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Soviet Strategy and Capabilities for Multitheater War

National Intelligence Estimate

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NIE 11-19-85/D
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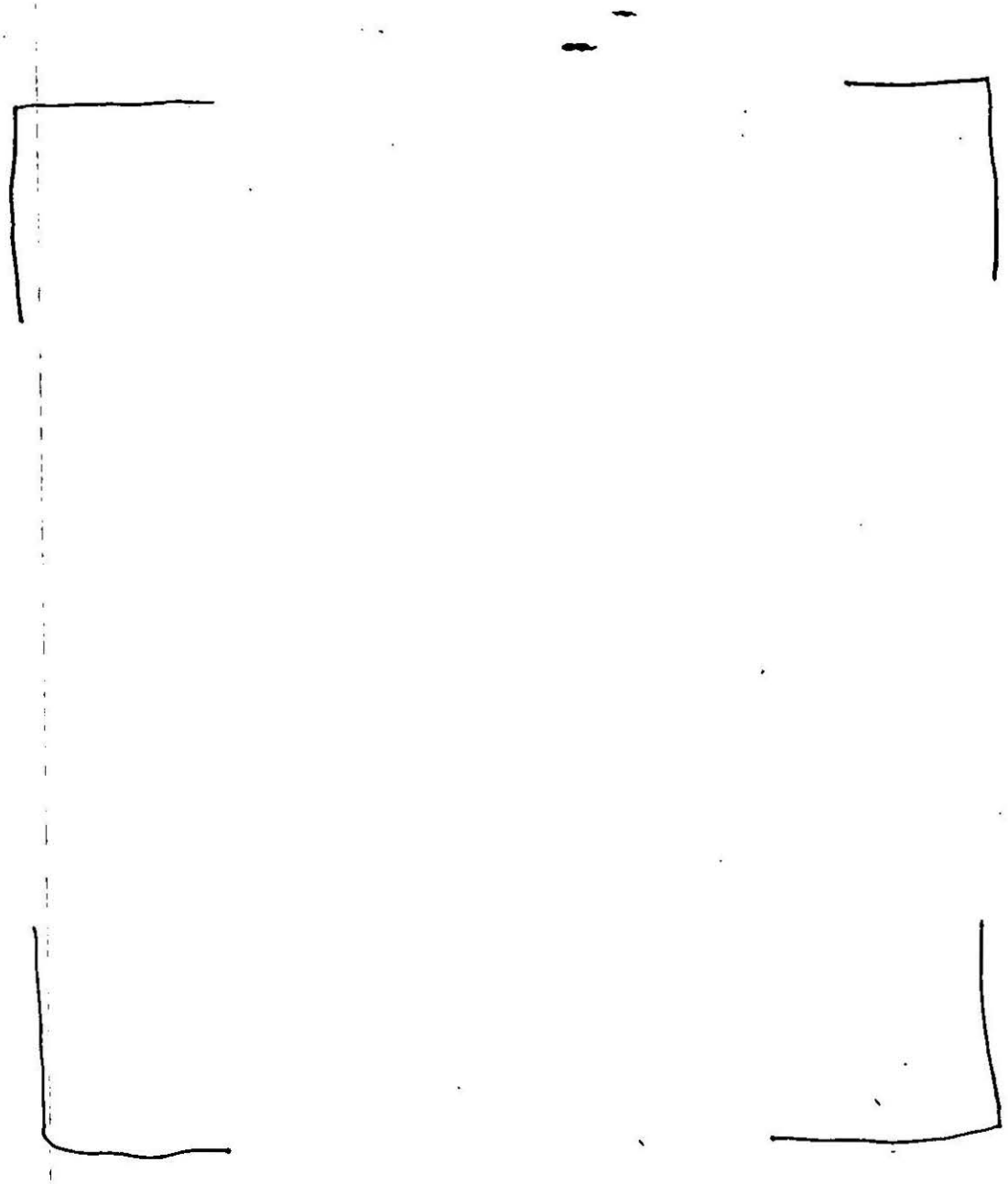

NIE 11-19-85/D

SOVIET STRATEGY AND CAPABILITIES FOR MULTITHEATER WAR

Information available as of 3 April 1985 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

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PREFACE

This Estimate assesses the capability of the Soviet Union—together with its Warsaw Pact allies—to fight a multitheater war over the next five years. It completes the series of theater threat assessments.[1]

The term "theater" in this paper reflects conventional usage, such as the European theater or the Pacific theater in World War II. The terms "theater" and "region" are used interchangeably throughout this Estimate. When referring to a specific Soviet theater of military operations[2] within a given region, such as the Western Theater of Military Operations, the abbreviation TMO is used. Figure 1 shows the Soviet TMOs that are addressed in this paper.

This Estimate focuses on the three principal regions in which the Soviets appear prepared to undertake military operations:

- Europe (the Soviet Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern TMOs), against NATO.
- East Asia (the Soviet Far Eastern TMO), against China, US forces in the area, and possibly Japan.
- Southwest Asia (the Soviet Southern TMO), against the Persian Gulf countries, eastern Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and US forces in the area.

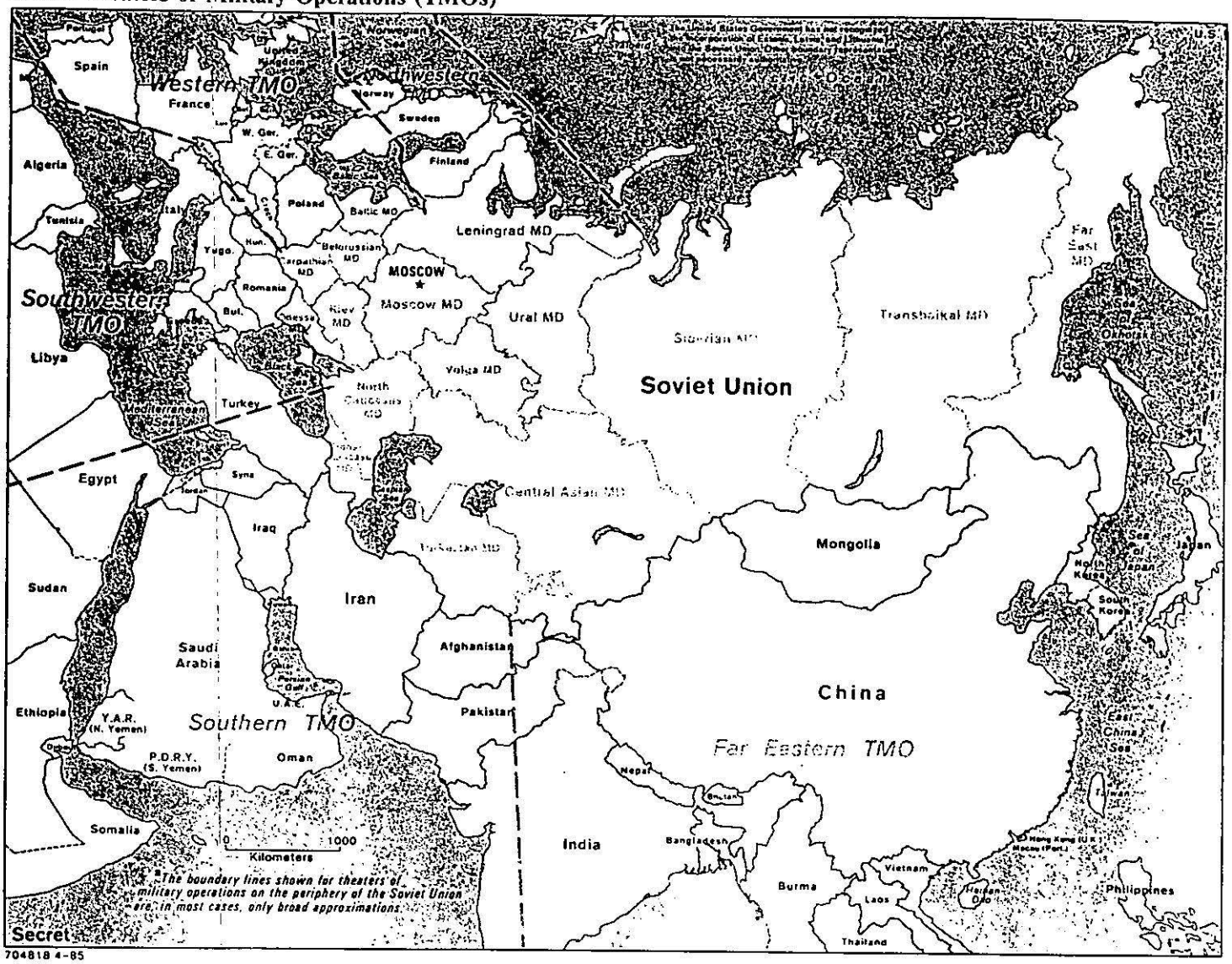
While the Estimate does not repeat the voluminous data on Soviet/Warsaw Pact forces already provided in other NIEs or the forthcoming factbook on Pact theater forces, it does address likely Soviet wartime objectives in the various theaters as well as the capacity of Soviet/Pact forces in each theater to accomplish these objectives. In this regard, the Estimate describes the interrelationship of the three regions from a Soviet perspective, and the part each plays in overall Soviet strategy and military planning. Further, it assesses the Soviet capacity to control and sustain simultaneous military campaigns in three widely separated areas and to coordinate them toward a common goal.

This Estimate discusses the likelihood that Moscow might transfer forces from one region to another in accordance with the Kremlin's overall strategic priorities. This includes judgments regarding the

[1] Previous issuances were NIE 11-14-81/D, *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO;* NIE 11-14/40-81/D, *Soviet Military Forces in the Far East:* and NIE 11/39-83D, *Soviet Forces and Capabilities in the Southern Theater of Military Operations.*

[2] The Soviet term *teatr voyennykh deystoiy* (TVD) translates as "theater of military operations." It describes an area in which specified forces are assigned a strategic military mission.

Figure 1
Soviet Theaters of Military Operations (TMOs)[a]



strategic mobility of Soviet forces, and the degree of flexibility Soviet planners would have in committing forces in regions other than their intended areas of employment. As an adjunct, the Estimate discusses our views of Soviet risk taking during a conflict, and the likelihood that Moscow might take risks in one region (by economizing forces there) to improve its chances for success in another. (s)

The focus of the Estimate is on theater forces. The subject of nuclear escalation—particularly in respect to its likely impact on Soviet strategy and actions in each theater—is also discussed. (s)

This Estimate was produced under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces. The drafter [redacted] Defense Intelligence Agency. (U)

KEY JUDGMENTS

Developments over the last two decades have increased the likelihood that, in the event of a NATO–Warsaw Pact war, the Soviet Union would have to conduct simultaneous campaigns in several widely separated theaters. Moscow is evidently prepared for such a contingency. There are sizable Soviet forces designated for operations in Europe, the Far East, and Southwest Asia. They are uniquely structured and equipped for operations in their respective areas, and are designed to operate independently, without major reinforcement from other regions. In addition, the Soviet General Staff has shown a concern with the control of forces waging war in different regions.

Soviet planning for multitheater war is undoubtedly based more on prudence than on preference. It is doubtful that, given the choice, the Soviets would opt to conduct simultaneous major offensives in multiple regions.

In a global war, Moscow's grand strategy would be heavily conditioned by two main concerns: preventing a nuclear attack against the Soviet Union and rapidly defeating the adversary that can do it most harm—NATO. Since the Soviet priority of effort in a global war would be against NATO, Moscow would attempt to avoid operations in other theaters that could constrain its capacity for a quick victory in Europe.[a]

The most likely Soviet course of action during a NATO–Warsaw Pact war would be to assume a defensive posture opposite both China and Iran, and to attack US forces in the western Pacific.

The capability of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies to prosecute military operations varies considerably among the three principal regions, but it is clearly greatest opposite NATO. This is also the region in which allies of the Soviet Union would make the greatest impact.

In the event of a NATO-Pact war, the Soviet objective would be the rapid and total defeat of NATO forces through offensive operations by superior forces. The Soviets consider defensive operations against

[a] *The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that Soviet planning options for operations against NATO in Europe must consider actions to prevent the movement of forces from the continental United States to the European theater. Such planning could include strategic intercontinental strikes against the following targets in the United States: general purpose forces; means of power projection (ports, airports); and command, control, communications, and intelligence facilities.*

NATO only in the context of their contribution to the offensive. They have the necessary forces to undertake a general offensive in Central Europe, and have deployed these forces to facilitate such an offensive.

