped for a 'grand compromise': a reduction in the number of the most powerful Soviet offensive missiles in return for limits to the US pursuit of SDI.[1] Reagan himself refused to treat SDI as a bargaining chip.[2] He expected to be able to convince the Soviet Union, especially after Gorbachev took office in 1985, to agree both to a mutual reduction in offensive forces and to co-operation in strategic defence planning; he even offered to 'share' US BMD technology.[3]

The CIA's analysis discredited Reagan's expectations and cast doubt on Nitze's and McFarlane's. It predicted that the Soviet Union would continue 'to try to prevent [the] development and eventual deployment of US defensive systems'. Although it might 'offer publicly' to make 'concessions of interest to the United States in return for a negotiated ban or limitations on BMD development', it would 'be very reluctant to offer the kind of offensive forces concessions the United States is looking for, probably preferring to take its chances on thwarting US BMD plans by other means'.[4] After discussing a wide range of political-propaganda and military-technical responses that the Soviet Union could make to SDI, the report concluded that the Soviets 'will be reluctant to divert scarce assets to expensive technological efforts'. Rather, they 'will try to cope with deployment of US advanced technology BMD with the least possible change to their planned programs'.[5]

The report stressed the difficult economic choices the Soviet leaders would have to make in order to pursue a 'crash' programme in response to SDI, and doubted that they would decide to do so. However, when the report turned to the relationship between US behaviour and the domestic Soviet debate over a response to SDI, it warned that 'Soviet directed energy programs already have important internal Soviet advocates, and support for them will be enhanced by aggressive US pursuit of directed energy weapons.' This turned out to be a remarkably accurate prediction.[6]

1 Talbott, *Master of the Game*, ch. 11.
2 Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, 1994), p. 226; Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, 1992), pp. 548, 608, 665-6; Lou Cannon, *Ronald Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, 1991), pp. 326-7.
3 Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era* (New York, 1992), pp. 145, 149, 204.
4 CIA, 'Possible Soviet Responses to the US Strategic Defense Initiative', NIC M 83-10017, 12 Sept. 1983, p. 1, CIA-CSI.
5 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
6 For information about internal Soviet advocates of directed-energy weapons: Evgenii Velikhov, 'Science and Scientists for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World', *Physics Today* (Nov. 1989), pp. 32-6, an

The citizens' groups that supported SDI, such as the High Frontier organization, whose premisses were different from the CIA's and the anti-SDI groups', claimed that the Soviets already had an effective ballistic-missile defence system in place around Moscow, and had the 'break-out' potential to expand it quickly. In their view, there was no question of the Soviet Union's *reacting* to US BMD development by building its own: the Soviets held the initiative in strategic defence.[1] The groups that opposed SDI predicted a range of possible Soviet responses similar to those outlined by the CIA. They were particularly concerned that the ABM treaty would suffer as the result of a new round of competition between defensive systems.[2]

The actual Soviet response to SDI varied over time. Initially, Soviet leaders, including Gorbachev in his early months in office, threatened offensive countermeasures including a similar system of their own. Eventually, however, Gorbachev stressed the political means of dealing with SDI: perestroika and 'new thinking' in foreign policy helped to reduce the perception of a Soviet threat and undermined the support for SDI within the United States. Finally, assured that nothing would come of SDI, he agreed in the course of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) to substantial mutual reductions in offensive nuclear forces, without obtaining a US commitment to forswear SDI or to continue to abide by the ABM treaty. The CIA was certainly right, therefore, to stress the economic constraints that drove Gorbachev to seek political alternatives to countering or matching SDI.

Former Reagan administration officials claim that Gorbachev's concessions vindicate the 'bargaining-chip' approach. In fact, the bargaining chip – SDI – was never cashed in: the United States never agreed not to go ahead with the programme.[3] Although Reagan, too, felt vindicated and expressed his satisfaction with the outcome, neither did things turn out the way he expected. Reagan obtained only part of what he wanted: a degree of nuclear disarmament in the form of a START treaty, but not his dreamed-of SDI 'space shield'. Gorbachev, on the other hand, obtained all

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expanded version of a speech Velikhov delivered at a 'Scientific-Practical Conference' of the Soviet foreign ministry, the original of which was published as 'Nauka rabotaet na bez"iadernyi mir', *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, no. 10 (1988), pp. 49-53; personal interview with Velikhov, Moscow, 29 July 1992. See also Sagdeev, *Making of a Soviet Scientist*; Parrott, *Soviet Union and Ballistic Missile Defense*.

1 For a summary of the views, see William J. Broad, *Teller's War: The Top-Secret Story behind the Star Wars Deception* (New York, 1992), esp. pp. 114-15.

