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# **GORBACHEV'S VLADIVOSTOK INITIATIVES**

by

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*Beijing, April 1990*

**GORBACHEV'S VLADIVOSTOK INITIATIVES**

**--Implications for Power Balance  
in Northeast Asia**

A sub-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Arts in Strategic Studies, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University

**To My Wife and Our Son**

## DECLARATION

This sub-thesis is my own work and all sources used have been acknowledged.

In addition, the views expressed in this sub-thesis do not necessarily represent the official views of China.

A handwritten signature in blue ink is positioned to the left of a red square seal. The seal contains some illegible characters, likely a personal or official stamp.

Ju Fang Qun

*Beijing, April 1990*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The situation in the Far East as a whole, in Asia and the oceanic expanses adjoining it, where we are permanent inhabitants and seafarers of long standing, is to us of a national, state interest.

--Mikhail Gorbachev

July 1986

### **Introduction**

In July 1986, sixteen months after becoming General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev made a three-week tour of the Soviet Far East. He visited main cities and towns, industrial centres, agricultural communities, as well as military and naval installations. Most important of all, Gorbachev delivered an important speech at Vladivostok on July 28.<sup>1</sup> Apart from a lengthy consideration of domestic policy issues, Gorbachev defined in his speech Soviet interests, attitudes and aims in Asia and the Pacific in a fresh light, taking Asian convictions and views (as he saw them) into consideration.

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1. The full text of Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech on July 28, 1986 can be found in Russian in all Soviet newspapers of July 29, 1986 and in English in "Vladivostok is awarded the Order of Lenin", Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1986, pp.3-40. Hereafter cited as **Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech**.

Gorbachev came to power at a time when the Soviet Union urgently needed economic reinvigoration at home, yet his predecessors, especially Brezhnev, had given insufficient attention to developing a comprehensive strategy for the Asian-Pacific region. Soviet leaders, as Ross Babbage argued, had failed to appreciate the region's economic dynamism and had tended to be overly pre-occupied with security issues.<sup>2</sup> Their drive to build up their military power in the region had created serious political obstacles in external relations with neighbouring countries as important as China, Japan and the United States. As a result, the Soviet Union was rather isolated in the region.

With this inheritance, it is not surprising that Gorbachev came to realise the need to replace the Soviet image of being "an enemy" with one of being "a friend" in the region. Political solutions needed to be found without delay to the "many tangled knots" and potentially dangerous security situations. A beginning needed to be made with bilateral and multilateral cooperation among regional states to remove the acuteness of military confrontation in various parts of Asia, and to overcome the problems of developing the Soviet Far East.

Since he took office in March 1985, Gorbachev has shown greater flexibility and energy than his predecessors in

2. *Ross Babbage, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.10*

Soviet policy-making towards the Asian-Pacific region, in an effort to reverse the decline of Soviet influence and improve its adverse regional situation. The quotation by Gorbachev at the beginning of this sub-thesis reflects that the Soviets have realised the importance of Northeast Asia and the adjacent area of the Pacific as an area in which Soviet influence must be sustained, and Soviet policies towards China, Japan and the United States must be given a new impetus and direction. Gorbachev introduced in his Vladivostok speech a series of fresh initiatives, aimed at persuading all countries in the region without exception that the Soviet Union genuinely wanted to improve regional relations.

What main determinants lay behind this major policy speech of Gorbachev's in Vladivostok? How much can Gorbachev match his peace gestures with deeds? The main object of this sub-thesis is to offer an analysis of the foreign policy aspects of Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech, so as to explore its implications for the power balance in Northeast Asia in the coming decade. The sub-thesis will concentrate on Northeast Asia, where most of the major powers are either located or involved: though references will be made to other areas where appropriate. The sub-thesis is divided into the following four chapters:

### Chapter 1: Gorbachev's Initiatives

This chapter discusses Gorbachev's geographic assertion of the Soviet Union as an Asian-Pacific country; and then examines Gorbachev's fresh diplomatic gestures to China, Japan and the United States.