It is virtually impossible to assess the Pact's capability to execute its strategy for a rapid conventional offensive in Central Europe, because NATO strategy calls for using whatever it takes—including nuclear weapons—to stop such an offensive.

By conceding to the Pact a superiority in conventional forces while refusing to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons, NATO is clearly implying that its strategy for the defense of Europe is based on the ultimate use of strategic forces. In the final analysis, if both NATO and the Pact follow through on their strategies and declared policies, a campaign in Central Europe would most likely be decided by nuclear rather than conventional forces.

The manner in which the Soviets allocate and exercise their forces indicates that, in a war on the Eurasian landmass, a campaign against China would be second in importance to the European campaign. The Soviet Pacific Fleet is capable of launching strategic nuclear strikes against the United States as well as against regional states, including China, Japan, and Korea. It is also postured and equipped to oppose incursions into the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk by US and Allied naval forces. Its capacity for open-ocean antisubmarine warfare (ASW), however, is hampered by its limited detection capabilities.

If Moscow were unable to persuade Tokyo to deny the United States access to forward operating bases in Japan, the Soviets would be likely to attack US forces there, as well as those Japanese military targets whose neutralization would be necessary to support such attacks.

Soviet forces in the Far East have the capability to stop a Chinese attack against the Soviet Union and to mount a counterattack quickly. They also have the capability to launch limited offensives into northern China—both east and west of Mongolia. To take and hold all of northeastern China, including Beijing, the Soviets would have to either use nuclear weapons or at least double their forces in the Far East. We do not believe they would attempt an attack with Beijing as its objective with fewer than 100 divisions. This would require the movement of an additional 50 Soviet divisions to the Far East. Many of them would have to come from the force opposite NATO, a move that Moscow would almost certainly be unwilling to make.

In the absence of a Chinese attack—which we consider extremely unlikely—a Soviet invasion of China makes little sense, especially in the context of a global war. Since most Chinese main-force units are

deployed 150 to 300 kilometers from the border, a de facto buffer zone already separates Soviet and Chinese forces.

A Soviet decision to use nuclear weapons against China would very likely be conditioned by events in the European Theater, as well as by Soviet objectives in the war with China. The Soviets would probably be reluctant to initiate the use of nuclear weapons against China in a campaign with only limited objectives, since a Chinese nuclear retaliatory strike could seriously degrade Moscow's ability to prosecute the campaign in Europe.

In Soviet military planning, Southwest Asia receives much less attention than either NATO or China. The Soviets have the capability to conduct a variety of military operations in the region, ranging from occupation of small areas of Iran or Pakistan to a large-scale attack to seize a port on the Persian Gulf. A major invasion of Iran, however, would be extremely difficult for the Soviets to execute. The Soviets would probably not regard the attainment of strategic objectives in Southwest Asia as decisive in a NATO–Warsaw Pact war. On balance, we believe the Soviets would regard invasion of Southwest Asia as an unattractive option during a multitheater war.

Overall, the Soviet Union—together with its Warsaw Pact allies—has the capability to conduct simultaneous military operations in Europe, the Far East, and Southwest Asia. Operations against China, however, would have to be limited in scope. Campaigns in the three regions—controlled by TMO high commands—could be conducted largely independently of one another.

If a war in all three theaters continued beyond two or three months, offensive operations in the Far East and the Persian Gulf region would begin to stretch logistic resources. Moscow would have to consider that continued offensives in these theaters could develop into a long-term and large-scale commitment of manpower and material that would compete with and ultimately could weaken the war effort in Europe.

We cannot envision the circumstance in which Moscow would conduct a major drawdown of its forces opposite NATO to attack China. Such a move would jeopardize any chance the Soviets have for a quick victory in Europe and, in view of China's lack of capacity to mount and sustain a coordinated attack into Soviet territory, would be unnecessary.

Given the fact that the Pact already enjoys a superiority in conventional forces in Europe, Pact planners would probably see no urgency for a large-scale transfer of forces from the Far East to Europe during a NATO-Pact war.

It is highly unlikely that, in the context of a global war, the Soviets would transfer large forces to Southwest Asia. Ground and tactical air units now in this theater are sufficient to undertake operations up to and including a full-scale invasion of Iran. The Soviets, however, would probably adopt a defensive posture opposite Iran, and hold the majority of their units in the Caucasus for operations against Turkey. During a global war, rather than reinforcing the Indian Ocean Squadron, the Soviets probably would recall some units from the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, particularly if US aircraft carriers were not present.

In sum, the Soviet Union will continue to posture its forces to fight in three principal theaters on its western, eastern, and southern borders. The priority of effort, however, will be toward the west. In the event of a global war, Moscow would subordinate its actions in all other theaters to the war against NATO. In all likelihood, so long as it were at war with NATO, the Soviet Union would not undertake major campaigns in the other theaters without being forced to do so, but would attack any US forces in these theaters that threatened the USSR.

DISCUSSION

THE PRIMARY THEATERS

1. Developments over the last two decades have increased the likelihood that, in the event of a NATO–Warsaw Pact war, the Soviet Union would have to conduct simultaneous campaigns in several widely separated theaters. Earlier in the period following World War II, Soviet planners could concentrate almost exclusively on the United States, Western Europe, and the developing North Atlantic Alliance. In the 1960s, however, the Soviet break with China introduced a new dimension into Soviet military planning, and Moscow had to consider the possibility of war with China as well. (s)

2. By the early 1970s it became apparent from the major buildup of Soviet forces in the Far East that Moscow's defense planning was developing on the assumption that the USSR might become involved in a two-theater land war—against NATO and China. Moreover, Japan's gradual defense buildup and strengthening of its ties to the United States have increased the potential wartime threat to the USSR in the northwestern Pacific. Finally, the developing Sino-US relationship has further complicated Soviet strategic calculations in this region. (s)

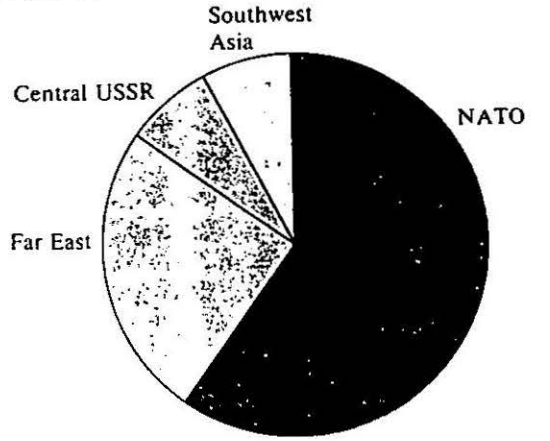
3. Events in Southwest Asia over the past five years have added a third dimension to the picture. The fall of the Shah of Iran, the growth of Shiite fundamentalism, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq war have destabilized the Persian Gulf region, increasing the potential for a US-Soviet confrontation there and raising the specter that the USSR could conceivably have to fight in three regions. (s)

4. Moscow is evidently prepared for such a contingency. There are sizable Soviet forces in each of the prospective theaters [4] (see figure 2). They are uniquely structured and equipped for operations in their respective areas, and are designed to operate independently, without major reinforcement from other regions. (s)

NATO—The Principal Adversary

5. The Soviet Union clearly recognizes the United States as its primary counterweight in world affairs and the US-dominated North Atlantic Alliance as its principal military adversary. The industrialized Western nations and Japan monopolize the world's commerce and technology and largely determine its economy. Their social and economic structures are essentially antithetical to those of the Soviet Union, and they are an obstacle to the expansion of Soviet influence. Most important in the Soviet view, the NATO nations have the military capacity to destroy the Soviet Union and its allies. As a result, the preponderance of Soviet—and all non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP)—forces have wartime missions against NATO. The Soviet intelligence agencies focus their reporting on the NATO countries, and Soviet military planning and exercises are directed primarily against NATO. In addition, Soviet planners probably expect that US forces in the northwestern Pacific would engage Soviet forces shortly after the initiation of

Figure 2
Approximate Distribution of Soviet Forces



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[4] Details on Warsaw Pact theater forces will be provided in a forthcoming "factbook" Interagency Intelligence Memorandum. (U)

hostilities in Europe, and they cannot exclude the possibility that Japan might support US military operations.

China—Enemy Number Two

6. The manner in which the Soviets allocate and exercise their forces indicates that, in a war on the Eurasian landmass, a Soviet campaign against China would be second in importance to the European campaign. For more than a decade, the Soviets have oriented more than one-fourth of their ground and tactical air forces toward their eastern frontier. They also keep one of their four fleets in the Pacific. Chinese nuclear forces, though not equivalent to those of the Soviet Union, are a cause of concern to Soviet leaders.

7. Like NATO in the West, China is an obstacle to the expansion of Soviet influence in Asia. Relations between the USSR and China have fluctuated since their split in the 1960s, and last year's bilateral political negotiations between Moscow and Beijing have led to improvements only in economic and cultural affairs. The Chinese leadership continues to consider the Soviet regime hostile toward China. There have been recent improvements in the atmosphere of their relations that require our close attention, however, and China seems to be playing a more active role in finding areas in which the two sides can agree to make progress despite the stalemate in security issues.

Southwest Asia—A Distant Third

8. In Soviet military planning, Southwest Asia receives much less attention than either NATO or China. Moscow began to focus on the area as a potential theater of military operations (TMO) in 1980, after the situation there destabilized. Soviet actions to date, however, have been more conceptual than real. The Soviets have not increased the rate of ground forces modernization. It continues to lag that in other areas, and the units in this region are still among the least well equipped of any along the Soviet periphery. The capability of the Soviet air forces for offensive action, however, has increased substantially. Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean, meanwhile, have fluctuated in size, but the Soviets have made no attempt to challenge US naval supremacy in the region.

9. The reason for the comparatively relaxed Soviet military posture opposite the Persian Gulf region (excluding Afghanistan) is clear. While the area is important to the Soviet Union for political reasons—increased influence there would provide the Kremlin some leverage over Western Europe and Japan because of their dependence on Persian Gulf oil—the area is not key to the Soviet Union from a security standpoint. None of the nations in the region poses a threat to Soviet territory. [

]None could prevent Soviet forces from advancing through Iran or Pakistan to the Gulf. The Kremlin would undoubtedly welcome a friendly—preferably subservient—Iran, which would serve as a buffer zone on the southern flank of the USSR as well as deny US access to the region. The Soviets have occupied portions of Iran twice in this century (in 1920 to oppose the British and in 1941 to check German influence). Still, a buffer zone in Iran would not be comparable to those the Soviet Union maintains in Eastern Europe and Mongolia.

10. While Southwest Asia does not present a military threat to the Soviet Union—particularly so long as there are no US forces or facilities in Iran—the area is key to Moscow's goal of increased influence in the Middle East. The Kremlin, however, must balance its moves in the area to avoid the appearance of directly threatening the security of the Western nations. The region is outside the NATO area, and NATO—as an alliance—shows no inclination to get involved there. In fact, many European NATO countries are reluctant even to support an improved US military posture in the Gulf region, lest it detract from the direct US military commitment to NATO or involve them in an unwanted war.

11. In contemplating a drive to the Persian Gulf, the Soviet leadership would have to consider not only the difficult operational environment and Iran's potential for protracted opposition, but also that the United States has declared the region vital to its interests and stated its intent to take all necessary measures—including the use of force—to protect Western access to Persian Gulf oil. The Soviets undoubtedly recognize that the West has major interests at stake in the Gulf. As a matter of prudence, they also must take seriously the US pledge to defend these interests. They probably assess that the United States has only a marginal capability to intervene directly in Iran—especially given the political situation there—but a relatively strong capacity for air and naval operations in and over the Persian Gulf and adjacent areas.

SOVIET STRATEGY FOR THEATER WARFARE

War in Europe

12. In the event of a NATO–Warsaw Pact war, the Soviet objective would be the rapid and total defeat of NATO forces through offensive operations by superior forces. The Soviets consider defensive operations against NATO only in the context of their contribution to the offensive. They have the necessary forces to undertake a general offensive in Central Europe, and have deployed these forces to facilitate such an offensive.

13. In a war in Europe, time would be of the essence for the Soviets. They would attempt to seize quickly their key military, political, and economic objectives in Central Europe. They probably view NATO's conventional forces—deployed well forward in Central Europe to defend territory but lacking in both reserves and maneuver room—as vulnerable to a strong air and ground attack. At the same time, the Soviets probably overestimate NATO's capability to reinforce its forces in Europe. They also are impressed by Western technology and the capacity of the NATO countries to produce war materials in the longer term. A quick Soviet victory in Europe would deny these potential strengths to NATO.