2 Thomas Longstreth, John Pike, John Rhinelander, *Impact of US and Soviet Ballistic Missile Defense Programs on the ABM Treaty* (Washington, 1985); *The Fallacy of Star Wars*, ed. John Tirman (New York, 1983); *Star Wars*, ed. E. P. Thompson (New York, 1985).

3 *Retrospective on the Cold War*, ed. Fred Greenstein and William Wohlforth (Princeton, 1994), pp. 10-11.

of what he wanted: nuclear disarmament and the confident expectation that SDI would die a natural death. However, it was a pyrrhic victory: the financial savings from forgoing a competition over defence were unable to compensate for the serious economic, social, and political problems of the Soviet system that perestroika had exposed and exacerbated.

The citizens' groups that most accurately predicted the ultimate Soviet response to SDI – ignoring it – were the US and Soviet scientists who collaborated in seeking to influence Soviet policy. Jeremy Stone and Frank von Hippel of the Federation of American Scientists, among others, co-operated with Roald Sagdeev, Evgenii Velikhov, and Andrei Sakharov to persuade Gorbachev that SDI need not hinder progress towards nuclear disarmament. As they lobbied at the same time against the programme in Washington, the prospects for an ambitious 'Star Wars' defence were negligible by late 1989 and Gorbachev could safely agree to 'delink' SDI from START. Thus, the transnational coalition of scientists predicted the Soviet response to SDI most accurately because they helped to make it a self-fulfilling prophecy.[1]

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Even after the end of the cold war, the critiques offered by citizens' groups of the intelligence process are still valid. Visiting and living in the countries about which one seeks to learn; awareness of internal divisions within potential adversaries; and consideration of how US policies might influence domestic debates: all were largely ignored by the CIA, with the notable exception of the report on Soviet responses to SDI. Contemporary Russia is one of many other countries where one finds a wide range of views on foreign policy and varied responses to US actions.[2]

Despite the end of the cold war, intelligence matters remain shrouded in secrecy, despite the public declarations of intent to reform the system. As a result, independent analysis of military data remains an urgent need. The US government has not made the case for sustaining near cold-war levels of military spending (about $280 billion) when the potential adversaries it names (Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria) between them spend only $22 billion. The US military budget exceeds that of the next ten major military powers combined, half of which are US allies.[3] A fuller disclosure of the military capabilities of potential US adversaries is clearly warranted.

1 Matthew Evangelista, 'The Paradox of State Strength: Transnational Relations, Domestic Structures, and Security Policy in Russia and the Soviet Union', *International Organization*, xlix (1995), 1-38.
2 For an overview of the Russian foreign-policy community, see Alexei G. Arbatov, 'Russia's Foreign Policy Alternatives', *International Security*, xviii (1993), 5-43.
3 This section is based on comments by Randall Forsberg at the conference on 'Estimating Soviet Military Power'; the figures for military spending are published in a National Priorities Project report, 'In Search of Security' (Northampton, Mass., 1994).

This review of the history of the second-guessing of the CIA by citizens' groups during the cold war reveals an important lesson. When outsiders were given access to US intelligence data, and even when they were not, they provided a valuable check on the official formulation of policy. Furthermore, the newly available Russian archival materials and memoirs show that the citizens' groups were often more accurate than the US intelligence agencies in their appraisals of Soviet intentions and capabilities. Today, the United States faces no military threat remotely comparable with the one attributed to the Soviet Union during the cold war. The benefits of independent, 'outsider' analysis of US security requirements, based on full disclosure of intelligence about potential opponents, should be obvious to everyone.

The US-Soviet cold war of the second half of the twentieth century was, in some respects, typical of great-power conflicts of the past. On both sides, perceptions of threat were exacerbated by the 'security dilemma': the possibility that each side would misinterpret the other's efforts to arm in self-defence as evidence of aggressive intentions. In the past, security dilemmas often contributed to the outbreak of war. Herein lies a key difference between this cold war and many previous cases of interstate confrontation: the US-Soviet cold war ended peacefully. Many would attribute the absence of a major East-West war to mutual restraint in the face of the prospect of nuclear annihilation, and this factor undoubtedly played a role. One should also consider the contribution made by citizens' groups in the United States. By second-guessing their government's estimates of Soviet military capabilities, some of these groups helped to moderate the 'enemy image' of the Soviet Union and to keep the conflict from getting out of control. When Gorbachev brought glasnost to Soviet security affairs in the late 1980s, he paved the way for more accurate evaluations of US military capabilities and intentions as well – many undertaken by non-governmental groups and individuals. In an age of unprecedented public information about and discussion of security policy, such scrutiny of government assessments of the adversary, on both sides, helped to bring about a peaceful end to the cold war.

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