### Chapter 2: Major Determinants

This chapter explores those major determinants, such as the Soviet strategic environment in Northeast Asia, security concerns about the Soviet Union's eastern frontiers and domestic economic development in Siberia and the Soviet Far East.

### Chapter 3: The Scope of Change Under Gorbachev

This chapter examines Gorbachev's inheritance, discusses his new security thinking on reasonable sufficiency for defence, equal security and nuclear war, and then explores the impact on Soviet security concerns.

### Chapter 4: Implications for the Power Balance

This chapter discusses the prospects for improved bilateral Sino-Soviet and Japanese-Soviet relations in light of recent developments, as well as Chinese and Japanese perceptions of Soviet threats to their respective security environments. In addition, as US policy is an important factor in the regional balance of power, Soviet-American relations and their impact on

regional security and stability, as well as the prospects for the US regional position will also be examined.

Finally, this sub-thesis will conclude with a summary of the trends in the regional balance of power in the coming decade.

The analytical framework of this sub-thesis is essentially that of balance of power, and the "rational actor" model is implicitly followed, basically because alternative models such as the bureaucratic or organisational require more information than is readily available, particularly where Soviet and Chinese policies are concerned.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Gorbachev's Initiatives**

Following a lengthy consideration of the need for accelerated economic development of the Soviet Far East, Gorbachev introduced in his Vladivostok speech a series of proposals and initiatives for good and peaceful relations with all USSR neighbours. Gorbachev appeared to have two major motives: one, to establish the Soviet Union's identity as an Asian-Pacific power; the other, to convey his foreign policy flexibility in improving relations with China, expanding economic cooperation with Japan, as well as recognizing the role of the United States in the Asian-Pacific region.

This chapter discusses Gorbachev's geographic assertion of the Soviet Union as an Asian-Pacific country; and then examines Gorbachev's fresh diplomatic gestures to China, Japan and the United States.

#### **1.1 The Soviet Geographic Identity**

Because of the significance of his speech, the background to Gorbachev's selection of Vladivostok as its venue bears examination. Vladivostok, which means "Rule the East" in Russian, is the largest city in the Soviet Far East and the principal base for the numerically largest

Soviet fleet--the Pacific Fleet. Traditionally, the Soviet Far East is regarded in Moscow as the country's outpost on the Pacific--an arena of critical importance for the Soviet Union to establish itself as a Pacific power. However, in the Asian-Pacific region, the Soviets have long had a feeling of uncertainty about their country's proper identity. Despite its actual occupation of large Asian territories, amounting to one-third of Asia, the country has been generally regarded in Asia as a European country even though it is described by Tibor Szamuely as being "in Europe but not of it".<sup>1</sup> Yet the Soviets believe that they have important and justifiable interests in the region. Gorbachev's trip to this seaside city clearly served to demonstrate the Soviet Union's links with Asia and the Pacific which, as the Soviet Ambassador to Australia Evgeni Samoteikin put it, are "regions of direct national interest to this country".<sup>2</sup>

In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev asserted that:

[Because] a greater part of our country's territory lies east of the Urals, in Asia--in Siberia and the Far East...the Soviet Union is also an *Asian and Pacific country*. It is very much aware of the complex problems facing this vast region. They concern it directly. [emphasis added] <sup>3</sup>

1. *Tibor Szamuely, The Russian Tradition*, London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1974, p.8
2. *Evgeni Samoteikin, "The Goals of Vladivostok"*, in *Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer* (eds.), *The Soviet Union as an Asian Pacific Power--Implications of Gorbachev's 1986 Vladivostok Initiative*, Westview Press, Inc., 1986, p.12
3. *Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech*, pp.22 and 26



The Soviet Union is the world's largest country, with a territory of 22.4 million sq km--about one-sixth of the earth's land surface. Located across the top of the vast Eurasian continent, the country is traditionally divided along the Urals into a European and an Asian part.<sup>4</sup> (See Figure 1.1) Because of the geographical fact, the Soviet Union is the only country in the world, except Turkey, which can claim to be both a European and an Asian country.