The Nuclear Question

14. Another factor that drives Soviet strategy for a quick victory in Europe is the desire of the Soviet leadership to keep any fighting from going nuclear. Once the nuclear threshold had been crossed, the Pact's conventional forces would suffer heavy attrition and the Soviet homeland would be held at risk.

15. Soviet strategists believe widespread attacks against NATO nuclear forces would be necessary during the conventional phase of a war to eliminate or reduce NATO's capability for escalation. Despite evidence that the Soviets are considering the possibility that the increase in their nuclear capabilities in Europe might deter early NATO escalation and allow them to extend the period of conventional war, they cannot be certain, and probably expect that NATO would be forced to use nuclear weapons ultimately to stave off defeat. All Warsaw Pact planning, therefore, proceeds on the basis that nuclear operations could begin at any time. Once the Pact determined that NATO had obtained authorization for widespread use of nuclear weapons, it would attempt to preempt such use. The Soviets consider that the initial massed use of nuclear weapons would have a decisive impact on a NATO-Pact war.

A Historical Perspective

The Kremlin's strategy for war on the Eurasian landmass is influenced heavily by its experiences in earlier campaigns, particularly in World War II. On the western front, that experience was initially largely negative. The Red Army was unprepared for a German attack, was taken by surprise by Operation Barbarossa, and spent the early period of the war retreating deep into its own territory.

On the eastern front, the Soviet experience was essentially positive. As opposed to the long defensive campaign it fought against Germany, Moscow conducted only two major actions against the Japanese—the battle of Khalkhin-Gol (Ha-lo-hsinn Ho), near the Mongolian border, in August 1939, on the eve of World War II, and the Manchurian campaign, at the war's end, six years later. Both were purely offensive actions. Both were characterized by:

- Extensive planning and detailed but secret preparations.
- The marshaling of superior forces at the end of a 4,000-mile supply line.
- The launching of a devastating blitz that not only inflicted heavy casualties, but also had a severe psychological effect on the Japanese.

Both operations resulted in decisive Soviet victories and were decided in less than two weeks. Judged according to the amount of writing devoted to them, both are still seen as offering valuable insights into planning and conducting conventional campaigns.

Several external factors contributed to the Soviet success in Manchuria—including the fact that the Japanese Army there had been depleted to support Japan's war effort in other areas, and that the Emperor was already inclined to surrender as a result of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet leadership, however, ignores these factors. Soviet planners emphasize that the key contributors to the success of the campaign were the secrecy that surrounded the preparations (allowing the Soviets to gain strategic surprise) and the speed and strength that characterized the offensive (allowing Soviet forces to achieve their major objectives entirely within the initial phase of the campaign). Soviet authorities have studied the campaign extensively, and have concluded that a deliberate offensive is far preferable to a strategy based on protracted defensive and counteroffensive operations.

16. In public, the Soviet leadership has consistently rejected the notion of limited nuclear war and emphasized that it would be impossible to control escalation once the nuclear threshold had been crossed. Nonethe-

less, the Soviets probably regard limited nuclear war in Europe as a contingency for which they must be prepared.

17. The Soviet leadership's preoccupation with the West's capacity for nuclear warfare is manifested in the priority that nuclear issues have been accorded in recent Soviet foreign policy initiatives. During the early 1980s, the Kremlin's number-one foreign policy goal was to prevent the introduction of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) into Europe. Concurrent with this effort, Moscow has conducted an unabated propaganda campaign to force NATO to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons.

The Campaign in Central Europe

18. In the Soviet view, a war in Europe would be won or lost in NATO's Central Region, which contains the bulk of NATO's military forces and most of its industry. Sixty percent of the Pact's divisions and 70 percent of its tanks opposite NATO are concentrated in this area. The Soviets plan to conduct a theater strategic operation against NATO in Central Europe, an area they describe as the Western TMO. It would be characterized by multiple, successive front operations, with few if any pauses, supported by Strategic Aviation, the Strategic Rocket Forces, and the Baltic Fleet. It would be conducted across a width of 700 to 750 kilometers and to a depth of 1,000 to 1,200 km. The Soviets plan to complete this operation in 20 to 30 days.

Operations on NATO's Flanks

19. Supporting operations on NATO's flanks, on a much smaller scale, would be initiated almost concurrently with the general offensive in Central Europe. They would be designed to destroy those NATO forces that could threaten the USSR, to tie down NATO forces to prevent their transfer to Central Europe, and to seize key objectives essential to the unhindered operations of Pact naval forces. On the southern flank (the Southwestern TMO), early Pact operations would include attacks on Allied naval forces in the Mediterranean, especially the aircraft carriers and cruise-missile-armed platforms that could strike the southern USSR, and a move against the Turkish Straits, which control access to and from the Black Sea. On the northern flank (the Northwestern TMO), the Soviets would probably attack northern Norway from the USSR and through Finland to seize the NATO bases or to deny their use, and to facilitate Soviet naval operations in the Norwegian and Barents Seas.

20. More extensive Pact operations on the flanks—which would not be critical to the success of the Pact main effort, and indeed could detract from it—would probably not be undertaken until key objectives in Central Europe had been achieved, or at least until the Pact campaign there was well developed. If the Soviet campaign in Central Europe went according to plan and NATO forces there were defeated in about a month, larger Pact operations on the flanks might not be necessary.

21. Soviet naval operations in the Norwegian Sea and Arctic Ocean would be designed largely to deny the areas to US aircraft carriers, cruise-missile-armed platforms, submarines, and amphibious assault forces, and to preserve the Soviet capacity to launch nuclear strikes by protecting the Northern Fleet's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

War in East Asia

22. Soviet strategy for a war in the Far East during a global conflict would be influenced by whether the fighting there involved only the United States and possibly Japan, or also included China. While operations against US forces would take place mainly at sea, a conflict with China would be primarily a land campaign involving both ground and air forces.[8]

23. Although Beijing clearly shows no interest in formally allying itself with Tokyo or Washington, China shares with the United States and Japan a common security interest in curbing Soviet expansion in the Far East. To Moscow, this translates into the possibility that a war in Asia could pit the Soviet Union against not only the United States and perhaps Japan, but also China. The structure of Soviet forces in this theater—with land forces aimed primarily at China, naval forces aimed primarily at US forces afloat, and air forces aimed at both plus Japan—reflects this assumption.

Operations Against US Forces

24. If the United States became involved in a war in the Far East, the primary focus of a Soviet attack would be US naval forces in the Pacific. The object would be to destroy those forces that could attack the Soviet mainland, deny vital straits, or disrupt Soviet naval operations in the Pacific. The Pacific Ocean Fleet would attempt to establish sea control in the waters contiguous to the USSR—including Soviet bal-

[8] For a detailed dicussion of Soviet strategy for a war with China, see NIE 11-14/40-81/D, *Soviet Military Forces in the Far East.*

listic missile submarine bastion areas—and conduct sea denial operations to a distance of about 1,200 nautical miles. (s)

25. In developing their contingency plans for war in the Far East, the Soviets must, therefore, take into account US naval forces in the Pacific as well as US air forces based in Korea and Japan. With respect to Japan, the Soviets are probably most concerned with its potential for use as a forward operating base for US forces, because Japan's Self-Defense Forces do not pose an independent threat to the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, Tokyo's efforts to improve the capabilities of its forces and US prodding to that end are—in Soviet eyes—disturbing factors, especially in view of Moscow's perception of a developing US-Sino-Japanese relationship. (s)

The Campaign Against China

26. Moscow's strategy for a war with China differs substantially from its strategy for a war with NATO. The primary difference is that Soviet strategists evidently envision only limited-objective attacks into China, with penetrations to a depth of 300 to 500 kilometers in northeastern China, and about half that in the area west of Mongolia (see figure 3). The Soviet military contingent opposite China, although large in absolute terms, is small in relation to the size of Chinese forces and territory. The Soviet units, moreover, are dispersed along strongpoints close to the border to protect Soviet territory, but are not echeloned in depth to facilitate a deep and sustained offensive. (s)

27. ***Northeastern China.*** In the event of a Sino-Soviet conflict, the primary Soviet objective would be to seize northeastern China. The Soviet operation would be similar to the one in Manchuria in 1945. Forces from the Far East Military District would attack to the south and west, while forces from Mongolia and the Transbaikal MD would attack to the south and east. The two forces would attempt to converge and link up, cutting off Chinese forces in the area, and occupying an area 300 to 500 kilometers deep. (s)

28. The Soviets would probably conduct a secondary attack from the Central Asian Military District into the Urumqi Military Region west of Mongolia. (s)

29. Soviet attacks in these areas would be designed to counter a Chinese invasion of the Soviet Union, with the expulsion of Chinese forces and the establishment of zones of occupation to protect Soviet cities and lines of communication (LOCs) near the border, particularly the port of Vladivostok. The latter would be

Figure 3
Potential Soviet Invasion Routes Into China

essential to the prosecution of maritime operations against Japan and US forces in the Pacific.

30. In the absence of a Chinese attack—which we consider extremely unlikely—a Soviet invasion of China makes little sense, especially in the context of a global war. Since most Chinese main-force units are deployed 150 to 300 kilometers from the border, a de facto buffer zone already separates Soviet and Chinese forces. This buffer zone contributes to Soviet security by reducing the chances of accidental border incidents that could lead to war. A Soviet move against China would involve the USSR in a two-front land war and reduce rather than enhance Soviet security in the Far East, since Soviet forces there are not adequate to occupy northern China indefinitely. Prolonged occupation would require substantial reinforcements and degrade the Soviets' capacity to prosecute the war with NATO.

31. ***The Nuclear Question Revisited.*** The large reserves of Chinese manpower and the vast expanse of Chinese territory pose several problems for the Soviets. One is the nuclear problem. The Soviets might feel they would have to use nuclear weapons against the Chinese—presumably to offset the Chinese advantage in manpower.

32. The use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese, however, would pose enormous risks for the Soviets. In the first place, they would have to consider the possibility of Chinese nuclear retaliation, which could destroy several Soviet cities as well as major military targets in the Far East. Secondly, they would have to consider that a nuclear exchange with China could lead to one with NATO. Any Soviet decision to use nuclear weapons against China, therefore, would very likely be conditioned by events in the European theater, as well as by Soviet objectives in the war with China. The Soviets would probably be reluctant to initiate the use of nuclear weapons against China in a campaign with only limited objectives, because a Chinese nuclear retaliatory strike could seriously degrade Moscow's ability to prosecute the campaign in Europe. As their technology improves, the Soviets will probably rely more heavily on improved conventional munitions against large Chinese troop concentrations. If Soviet forces were in danger of being overwhelmed by sheer numbers of Chinese troops, the Soviets would be likely to employ chemical weapons, against which the Chinese have little capacity to defend themselves and a limited capability to reply in kind.

33. Although nuclear weapons would have a significant impact in a Sino-Soviet war, the total defeat of China would entail occupation of the country by conventional forces, and Soviet forces in the Far East are clearly inadequate for such an undertaking. For Moscow, a protracted war on the Asian mainland makes little sense from either a political or military point of view.

War in Southwest Asia

34. Soviet military strategy for a war in the Persian Gulf region may not be as well defined as it is for wars in Europe and China, despite the fact that both the Soviets and their czarist predecessors have a long history of intervention in northern Iran. Twice in this century they occupied parts of the area in response to what they perceived as threats to their security. In May 1920 their forces occupied Gilan—the northernmost province of Persia—in an attempt to rid the area of British forces that were supporting resistance to the new Soviet regime. The Soviets withdrew the following September. In August 1941 they again occupied Iranian territory, this time with the help of British forces, to oppose German influence. British forces withdrew by March 1946, but Soviet troops, in contravention of an earlier Anglo-Soviet agreement, remained and were subsequently reinforced. Heavy pressure by the United States and the United Kingdom applied through the United Nations over the next two months compelled the Soviets to remove their troops in May. Those experiences, however, are not applicable to the current situation, in which any Soviet move into Iran would be strongly resisted by the Iranians. The Soviets would also have to consider the possibility of a US military reaction.

35. Soviet military literature on the Persian Gulf is lacking. While much has been written on military operations in Europe and the Far East, virtually all recent Soviet literature on the Gulf region is propaganda. It denounces US interference in the area. It dwells on the "massive" and "aggressive" US naval buildup in the Indian Ocean. It cites the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force and its successor, USCENTCOM, as examples of American "imperialism." It provides no clue, however, as to the types of campaigns the Soviets are considering in the region.

36. Soviet military strategy for war in Southwest Asia is not clear. However, roughly concomitant with the US decision following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to establish a force capable of rapid deployment to Southwest Asia, the Soviets began to focus on the area as a potential theater of military operations.

37. They have not, however, significantly upgraded their military posture in the area. Force improvements, on the contrary, have continued at a slow pace—particularly in relation to the other theaters. The significant force changes in the region have resulted primarily from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent operations there. Neither the invasion nor five years of operations in Afghanistan, however, have more than marginally enhanced Soviet prospects for military operations in Southwest Asia.

Multitheater War

38. We do not have good evidence on Soviet views of fighting simultaneous campaigns in widely separated regions. The Soviet Union has never fought a large-scale multitheater war. Following the October Revolution in 1917, and through 1922, however, the Soviets did have to contend simultaneously with the Germans in the west; small British, French, and American contingents in the north near Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk; the Japanese, Americans, and British who landed at Vladivostok in the east; the Czech Legion in the Volga Basin in the south; and bands of White Russians across the breadth of the nation. During World War II, the Kremlin resisted Allied pressures to attack Japan until Germany had surrendered.

Force Deployments

39. Moscow's views on multitheater war are probably best inferred from the manner in which it deploys its forces and from the structure it has established to control them. A strategy of multitheater war implies readiness for combat in separate geographic regions simultaneously. It implies adequate forces in the potential theaters, as well as substantial reserves configured both for mobility and flexibility of employment to respond to setbacks and capitalize on opportunities. Finally, it implies a system of command and control that provides for centralized control of independent operations in each region.

40. Soviet forces meet these criteria. Given our understanding of Moscow's likely objectives in each of the three regions, we believe Soviet forces in each region are adequate for initial operations. The evidence indicates, moreover, that the Soviets would rely primarily on these forces to accomplish initial objectives (see inset). This is particularly true of ground and naval forces, whose transfer would be both time consuming and risky. While frontal air forces could be transferred more quickly, they are likely to remain with the combined-arms formations they support. Overall, the major variations in readiness and combat potential of forces in the various theaters suggest that Soviet/Pact forces in each are uniquely structured, manned, and equipped to meet contingencies peculiar to that region, and that major reinforcements from outside the region are not regarded as essential.

Sokolovskiy on Forces Redeployment

Marshal Sokolovskiy, in an article entitled "Preparing a Country to Repel Aggression," provided some insight into the Soviet view of the transfer of forces:

> During the course of the war it will be impossible, naturally, to avoid certain transfers of specialists from one region to another. But these transfers under present-day conditions should be reduced to a minimum. Complex storehouses with all necessary equipment should be created at the mobilization center. During the last war the equipment for manning the units frequently had to be brought in from dozens of storehouses located hundreds and even thousands of kilometers from the mobilization points. In a future war such a situation will be intolerable, since it does not correspond to present-day mobilization time limits.

The Strategic Reserve

41. Nevertheless, on the basis of their experience in World War II and analysis of the scale of losses likely to be experienced in a war under modern conditions (conventional or nuclear), the Soviets have devoted considerable attention to the creation and organization of their strategic reserves. They classify as strategic reserves those units of the armed forces in direct subordination to the Supreme High Command (VGK)—that is, the Moscow, Ural, and Volga Military Districts, airborne forces, and VGK air armies. They also include the stores of supplies kept in arsenals, depots, and bases of central subordination. Such reserves are intended for weighting attacks at the outset of hostilities, for making up losses suffered in battle, for reinforcing and creating new groupings of forces, and for accomplishing other missions arising in the course of a war.

42. For the most part, the ground force units in the strategic reserve—even those existing in peacetime—are "not ready" or cadre formations. They would require large-scale mobilization, preparation, and training before they could be committed to combat. Many units would have to be moved thousands of kilometers by road or rail to their area of employment.

In theory, these units could be employed in any TMO. Augmentation of the strategic reserve assets—especially ground forces—during the past several years underscores the Soviets' concern over their ability to reinforce their forces during a multitheater war.

43. Military operations in all regions would also be supported by KGB Border Guards and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) troops, as well as by similar NSWP paramilitary forces. Border Guards would provide initial defense of the border and assist in the collection of tactical intelligence. Many units are equipped as light infantry, and some have tanks, armored personnel carriers (APCs), and artillery. They would perform such duties as rear area security.

Command and Control

44. Soviet strategy evidently does envision largely independent campaigns in each theater. It apparently draws on World War II experience, including the Manchurian campaign in 1945. Because of the remoteness of the Far Eastern theater, the great diversity of forces and equipment assembled there, and the vastness of the area, the Soviets experienced difficulty in organizing the missions of the fronts and fleet and preparing them for operations. At first they tried the approach they had used against Germany, appointing a representative of the GHQ, Marshal Vasilevskiy, to coordinate operations in the Far East and providing him with a small staff. After a few weeks, however, Vasilevskiy realized that this system was inadequate to the task he faced in the Far East. He proposed instituting the post of Far Eastern commander in chief and providing him with an appropriate staff. His suggestion was accepted, and, according to Soviet historians, the resulting organization was an important prerequisite to the successful execution of the campaign in Manchuria.

Prudence Over Preference

45. Judging by the manner in which the Soviets deploy and exercise their forces, we conclude that they plan for the contingency of a multitheater war. This strategy is undoubtedly based more on prudence than on preference. It is doubtful that—given the choice—the Soviets would opt for simultaneous operations in multiple regions. Any advantage they might enjoy in theory in such a situation—interior lines, for example—would largely disappear in practice, because of the great distances and difficult terrain that separate the theaters.

Soviet Grand Strategy

46. In a global war, Moscow's grand strategy would be heavily conditioned by two main concerns: preventing a nuclear attack against the Soviet Union and rapidly defeating the adversary that can do it most harm—NATO. Because the Soviet priority of effort in a global war would be against NATO, Moscow would attempt to avoid operations in other theaters that could constrain its capacity for a quick victory in Europe. A Soviet attack into China, for instance, could develop into a long-term, large-scale commitment of manpower and material and compete for resources with the campaign in Europe. A similar situation would exist if the Soviets were to undertake a major offensive in Southwest Asia. They would have to commit some ground and air units that could otherwise be used in the European campaign. The Soviets, moreover, would probably not regard the attainment of strategic objectives in Southwest Asia as decisive in a NATO–Warsaw Pact war.

47. In the context of a global war, the Soviets would probably see no real urgency for major operations against China or in Southwest Asia. Compared with NATO, China poses little threat to the Soviet Union. The Persian Gulf nations pose none. The Soviets, therefore, would have little to gain by attacking China while they were at war with NATO, but much to lose. By the same token, the Soviets would probably not attack Japan unless Tokyo permitted US forces to stage combat operations out of bases in Japan.[6] Similarly, a Soviet move toward the Persian Gulf would detract from the Soviet capacity to conduct operations against both NATO and US forces in the Pacific. While the impact on Soviet operations in Europe would not be pronounced—the primary effect would be to limit Soviet operations in eastern Turkey, which would not be critical to the campaign in Central Europe—any drawdown of Soviet naval forces in the Pacific to augment the Indian Ocean Squadron would impair the Soviet capacity to attack US forces in the Pacific, to protect their SSBN force, and to defend the homeland against attacks by US carriers and sea-based land attack nuclear-armed cruise missiles.

48. Conceivably, the Soviets might initiate operations in the Persian Gulf region to deny oil to the NATO nations. Such operations, if undertaken, would probably be in the form of strategic air attacks against the tanker loading facilities in the Gulf ports. Denial of

[6] *See footnote 11, on page 21, for a view of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army.*

Persian Gulf oil, however, would not have an immediate effect on NATO's fighting ability, as NATO has about 100 days of crude oil reserves, and its wartime military requirements would be only a fraction of peacetime civilian consumption that could be diverted to military use.

49. The most likely Soviet course of action during a NATO–Warsaw Pact war would be to assume a defensive posture opposite both China and Iran, and to attack US forces in the Western Pacific. In addition, the Soviets would try to dissuade Japan from becoming an active participant, and would press Tokyo to deny the United States use of air and naval facilities in Japan. Failing this, the Soviets would be likely to attack these facilities, since US combat aircraft based in Japan would be able to attack military targets in the Soviet Far East, as well as Soviet naval forces operating in the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk, and the western Pacific.

50. Only one view in the Intelligence Community holds that the Soviets would undertake a ground invasion of the Japanese main islands.[1] All believe, however, that the Soviets would probably bolster their defenses on Sakhalin and on the Kuril Islands, including the northern territories claimed by Japan. These areas are key to Soviet strategy both to defend the homeland and to launch strategic nuclear attacks against the United States. They guard the Soviet fleet access to the western Pacific, and are indispensable to the fleet's capacity to defend its SSBN bastions in the Seas of Okhotsk and Japan.

51. We do not have good insights into what Soviet policy toward Korea would be during a multitheater war. The Soviets might try to complicate US planning and neutralize US air forces in Korea while conserving their own forces by encouraging North Korea to invade the South. We believe P'yongyang would be tempted to take advantage of the opportunity created by the absorption of US forces in a worldwide conflict and would give serious thought to an attack with or without encouragement from Moscow. It might move shortly after the opening of hostilities in Europe or alternatively might wait until US forces earmarked to reinforce the defense of South Korea had been committed elsewhere. If P'yongyang failed to act quickly, however, the Soviets would probably attack US airbases in Korea. A North Korean attack, however, could result in demands by North Korea for increased Soviet support, both logistic and operational, particularly air support. In essence, if the Soviet leaders believed a land war in Korea would cause more problems for the United States than it would for the USSR, they would probably abet a North Korean attack. If, however, they concluded that a war in Korea would compete for resources with their campaign against NATO, they would probably discourage a North Korean attack.

52. At the outset of a NATO-Pact war, the Soviets would attack US naval forces in the western Pacific within about 1,200 nautical miles of the USSR hoping to prevent their use against the eastern USSR, and to eliminate any possibility of their being transferred to the European Theater.

SOVIET CAPABILITIES IN THE VARIOUS THEATERS

53. The capacity of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies to prosecute military operations varies considerably among the three principal regions.

Europe

54. That capacity is clearly greatest opposite NATO. This is also the region in which allies of the Soviet Union would make the greatest and most direct contribution. In the other theaters, the Soviets might use bases in client states to support military operations—in Afghanistan for operations in the Southern TMO or in Cam Ranh Bay in the Far East, for example. There would, however, be little if any direct involvement by non-Soviet military forces other than the Mongolians.

Pact Forces

55. Although Warsaw Pact forces opposite NATO vary considerably in quality and readiness, they are far superior—both in number and armament—to the forces the Soviets maintain opposite both China and Iran. They include 60 percent of the Pact's maneuver divisions and tactical air forces (70 percent if units in the Caucasus are allocated against Turkey rather than Iran), and three of the four Soviet fleets. Opposite NATO's center, Pact ground forces are echeloned in depth to facilitate a sustained offensive campaign. They are largely mechanized, and heavily outnumber NATO armies in most key arms, including armor and artillery.

The Military Balance

56. Exactly how the Soviets assess the military balance in the Western TMO is not clear. For years,

[1] *The holder of this view is the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army. (See paragraphs 74-80 for a detailed discussion of this subject.)*

Eastern participants at the negotiations on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR) have insisted that the forces of the two alliances in Central Europe are approximately equal. The Soviets, moreover, do not rate their forces as highly vis-a-vis NATO as Western analysts do. Nonetheless, there are indications that Pact planners rate their conventional forces as superior to those of NATO.

57. The Pact, however, continues to make major adjustments to its force posture opposite NATO—especially in those forces opposing NATO's center. These changes go beyond such routine force modernization as the fielding of new fighters, tanks, artillery (including nuclear), and a new generation of accurate and longer range tactical missiles. They include a general reorganization of air and air defense forces, a realignment of the Soviet armies in East Germany, the testing of new operational concepts such as the operational maneuver group (OMG), and the establishment of new types of units, presumably to implement that concept. We believe the Soviets are also considering the early reinforcement of Eastern Europe, including the movement of fronts from the western USSR before D-day. Soviet planners—recognizing that improvements in the NSWP armies (which compose a substantial part of Pact first-echelon forces) are not keeping pace with those in Soviet first-echelon units—might want to increase the weight of Soviet forces in the first echelon to improve its overall combat power. This would also alleviate any apprehension the Soviet leadership may have concerning the reliability of its allies, particularly Poland.