Soviet territory east of the Urals comprised of Central Asia, Siberia and the Far East, covers an area of almost 17 million sq km--approximately 75 per cent of the Soviet total territory. (See Table 1.1) This is almost twice the size of Canada (9.976 million sq km), China (9.6 million sq km), the United States (9.36 million sq km), and slightly more than twice that of Australia (7.7 million sq km). In Northeast Asia, Siberia and the Soviet Far East border on China, Mongolia and North Korea; its Pacific coastline is close to Japan and Korea. And just

4. See USSR'76, *Novosti Press Agency Year Book*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1976, p.22. The Urals, a mountain chain running from the Kara Sea in the north to the steppes of Kazakhstan in the south, are usually considered to be the boundary between Europe and Asia. This division between continents, as *Geoffrey Jukes* argues, is purely arbitrary; the Ural Mountains (highest point 1,894 m) constitute only a minor natural barrier, with no major differences between the terrain, flora and fauna on the eastern and western sides...Politically, the distinction is even more meaningless, as the continental division along the Urals is not accompanied by any distinction of sovereignty or statehood: the territory both sides of it forms part of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the largest of the fifteen union republics which make up the Soviet Union. For a further discussion see *Geoffrey Jukes, The Soviet Union in Asia*, Angus and Robertson Publishers Pty Ltd, 1973, p.2)

across the Bering Sea, the Soviet Union has a near border with the United States, only seven kilometres between the Soviet Big Diomedes Island and the US Little Diomedes Island.

Although the major part of its territory lies in Asia rather than in Europe, the Soviet Union has traditionally been seen by local states in the region as not being one of their own. This is not because "the Soviet Union has chosen to remain European",<sup>5</sup> but because traditional Russian culture has had little in common with Asian culture and civilization--in the sense that, as Malcolm Mackintosh put it, Russian civilization, culture and patterns of behaviour in external relations cannot easily be linked to the traditions of the peoples and nations of Asia as they have developed in the Asian physical and human environment.<sup>6</sup>

Another major reason is that the present size of Soviet territory in Asia was the product of a long period of Russian territorial expansion eastwards and southwards, either by conquest or by treaty. (See Figure 1.2) The Russians annexed Siberia towards the end of the sixteenth century and reached the Pacific coast around 1638. By the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, they claimed all Siberia to the Pacific coast. For a time, they even expanded across the

5. *Gerald Segal*, "Introduction", in *Gerald Segal* (ed.), *The Soviet Union in East Asia*, Westview Press, Inc., 1983, p.2

6. *Malcolm Mackintosh*, "Soviet Attitudes towards East Asia", in *Gerald Segal* (ed.), *The Soviet Union in East Asia*, Westview Press, Inc., 1983, p.6

Bering Strait into Alaska, which remained Russian until sold to the United States in 1867. In the nineteenth century, the Russians annexed large territories from China. At the end of World War II, the Soviets recovered some of their post-Revolution losses and seized fresh territories from Japan. As a result, the Soviet Union now possesses a larger area of Asia than any other Asian country.

In recent years, there is a growing recognition in Moscow that "the Asian and Pacific part of the world will play an ever increasing role" in the development of the international situation.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, non-recognition of the Soviet Union's legitimacy and role in the region would be a blow to the younger-generation Soviet elite represented by Gorbachev who inherited a country with global superpower interests. Gorbachev grew up at a time when the Soviet Union's influence and prestige in Asia was greater than that of Tsarist Russia. The Soviet model had inspired a whole generation of Asian intellectuals, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. The Chinese communists called the victories of the Russian October Revolution and of the Soviet Union in World War II a prologue to the triumph of the people's revolution in China. In the age of post-war decolonization, Asia's independence movements against European colonial powers looked to Moscow for aid and counsel and as a possible model. But the Soviet

7. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.39

"Golden Age" was over by the 1970s mainly because of Moscow's heavily militarised foreign policy and uneasy relations along most of its borders in Asia.