The Role of Nuclear Weapons

58. Pact ground and air units have the capacity to undertake a general offensive in Central Europe, supported by limited offensives on the flanks. It is virtually impossible to assess the Pact's capacity to successfully execute its strategy for a rapid conventional offensive in Central Europe, because NATO strategy calls for using whatever it takes—including nuclear weapons—to stop such an offensive. The success of a Pact attack against NATO would depend to a large extent on the capacity of Pact air forces to establish air superiority over the European continent and to destroy NATO's nuclear forces in the European theater before they could be employed. At the outset of fighting, Pact strategy calls for a widespread conventional air operation against NATO's air defenses, airfields, and nuclear command and control facilities.* At the same time, the Pact would attempt to overrun NATO's forward defenses—including much of its nuclear artillery and short-range tactical missiles. Special-purpose forces (Spetsnaz) and OMGs, operating behind NATO's main defensive area, would have the mission of locating and destroying NATO's theater nuclear weapons.

59. This would be a very ambitious undertaking, however, and, given the potential problems that could force the Soviets to cancel the air operation, the Pact must have serious doubts that it could eliminate the NATO tactical nuclear threat.* The Pact's problem is further complicated by the fact that the ground tactical weapons are dispersed throughout the NATO corps areas, many of the strike aircraft are based well to NATO's rear, and submarines capable of launching nuclear missiles routinely operate in European waters, where the Soviet capacity for detection is very limited.

Impact of INF Modernization

60. The arrival of Pershing IIs and GLCMs in Europe, moreover, greatly complicates the picture for the Soviets. Unlike NATO's shorter range tactical missiles (Lance) and artillery pieces—a large number of which would be overrun in the event of a successful Pact offensive in Central Europe—the newer missiles would not be affected by early Pact ground operations. The mobile missiles would not be good targets for Pact short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) using conventional warheads, and those GLCMs in the United Kingdom and Sicily would be out of the range of Pact SRBMs, with the exception of those SS-12 Mod 2's deployed in Eastern Europe. Inasmuch as the new US missiles are capable of striking strategic targets as well as follow-on forces in the Soviet Union, however, Pact planners would have to include them in their conventional as well as nuclear target planning.

61. This raises the question of how the Soviets would handle the rear-based theater nuclear systems (bombers and GLCMs in the United Kingdom and GLCMs in Sicily). Given the abundance of high-priority targets on the continent, and the fact that bombers attacking Britain would lack fighter cover, we do not believe the United Kingdom would be an early target for air attack. The same applies to Sicily for similar reasons. If the Soviets did not attack US forces in the United Kingdom and Sicily in the initial air operation, a substantial part of NATO's ground-

* For details, see NIE 11/20-6-84/D, *Warsaw Pact Nonnuclear Threat to NATO Airbases in Central Europe.*

* See NIE 11/20-6-84/D.

based and air-launched theater nuclear weapons would go untouched. These—along with the sea-based systems—could do severe damage to the USSR.

NATO's Strategic Nuclear Deterrent

62. Even if the Pact's conventional offensive met with initial success, Pact leaders would have to consider the possibility that—faced with a quick defeat of its conventional and tactical nuclear forces—NATO, or one of the three Western nuclear powers acting independently, might launch a strategic nuclear attack against the Soviet Union. NATO's strategic systems pose a much greater threat to Soviet territory than do its tactical weapons, because of their greater destructive power and ability to reach deep into the Soviet homeland. They are, moreover, not likely to be affected by any conventional Soviet campaign. Strategic systems also are assuming an ever-increasing role in Western plans. The French nuclear arsenal, for instance, is assuming greater importance in France's defensive strategy as conventional forces suffer cutbacks for economic reasons. The same applies to UK forces, if to a lesser degree. The United States, for its part, is undertaking a major overhaul of its strategic triad.

Conventional Force Improvements

63. None of the NATO nations, on the other hand, is significantly improving its conventional forces. On the contrary, all European NATO capitals have resisted entreaties by the major NATO commanders—principally SACEUR—to strengthen their conventional forces, citing the high costs involved. Overall real growth in non-US NATO defense spending has averaged only 2 percent annually since 1978, the year the 3-percent goal was adopted. The implications for conventional forces are clear, inasmuch as only two non-US NATO members have nuclear weapons and both are dedicating a large portion of any increased defense expenditures to strategic nuclear forces.

64. With respect to conventional forces, many non-US NATO nations have made major reductions in personnel, maintenance, current operations, and training. Several countries—particularly France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Norway—have reduced military and civilian manpower and are relying more heavily on reserves. All European NATO nations have curtailed training, and many have canceled or trimmed field exercises. They have phased out older weapons to save on maintenance and have limited replenishment of ammunition and spare parts.

Assessing Western Reaction

65. The disproportionate rate of improvement between Western strategic and conventional forces undoubtedly impacts on Moscow's confidence in its ability to assess the likely Western response to a Warsaw Pact conventional attack. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there are three Western governments that control nuclear weapons. The United States is the only nation to ever have employed such weapons, and the United Kingdom and France assert that they will continue to maintain a strategic nuclear capability as a safeguard against the failure of the US nuclear umbrella. The British and French strategic assets, by themselves, are no match for Soviet strategic forces. Nevertheless, they could do enormous damage to the USSR, and will be significantly expanded over the next decade. The Soviets take them very seriously and—before their walkout from the talks on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF)—insisted that both the British and French systems be included in those negotiations.

67. To occupy Central Europe with conventional forces, the Soviets would have to defeat the ground forces of the three nuclear powers as well as those of the other Allies. It is highly questionable that the Soviets would assume that these three nations would sit on their strategic nuclear stockpiles if their conventional and tactical nuclear forces were being overrun. This would be an extremely risky assumption, and the Soviet leadership characteristically leaves little to risk.

68. In essence, by conceding to the Pact a superiority in conventional forces while refusing to renounce

the first use of nuclear weapons, NATO is clearly implying that its strategy for the defense of Europe is based on the ultimate use of strategic forces. In the final analysis, if both NATO and the Pact followed through on their strategies and declared policies, a campaign in Central Europe would probably be decided by nuclear rather than conventional forces.

East Asia

69. The Soviets maintain about one-fourth of their ground forces—some 500,000 troops in over 50 division—in the eastern USSR. Except for the four divisions in the Pacific—one on the Kamchatka Peninsula, two on Sakhalin, and one in the Kuril Islands—these forces are oriented against China. The Soviet Pacific Fleet, on the other hand, which is the largest fleet in the Soviet Navy (although it has a smaller ballistic missile submarine force than the Northern Fleet) is oriented primarily against US naval forces in the Pacific. The Soviets also have about 2,000 aircraft in the Far East which could be used to support the land campaign in China, or to attack US forces in Japan, Korea, and the Pacific.

The Military Balance

70. The military balance in the Pacific depends largely on the status of US air and naval forces in the region, including the number of US aircraft carriers deployed to the western Pacific. For their part, the Soviets have considerably upgraded their Pacific Fleet over the last decade—both through the allocation of new ships and aircraft and through transfers of ships from other fleets. Soviet air forces in Asia are being modernized at roughly the same pace as those in Europe.

71. Although the gap between the capabilities of Soviet ground forces in East Asia and those facing NATO has narrowed somewhat, most ground units opposite China are still not as well equipped as those opposite NATO. They are also considerably outnumbered by the Chinese, who have roughly a 4-to-1 advantage in manpower and a 2-to-1 advantage in combat divisions along the border. Despite their smaller numbers, the Soviets clearly have the advantage over the Chinese in firepower, mobility, and quality of equipment. The Chinese Army is not equipped, structured, or adequately supported to withstand attacks by mobile armored forces supported by superior air forces. They also have little capability to defend against a chemical attack. The Soviets, despite these advantages, continue to modernize their forces along the border, and to improve their capacity to support these forces logistically.

72. The Chinese are also improving their warfighting capabilities. In the last four years, for example, they have increased their tanks, APCs, and aircraft in the border region by one-third. Nevertheless, they continue to fall behind the Soviets in overall force improvement, and the military balance along the frontier is tilting more and more in favor of the Soviet Union. Significantly, the Soviets have made major improvements to their army in Mongolia, despite repeated Chinese demands that Soviet forces there be reduced. As a result, these units are now in a position to threaten the North China plain and Beijing. Moscow has also established an important air and naval base at Cam Ranh Bay and augmented its forces in the South China Sea, actions that are of concern to the Chinese.

Soviet Capabilities in the Western Pacific

73. The Soviet Pacific Fleet is capable of launching strategic nuclear strikes against the United States as well as against regional states, including China, Japan, and Korea. It is also postured and equipped to oppose incursions into the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk by US and Allied naval forces. Its capacity for open-ocean antisubmarine warfare (ASW), however, is hampered by its limited detection capabilities. Thus, while Soviet ASW forces cannot detect US submarines in the open ocean, we believe the Pacific Fleet—together with Soviet air and air defense forces—would pose a substantial threat to any force that approached Petropavlovsk or the Seas of Japan or Okhotsk.

Soviet Capabilities Against Japan

74. If Moscow were unable to persuade Tokyo to deny the United States access to forward operating bases in Japan, the Soviets might limit their attacks to US forces at sea and defend against attacking US aircraft from Japan while weighing the military and political risks of attacking US bases in Japan. We believe it more likely, however, that, failing to achieve Japanese acquiesence, the Soviets would attack US forces in Japan as well as those Japanese military targets whose neutralization would be necessary to execute such attacks. The Soviets have substantial bomber forces available in the Far East that are capable of such missions. Key to the Soviets' capability to attack these targets will be their ability to obtain air superiority in the region. The relatively short combat radii of many Soviet aircraft would limit the area of major air operations. While Soviet heavy and medium bombers could strike targets throughout Japan, the light bomber force would probably be able to attack

only those targets on Hokkaido and northern Honshu. In addition, fighter escort would probably be limited to the approaches over the Sea of Japan and Hokkaido and perhaps northern Honshu.

75. The Soviet capacity to conduct airstrikes against Japan, however, must be viewed in the light of Japan's limited capacity for air defense.[10] Japanese ground-based air defenses—HAWK and Nike surface-to-air missile (SAM) groups—are not sufficient to defend against a determined Soviet air attack [redacted]

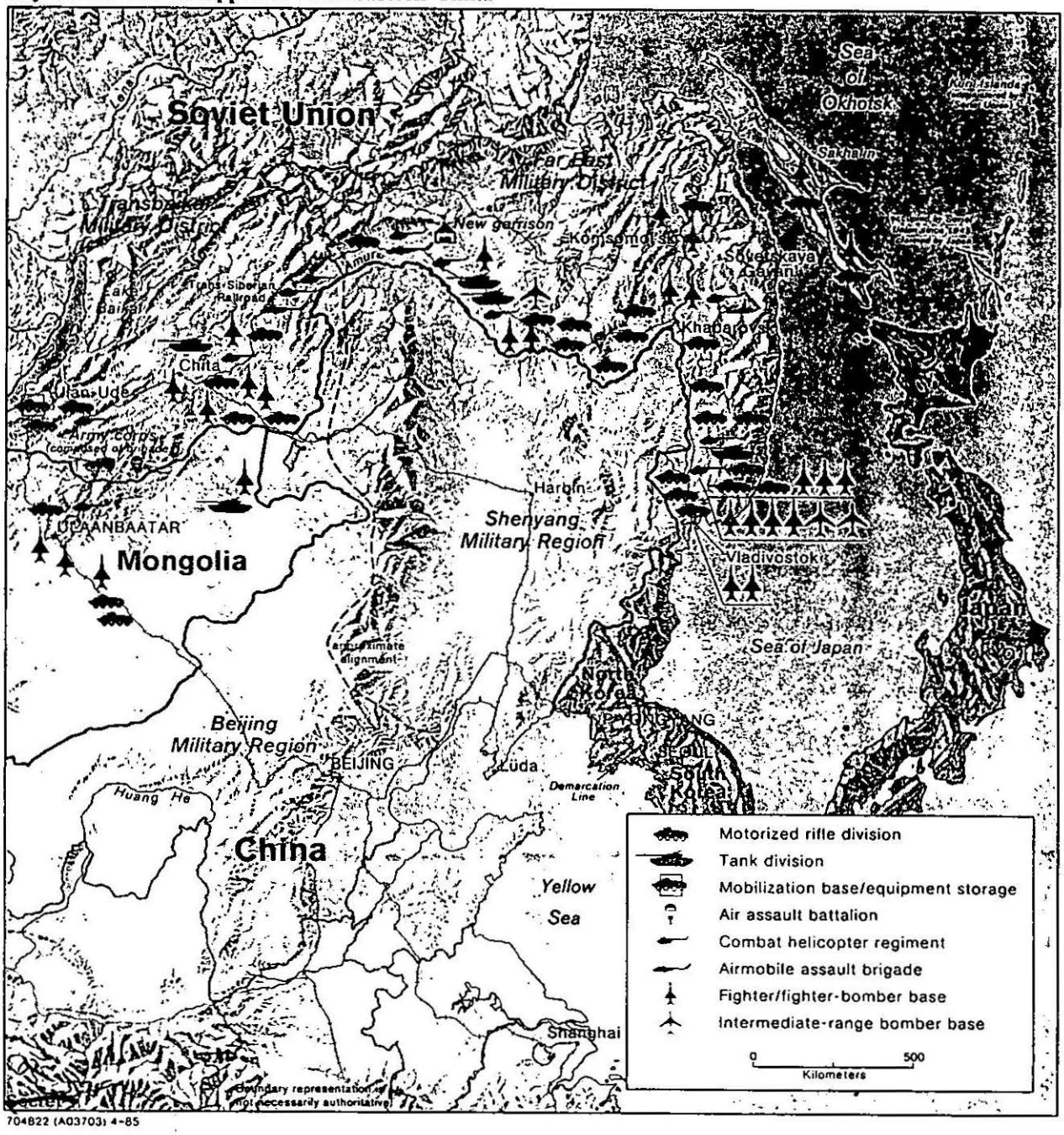
The Japanese Defense Agency hopes to purchase some Patriot SAMs, perhaps as early as 1985, to replace the Nike system. In addition, Japanese defense firms plan to acquire production licenses for the Patriot to help develop their own missile program. In the meantime, however, the brunt of the attack would have to be borne by Japan's fighters. They could inflict heavy casualties on attacking Soviet air forces, but could not stand up to a sustained Soviet attack.

76. The Soviets could not invade the Japanese main islands without significantly drawing down their ground and air forces opposite China. In the case of ground forces, the only available units close to Japan

are those divisions that border northeastern China (see figure 5). They are crucial to the defense of Vladivostok in the east and the Trans-Siberian Railroad in the north, and the Soviets could ill afford to commit any of them against Japan if there were even a remote chance that China might enter the war. (s)

77. Even an attack limited to Hokkaido—which is defended by four Japanese divisions—would require on the order of seven to eight Soviet divisions (given the Soviets' propensity for absolute force superiority). They would have to be moved on merchant ships and landed after the naval infantry and air assault troops had seized a beachhead. Before undertaking such a venture, the Soviets would have to attain air superiority in the northwestern Pacific. This would entail the destruction of any US aircraft carriers and cruise-

Figure 5
Key Soviet Forces Opposite Northeastern China



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missile-armed platforms in the area, the elimination of US airbases in Japan and Korea, and the overcoming of Japanese air defenses.

78. An invasion of Hokkaido would entail a major reallocation of forces and would significantly limit the Soviet capacity for operations against China. Moscow would have to consider whether the benefits to be obtained by occupying Hokkaido would justify the extensive and risky operations such an undertaking would entail. As long as they control the Kuril Islands, the Soviets are virtually guaranteed access to the northwestern Pacific. Possession of Hokkaido would improve the Soviet capacity to protect the SSBN bastions in the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, but Moscow's capability for SSBN defense in narrow, confined waters—especially in this region—is already quite good and will improve as new fixed underwater detection systems are fielded.

79. Soviet forces opposite Japan—on Sakhalin and the Kurils—are clearly configured for defensive rather than offensive missions. They are strong in coastal and air defense but generally lacking in mobility.

80. Except for one opposing view,[11] the Intelligence Community believes that an invasion of Japan—even one limited to Hokkaido—would entail operations beyond those the Soviets would want to undertake in the Far East during a NATO-Pact war.

Soviet Capabilities Against China

81. Soviet forces in the Far Eastern TMO have the capability to stop a Chinese attack against the Soviet Union and to mount a counterattack quickly. They also have the capacity to launch limited offensives into northern China—both east and west of Mongolia. The initial Soviet advance would be facilitated somewhat by the manner in which Chinese forces are deployed. The Chinese employ a defense in depth in which an invading force would be confronted with successively larger and better equipped units. The major ground force units are organized into a series of defensive areas well back (150 to 300 km) from the border in the first terrain suitable for defense, but well forward of Beijing and industrial centers in the southern Shenyang Military Region (MR). China's major maneuver forces are located behind the defensive areas in position to react to enemy incursions.

82. *A Limited Attack Into Northeastern China.* Despite the qualitative superiority of Soviet forces, an attack across the Amur-Ussuri River border into northeastern China would not be easy. The Soviets could probably quickly seize an area to a depth of about 200 kilometers. Beyond that, however, they would have much greater difficulty as they confronted Chinese main-force units. The Chinese greatly outnumber the Soviets in the area, and their lines of communication (LOCs) are much shorter. The logistic advantages, therefore, would be on the Chinese side.

83. The Soviets could probably advance to the area of Harbin (about 400 to 500 km) inside the border. If they wanted to hold the area, however, they would require reinforcements. Such reinforcements would have to come from either the strategic reserve or from units that have missions against NATO. Chinese reinforcements, on the other hand, would be available from the southern Shenyang and Beijing MRs, and subsequently from the central reserve units in the Wuhan MR.

84. Because of the great distance separating northeastern China from the western USSR, resupplying and reinforcing forces operating in the region would be a major problem for the Soviets. In eastern Siberia, the Soviets are dependent on the double-track Trans-Siberian Railroad, which, in following the Amur River, runs for a long distance in the immediate vicinity of the Chinese border. It would be vulnerable to interdiction, especially in the winter when the river is frozen. Russia lost the war with Japan in 1905 in large part because of the inability of the (then) single-track railroad to supply and reinforce the Czar's troops in Manchuria. When the Baikal-Amur Mainline Railroad becomes operational (see paragraph 105), the situation will be improved somewhat for Moscow, but logistic support of units in the Far East will still be a problem.

85. Because of the vulnerability of their land-based supply lines, the Soviets have made substantial efforts to develop their logistic base in the Far East. They have large amounts of combat equipment in storage depots. Although the Soviets have a large number of airfields in the Far East, the number of transport aircraft in the region is low, and a major airlift would require a transfer of aircraft from the European theater. Airlift alone, however, could not provide the

[11] *The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes it is likely that a NATO-Warsaw Pact war would be global in scale. In that event, the Soviet General Staff would put high priority on early control of the La Perouse Strait into the Sea of Japan. To achieve this without seizing Hokkaido is difficult to envision. Therefore, the Army view holds that Soviet operations against Hokkaido are very likely.*

extensive reinforcement that would be required if the Soviets attempted to occupy northeastern China as far as Beijing.

86. *A Major Offensive Into China.* To take and hold all northeastern China, including Beijing, the Soviets would have to either use nuclear weapons or at least double their forces in the Far East. This judgment is based on an analysis of opposing forces in the region and historical precedent. As for Soviet views on conventional force ratios, Soviet strategists, when formulating plans for the Manchurian campaign in 1945 (which provided for an attack to a depth of 600 to 800 kilometers), insisted on both a substantial superiority over the Japanese in quality of equipment (which they also have over China) and a numerical force superiority over the Japanese (which they could not achieve over China). The Soviets assembled a force of about 80 divisions to attack a Japanese force that had been largely depleted as a result of Japan's war effort against the United States, Britain, and China.

87. The situation the Soviets face in China today is much the opposite. The Chinese have prepared a defense in depth and have ample forces—the world's largest standing army—to implement it. We do not believe the Soviets would attempt an attack with Beijing as its objective with fewer than 100 divisions. This would require the movement of an additional 50 Soviet divisions to the Far East. Many of them would have to come from the force opposite NATO, a move that Moscow would almost certainly be unwilling to make.

88. *An Attack Into Northwestern China.* While Beijing enjoys the advantage in manpower and logistics in the eastern sector of the Sino-Soviet border, the opposite applies to the western sector. In the Urumqi Military Region, Chinese forces are weak and are linked to China proper by just two secondary roads and a single-track railway. The Soviets, conversely, have ample forces in the area, and their LOCs are comparatively short. The Soviet task west of Mongolia would, therefore, be far less difficult than that in northeastern China.

Southwest Asia

89. Soviet forces in the Southern TMO are quite small in comparison with those in the other two theaters. The potential indigenous opposition is limited, however, and there are no indications that Moscow intends a major expansion of its forces in the region. The units most likely to be committed in the Southern TMO include the 30 divisions and 800 tactical aircraft in the MDs north of Iran and in Afghanistan, and the small naval contingent (routinely including about five combat vessels) in the Indian Ocean.

The Military Balance

90. The balance of forces on the Iranian border clearly favors Moscow. The Iranian Army was no match for Soviet forces in the region before the Iran-Iraq war began, and it is even less of a match now, with its units depleted and maldeployed. Iranian regular and paramilitary forces could not by themselves stop a Soviet invasion of their country. They could, however, delay the Soviet advance by occupying blocking positions in the rugged terrain that controls the approaches to Tehran and by interdicting Soviet lines of communication. They could also make any Soviet occupation long and costly by conducting guerrilla warfare similar to that which the Soviets face in Afghanistan.

91. Opposition by other nations in the region would depend largely on the scenario. Turkey, Iraq, and Pakistan would probably not come to the aid of Iran, but would fight if their own borders were threatened. The same applies to the Gulf Arab states, which are apparently forming a small rapid deployment force.

Soviet Capabilities

92. The Soviets have the capacity to conduct a variety of military operations in the Southern TMO.[12] These range from small cross-border forays into Iran or Pakistan in conjunction with operations in Afghanistan, to large-scale attacks to the Persian Gulf (see figure 6). In each case, the Soviets would have to consider the fact that any military action in the region could elicit a US response.

93. *Occupation of Azarbayjan.* The Soviets are clearly capable of occupying Azarbayjan in northwestern Iran. This is the most feasible Soviet option in the region from both the political and military points of view. Politically, the Soviets probably feel that the United States would be less likely to respond to an attack that did not clearly threaten Western vital interests. In addition, an attack limited to Azarbayjan would not be an immediate threat to Pakistan or the oil-producing nations south of the Persian Gulf.

94. Militarily, this would be the easiest option for the Soviets to execute. Force requirements, at least

[12] See NIE 11/39-83/D, *Soviet Forces and Capabilities in the Southern Theater of Military Operations.* (u)

Figure 6
Representative Soviet Attack Options in Iran and the Persian Gulf Region

Limited Invasion To Seize Azarbāyjān

Limited Invasion To Seize the Port of Bandar Beheshti in Baluchistan

Full-Scale Invasion of Iran

Invasion of the Persian Gulf Littoral

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initially, would be small—about five to seven divisions—as the Soviets could avoid most Iranian Army units. In addition, the attacking force would be within range of tactical air forces in the Soviet Union. This operation would be easiest to support logistically, because LOCs would be comparatively short and easy to secure. Moreover, this attack could be undertaken and completed quicker than any other, minimizing both the potential for organized Iranian opposition and the chance for the United States to respond. In this regard, the Soviets undoubtedly recognize that the United States would have difficulties countering a Soviet move into Azarbayjan, especially given the political situation in Iran.

95. Although the risks associated with this scenario are relatively low, so are the immediate gains. Occupation of Azarbayjan would not afford the Soviets any control over Iranian oil. An invasion restricted to Azarbayjan, moreover, would not markedly improve the Soviet capability to execute other limited options that could threaten NATO's access to Persian Gulf oil, such as an assault on the Strait of Hormuz, because Soviet air forces would not be able to provide effective fighter coverage over the Gulf. To attain such a capability, the Soviets would have to commit additional forces and extend their operations well into central and eastern Iran.

96. *Seizing a Gulf Port.* Faced with only indigenous opposition, the Soviets have the capacity to conduct an overland attack with three to five divisions to seize a port on the Gulf of Oman or on the Arabian Sea. An attack against the Gulf, however, would be much more difficult than an invasion of Azarbayjan. It would probably be launched out of Afghanistan, and the Soviets would have to at least maintain—and probably increase—their forces there to provide security for the attacking force. Moreover, Soviet LOCs would extend from the USSR through Afghanistan to the coast—a distance of almost 2,000 km over very difficult terrain. They would be vulnerable to interdiction by the Afghan resistance, as well as Iranian or Pakistani forces.

97. Any operation against the Gulf would also threaten Western interests in the region. The Soviets probably would assume that their forces would be subject to attack by US forces, particularly carrier aircraft. They undoubtedly realize that it would be easier for the United States to counter rapidly an attack in this area than one in Azarbayjan and that it would be extremely difficult for them to take or hold a Gulf port if their ground units and LOCs were subject to interdiction by US forces. The Soviets, therefore, would probably have to prepare a contingency plan to engage US aircraft carriers in the Arabian Sea as part of any military move against the Gulf. They would have to weigh the risk of engaging US forces in an area where they could regard the United States as holding an air and naval advantage, against the limited short-term gains afforded by possession of a Gulf port. On balance, this would be an unattractive option for the Soviets during a multitheater war.

98. *A Full-Scale Invasion and Occupation of Iran.* The Soviets have sufficient ground and tactical air forces in the Southern TMO to conduct a general offensive into Iran with the objective of advancing to the Persian Gulf and occupying the country. A major invasion of Iran would be an extremely difficult operation for the Soviets to execute. Constraints would include determined and protracted Iranian resistance, the highly constricted terrain, difficulties in providing logistic support for both ground and air forces, and the short combat radii of Soviet tactical fighter aircraft.

99. The ground force requirement would be on the order of 20 to 25 divisions. The campaign would require at least a month of preparation, and its execution would be very time consuming, as the forces moved through difficult terrain with extended LOCs and with little room to deploy or maneuver. Depending on the degree of Iranian resistance, it could well take the Soviets six to 12 weeks to occupy the Khuzestan oilfields and seize key oil facilities on the Gulf. They could probably occupy the western and southern littoral of the Gulf—from Kuwait to Oman—with an additional 10 to 15 divisions. This would entail the transfer of five to 15 divisions to the Southern TMO from other parts of the USSR, making this a very unlikely option during a global war.

SOVIET CAPABILITIES FOR MULTITHEATER WAR

100. The Soviet Union—together with its Warsaw Pact allies—has the capability to conduct simultaneous military operations in Europe, East Asia, and Southwest Asia. Operations against China, however, would have to be limited in scope. Campaigns in the three regions—controlled by TMO high commands—could be conducted largely independently of one another. Operations in the three TMOs opposite NATO would, of course, have to be coordinated. The TMO high commands would operate under the general direction of the General Staff in Moscow, which would retain control over those forces not specifically assigned to the theater commanders, including most units in the

central USSR, several airborne divisions, and some air armies and transport aircraft.

101. Logistic stocks in the Western TMO opposite NATO's center are believed sufficient to sustain Pact units in combat for at least 90 days. Our data on Soviet stockpiles on NATO's flanks and in the Far Eastern and Southern TMOs are not as good as they are on stocks in the Western TMO. As a result of recent improvements in logistic infrastructure as well as an increase in stockpiles, the Soviets probably have sufficient stocks in the eastern USSR to support limited operations against China (of the type described in this Estimate) for at least 90 days. Stockpiles in the southern USSR are probably sufficient to support forces operating in Iran for a like period. If the Soviets limited their operations in Iran to Azarbayjan, logistic stocks in the Caucasus would be sufficient to sustain a force of five to seven divisions in low-intensity combat—the type the Soviets would experience there—for an indefinite period. The main logistic problem the Soviets would be likely to face in Iran would be, not a shortage of supplies, but rather getting those supplies from the southern USSR to the units as they advanced deeper into Iran over very primitive and vulnerable LOCs.

102. If a war in all three theaters continued beyond two or three months, the Soviet capacity to conduct offensive operations in the Far East and the Gulf region would begin to show strains. Moscow would have to consider that continued offensives in these theaters could develop into a long-term and large-scale commitment of manpower and material that would compete with and ultimately could weaken the war effort in Europe.

Intertheater Transfer of Forces

103. In a multitheater war, the Soviets could transfer forces from one region to another to enhance their prospects for success or to respond to actions of their opponents. Our assessment of how the Soviets would probably view a transfer of forces among the three principal regions is based largely on our understanding of the priority the Soviets would assign to each region during a multitheater conflict, and the capabilities of Soviet forces in each theater. The strategic mobility of Soviet theater forces and their adaptability to fight in varying environments are also important considerations.

Strategic Mobility

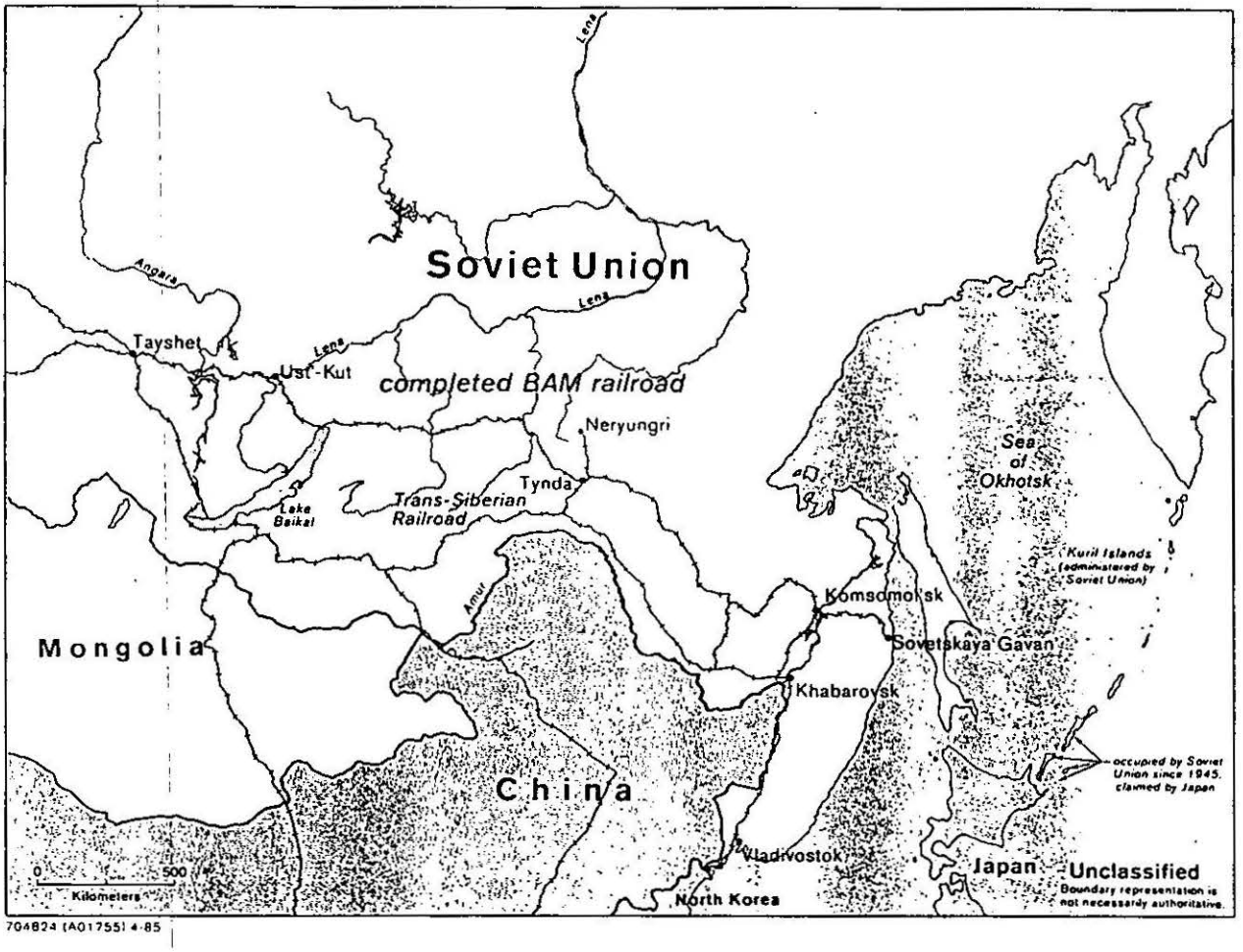
104. In fighting a multitheater war, the Soviet Union would enjoy the advantage of interior lines. Troop transfers could be made over the nation's railways, highways, inland waterways, and largely uncontested airspace. The Soviet Union conducted major troop redeployments in World War II, and has the capacity for similar or greater redeployments now. The largest such move during World War II was the west-east transfer of about 40 divisions over the Trans-Siberian Railroad in preparation for the attack into Manchuria. The process took about three months, although some equipment had been moved to the Far East earlier and stockpiled there.

105. The Trans-Siberian Railroad is still the main east-west rail link in the Soviet Union. When the Baikal-Amur-Mainline (BAM) Railroad becomes operational in the late 1980s (the last link was laid in September 1984), the rail capacity between Lake Baikal and the Pacific coast will increase by about 50 percent. The BAM will also be less vulnerable to interdiction than the Trans-Siberian line because it follows a course 100 to 300 miles north of the Chinese border (see figure 7). The BAM, however, will not affect the Soviet capacity to move forces between the western or central USSR and the Lake Baikal region, and hence will not significantly increase the Soviet capacity to shift forces between Europe and the Far East.

106. Transport aircraft, both military and civil, could be used to a lesser degree to transport troops and supplies between the eastern and western USSR. The primary mission of Soviet Military Transport Aviation (VTA) is to support airborne forces, but the Soviets also use VTA to move ordinary troops, minus heavy equipment such as tanks, in exercises. The capacity of VTA has expanded dramatically over the last decade. However, this increase has been more than offset by additional heavy equipment in airborne divisions and by the establishment of air assault units, which are prime competitors for VTA aircraft. As a result, the net capability of VTA for simultaneous airlift continues to be either the combat and combat support elements of about six airborne regiments or a full airborne division. The civil airline, Aeroflot, has a limited cargo capability and is used chiefly for passenger travel, especially during the semiannual troop rotation. Since the use of VTA and Aeroflot for intertheater transfers would severely restrict the conduct of airborne and air assault operations, we do not expect the Soviets to use aircraft to move heavy units, such as tank or motorized rifle divisions.

107. If the Soviets decided to transfer forces into or out of the Southern TMO, they could use the Caspian Sea as well as transport aircraft, roads, and railroads.

Figure 7
Baikal-Amur Mainline Railroad (BAM)



Adaptability of Theater Forces

108. Another factor Soviet planners would have to consider is whether forces designed to fight in one theater are readily adaptable for fighting in another. The structure of the Soviet ground units in the Caucasus—many with small complements of tanks and armored personnel carriers, and with light towed artillery rather than heavier self-propelled models—is ideal for employment in the mountainous terrain of Iran and eastern Turkey. These units could also be used in the rugged terrain of northeastern China, but would have to be transported several thousand miles to fight there. Lacking in armor, firepower, and tactical mobility, they would be less well suited against NATO's center. (s)

109. Soviet ground forces in the Far East use tanks older than those of the units in the west, and, while these tanks compare favorably with those of the Chinese, they would be vulnerable to NATO antitank weapons. Conversely, the modern, heavy frontline units opposite NATO are more sophisticated than required for missions against China. (s)

Risk Taking

110. Another factor that would bear heavily on any Soviet decision to transfer forces from one theater to another would be the degree of risk the Soviet leadership perceived and was willing to take. Traditionally, Soviet leaders have not been prone to take major risks in one area (by economizing their forces there) in order to maximize their military power in another. (s)

111. Stalin minimized his risks in late 1941 and early 1942 when he ordered the transfer of units (the exact number is unknown, but it probably exceeded 25 divisions) from Siberia, including many from opposite Manchuria, to bolster the defense of Moscow. There is

good evidence that he had already been informed—by his agent Sorge—that Japan had decided not to attack the Soviet Union, despite pressure from Germany to that end. The Kremlin, moreover, could have reasonably inferred that Japan—already at war with the United States and Britain and still mindful of its stunning defeat by the Soviets at Khalkhin-Gol—would be wary of attacking the USSR. Despite these facts, Moscow kept 40 divisions in the Far East throughout the war—even when they were desperately needed in the west, and even after Japanese forces in Manchuria had been depleted as a result of Japan's war effort against the Americans, British, and Chinese.

112. If Pact forces became involved in a protracted war with NATO, however, the Soviets would have one option with respect to China that they did not have with respect to Japan. They could adopt a strategy of massive retaliation against China—similar to the strategy the United States declared publicly when it enjoyed nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. By informing China that any attack against the Soviet Union would trigger a Soviet nuclear response, the Soviets might feel that they could transfer some forces from the Chinese frontier to the European theater. Such an assumption, however, would entail major risks for the Soviets, including the chance that Beijing might call Moscow's bluff, and that the Kremlin might not be able to contain a nuclear war to one theater.

113. Since there is no credible military challenge to Soviet security from the Persian Gulf countries, the Soviets could be expected to economize their forces there to facilitate operations against NATO or even against China. Such a move would be virtually risk free.

114. A less likely and much riskier move for the Soviets would be to invade Iran before attacking Western Europe in the hope of diverting potential US reinforcements for NATO to the Persian Gulf. Soviet planners might calculate that they could exchange 10 to 15 of their poorly equipped and trained divisions from the Caucasus—which have only peripheral missions against NATO—for more critical US divisions, and divert US strategic lift assets away from NATO.

115. The Soviets know that Washington is concerned that a diversion of US forces to the Persian Gulf could have serious implications for the collective defense of Western Europe. They are also aware that, despite pressures from the United States, the European NATO nations have taken no meaningful steps to compensate for such a diversion by improving their own forces. Soviet planners almost certainly would calculate that the logistic problems they would face in such an attack would not be as great as those the United States would face in moving troops to the Persian Gulf, or later in simultaneously supporting operations in the Gulf area and reinforcing Western Europe. Also in this scenario, the Soviets might elect to allow time for the United States to deploy its forces, land them in the area, and move inland. Once the US forces were firmly committed, the Soviets might well accept a stalemate in Iran, shifting as much of their air assets as possible toward NATO. They might also attempt to close the Suez Canal to further impede the transfer of US forces.

116. This option, however, would entail costs that the Soviets would not be able to calculate confidently. In the first place, they could not be assured of how the United States would respond or if, in fact, any significant number of US forces would actually be diverted to this area. Moreover, such a diversionary attack would make sense only if the international situation were such that the Soviets believed war with NATO were either desirable or inevitable. They would have to assume, however, that a Soviet attack into Iran could trigger NATO mobilization and the heightened readiness of NATO forces. If it did, the advantages of any diversion of US forces might be more than offset by the reduced possibility that the Warsaw Pact could achieve any degree of surprise with regard to its attack on NATO. Other Soviet uncertainties would include the degree to which air assets committed to the feint could suffer attrition, reducing their availability for operations against NATO and the chance that regional states such as Pakistan might be drawn into the conflict.

Transfer of Forces From Europe to the Far East

117. We cannot envision the circumstance in which Moscow would conduct a major drawdown of its forces opposite NATO to attack China. Such a move would jeopardize any chance the Soviets have for a quick victory in Europe and, in view of China's lack of capacity to mount and sustain a coordinated attack into Soviet territory, would be unnecessary.

118. In the unlikely event of a Chinese attack, Soviet forces along the border are sufficient to repulse it and to mount a counterattack to eject Chinese forces. The Soviets would almost certainly not undertake larger operations against China until they had concluded a war in Europe, in view of the extensive reinforcements that would be required.

Transfer of Forces From the Far East to Europe

119. It is conceivable that before attacking NATO the Soviets would transfer some of their ground and air units from the eastern frontier to the western USSR to beef up their second-echelon forces and reserves in the western and central MDs. There is precedent for such a move—the transfer of units from Siberia to defend Moscow in World War II—although it is not likely that the circumstances (the Soviet army on defense) will be repeated. Any future Soviet campaign in Europe would be offensive from the outset.

120. Under these circumstances, and given the fact that the Pact already enjoys a superiority in conventional forces in Europe, Pact planners would probably see no urgency for a large-scale transfer of forces from east to west. In fact, such a transfer could do more harm than good. To influence the Pact's prospects for a quick victory in Europe, the transfer would have to get under way several months before the Pact attack, providing clear warning to NATO, and perhaps triggering mobilization in the West European countries and the implementation of SACEUR's Rapid Reinforcement Plan for the transatlantic reinforcement of NATO's ground and air forces. Such actions could more than offset any increased numerical advantage the Soviets might gain.

121. The Soviets, moreover, obviously do not consider their forces opposite China excessive to their needs. In numbers, the ground forces are only slightly larger than the force the Soviets maintained opposite Manchuria in World War II (considering that several divisions now on Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands could not participate in a campaign in China). While the pace of the quantitative buildup in Soviet conventional forces along the border has tapered off from that of the late 1960s and early 1970s, force modernization continues. In addition, nondivisional ground units such as attack helicopter regiments and multiple rocket launcher regiments are being increased.

122. The weight of the Soviet strategic nuclear threat directed against China is also continuing to grow. The Soviets have more than 150 SS-20 launchers in Siberia and an additional 50 in the central USSR that could hit targets in western China. These are in addition to the considerable array of other Soviet nuclear weapons—ICBMs, over 200 Backfire and Badger bombers, shorter range ballistic missiles, tactical aircraft—and older ballistic missile submarines in the Sea of Japan.

123. Soviet leaders evidently consider the maintenance of strong military forces in the eastern USSR not only indispensable to the security of their borders, but also as insurance against a two-front war. They probably believe that a strong military presence along the border would deter a Chinese attack in the event of a NATO-Pact war, although we have no reason to believe the Chinese would attack the Soviet Union, even under such circumstances. In the event of a NATO-Pact war, therefore, while a minor shift of Soviet ground and air units away from China is feasible, a major transfer of forces is unlikely.

Transfer of Forces To or From Southwest Asia

124. It is highly unlikely that, in the context of a global war, the Soviets would transfer large forces into the Southern TMO. Ground and tactical air units now in this theater are sufficient to undertake operations up to and including a full-scale invasion of Iran, and—given the limited maneuver room there—additional ground units would probably not be desirable, even if they were available. Ground and tactical air reinforcements would be required if the Soviets were to continue their attack south of the Persian Gulf.

125. Before the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron could seriously challenge Western naval forces in the area, threaten US sea lines of communication, or make a meaningful contribution to any Soviet land campaign in the Southern TMO, it would require substantial augmentation. Some augmentation could come from Soviet Pacific Fleet forces deployed to Vietnam and the South China Sea, normally three to five general purpose submarines, two to six surface combatants, and about 20 auxiliaries. More substantial augmentation, however, would require that the Soviets significantly reduce their capabilities in the other, more vital theaters:

- The Pacific Fleet, which provides the bulk of forces in the Indian Ocean, has priority missions in wartime to protect the SSBN force, be prepared to conduct strategic nuclear strikes, and establish sea control in the Seas of Okhotsk and Japan and the area adjacent to the Kamchatka Peninsula and the Kuril Island chain to defend against aircraft carriers and cruise-missile-launching platforms.
- The Baltic and Black Sea Fleets, which also contribute ships to the Indian Ocean Squadron, also have high-priority missions against NATO.

During a global war, rather than reinforcing the Indian Ocean Squadron, the Soviets probably would recall some units from the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, particularly if US aircraft carriers were not present.

126. If Western forces, particularly aircraft carriers, were operating near the Persian Gulf, however, the Soviets might rebase some strategic aviation bombers in the southern USSR to attack them to prevent their use against the Soviet Union and to preclude their transfer to another theater.

127. The Soviets would probably limit their ground operations in the Southern TMO—probably to the point of adopting a defensive posture opposite Iran—and commit the majority of their units in the Caucasus against NATO's southern flank in Turkey. If additional ground forces were needed in other areas, Moscow might well limit its operations in eastern Turkey, assign security missions along the Iranian border to paramilitary units, and transfer some divisions from the Caucasus to other theaters.

OUTLOOK

128. The position of primacy that NATO occupies in Soviet thinking is not likely to change. No other group of nations outside the Soviet camp has the potential to achieve the military power of NATO. The Soviets will continue to judge NATO on its capabilities, not its intentions, and will improve their forces accordingly.[13]

129. The Soviets will attempt, with little success, to persuade the East European countries to spend more money on their armed forces. The result will be a continually widening gap between the capabilities of the best Soviet units and those of the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries. The Soviet leadership is likely to pay increased attention to this problem as NATO's strategy for attacking follow-on forces evolves, placing a premium on the capacity of Pact first-echelon units to overcome NATO defenses quickly.

130. As both East and West experiment with new concepts for land warfare in Central Europe, nuclear weapons—both theater and strategic—will continue to play an important, perhaps dominant, role in the strategy of both alliances. This will result partly from the reluctance of most West European nations to commit themselves to the spending necessary to raise the nuclear threshold (by improving their conventional forces at a faster rate than the Soviets improve theirs) and partly because some European leaders feel strongly that it is precisely nuclear weapons that deter war in Europe by ultimately tying the United States to the defense of the continent. They will argue that a NATO strategy based primarily on conventional forces would be less of a deterrent, and could result in an East-West conflict limited to Europe. [

] Both superpowers are following a similar course, ensuring that nuclear weapons will continue to have the potential to resolve any NATO-Pact conflict in Europe.

131. Ongoing developments indicate that the Far East will continue to play a major—if secondary—role in Soviet military strategy. The Soviets will still worry about the prospect of China's taking advantage of a Pact-NATO conflict to settle old scores such as territorial claims. There are some signs of progress in Sino-Soviet relations, but the Soviets are not likely to meet any of the preconditions the Chinese have set for improved relations—a reduction of Soviet military forces along the Chinese frontier, a withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, and an end to Soviet support for the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. On the last point, periodic clashes on the Vietnamese-Chinese border will only serve to focus Chinese attention on the problem. Nor will Soviet-Japanese relations improve markedly, as Moscow will refuse to even discuss with Tokyo the issue of the disputed Northern Territories. The US-Sino-Japanese relationship, meanwhile, will probably move steadily if slowly forward. The Chinese clearly regard the Soviet Union as the principal threat to their security, and they need Western technology. [

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132. Moscow's principal objective in East Asia will be to increase its own influence—by expanding its military power—while at the same time containing China and reducing US and Japanese influence. In

[13] A comprehensive discussion of anticipated improvements to Warsaw Pact Theater Forces will appear in NIE 11-14-85/D, *Trends and Developments in Warsaw Pact Theater Forces, 1985-2000.*

pursuit of this objective, the Soviets will continue to build toward a force posture that will be viable even against the combined forces of the United States, China, and Japan, to hedge against the possibility of a worst case scenario. These efforts, however, will not be at the expense of Soviet forces facing NATO.

133. The military balance on the Sino-Soviet border will continue to be a mismatch of superior Chinese numbers against superior Soviet technology. The Soviets will make no attempt to match the Chinese numbers, but they will field military hardware of a caliber the Chinese cannot duplicate. The Chinese will continue to press for Western technologies—particularly from the United States, Japan, and West Germany—that have military application. Even if they acquire such technologies, however, they will have difficulty absorbing them because of shortcomings in industry and R&D facilities. In short, the imbalance in military forces along the Sino-Soviet border will grow even larger in favor of Moscow, but the Kremlin's options will still be limited because of China's reserves of manpower and its vast territory.

134. Southwest Asia—given its geostrategic position—will continue to be a prime arena for superpower competition as the Soviets seek to expand their influence in the Middle East, and the United States looks for ways to ensure Western access to Persian Gulf oil. Given the instability of the region, the potential for a superpower confrontation there will remain high. Nevertheless, Moscow's actions in the area will be guided more by political than military concerns. We do not expect a major effort to improve the Soviet military posture in the region, nor do we believe that Moscow feels such an effort is necessary.

135. The Soviet position in Afghanistan will weigh heavily on Moscow's future capacity to conduct military operations in the Persian Gulf region. If that position improves—whether the result of declining resistance to Soviet occupation or improved capabilities of the Afghan Army—Moscow's capacity to conduct operations in the Gulf region will be enhanced. Some regular Soviet forces tied up in counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan would be freed for operations elsewhere, and Soviet land LOCs would be more secure.

136. An end to the war between Iran and Iraq would improve the capacity of both countries to resist a Soviet invasion—particularly in the longer term as both Iraqi and Iranian forces recovered from the war. Any postwar redeployment of Iranian units to northern Iran would also make a Soviet invasion of Azarbayjan more costly, although the Iranians, by themselves, could not prevent the Soviets from occupying Azarbayjan.

137. In sum, the Soviet Union will continue to posture its forces to fight in three principal theaters on its western, eastern, and southern borders. The priority of effort, however, will be toward the west. In the event of a global war, Moscow would subordinate its actions in all other theaters to the war against NATO. In all likelihood, as long as it were at war with NATO, the Soviet Union would not undertake major campaigns in the other theaters without being forced to do so, but would attack any US forces in these theaters that threatened the USSR.

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