There is no doubt that Gorbachev does not wish to see the Soviet Union as "the odd man out" when his country's economy urgently needs reinvigoration; a reinvigoration which might be accelerated markedly by integrating into the most dynamic region of the world economy, the Pacific basin. Gorbachev's trip served to signal that the vast Soviet territory in Asia is not merely a territorial extension of the European USSR but, in a realistic sense, makes the Soviet Union an Asian-Pacific country. Gorbachev's Vladivostok proposal for "building together new, fair relations in Asia and the Pacific" clearly reflected his intention to gain for the Soviet Union recognition as an Asian-Pacific country equal to other regional players: the United States, China, Japan and others, so as to engage in international relations "as an Asian-Pacific power as much as a European power".<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Fresh Diplomatic Gestures

In geostrategic terms, Northeast Asia is now the only region in the world where the national interests of the Soviet Union are interrelated with, interact directly on

8. *Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer, "Introduction", in Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer (ed.), The Soviet Union as an Asian Pacific Power: Implications of Gorbachev's 1986 Vladivostok Initiative, Westview Press, Macmillan Australia, 1987, p.2*

and overlap critically with those both of China and Japan--the two important regional powers with rising potential in international relations, as well as the United States--the rival superpower. Clearly, it is a region of direct political, economic and security concerns to the Soviet Union as it is to its potential adversaries--China, Japan, and the United States. Moreover, it is also a region of strategic significance to Soviet strategy, whether for the further expansion of Soviet influence in Asia and for the continuing growth of Soviet global power in the world, as outside powers tended to see it in the past, or an area vulnerable to hostile penetration in a two-front war, as Soviet strategy has tended to view it ever since 1941.<sup>9</sup>

In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev signified his foreign policy flexibility and intent to invigorate good and peaceful bilateral relations with the Soviet Union's adversarial neighbours--China, Japan, as well as the United States. However, while his speech was seen as designed principally to woo China and Japan, and it also contained signals to the United States to accept the Soviet Union as a Pacific power.

9. For example, Marshal Nikolai Orgarkov, in *Kommunist*, July 1981, and in *Armed Forces Communist*, No.14, 1980, p.26

## China

The most important single target of Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech was China. The priority given to China indicated his recognition of the need for a new approach to China's position and role in Northeast Asia as well as in the world. In the first place, Gorbachev reiterated Moscow's willingness to improve Sino-Soviet relations, by saying:

...the Soviet Union is prepared--at any time and at any level--to enter into discussion with China on additional measures for establishing an atmosphere of good-neighbourliness. We hope that the border dividing us (I would prefer to say linking) will become in the near future a line of peace and friendship.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Gorbachev also asserted:

History has entrusted the Soviet and Chinese peoples with an extremely responsible mission. Much in international development depends upon these two major socialist nations.<sup>11</sup>

This could be interpreted as a new element in Soviet thinking about China. It was also clear that China was regarded in Moscow as a critical factor in shaping the strategic balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. Since 1949, China's role in the global power balance dominated by the two contending superpowers has

10. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.29

11. Ibid.



evolved through several stages: from a close partnership with the Soviet Union during the tight bipolar structure of the cold war, through a period of hostile isolation in the loose structure of the 1960s, to a strategic leaning towards the United States as a counterweight to the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>12</sup> Now China, said Chinese Premier Li Peng in March 1988, "will pursue an independent foreign policy" and "will never attach itself to any big powers or align itself with or establish any strategic relationship with them."<sup>13</sup> Yet seen from Moscow, China in 1986 was showing greater interest in better relations with the United States than with the Soviet Union. In the event of a US-Soviet conflict, China would probably represent a threat to the Soviet Union, not to the United States.

There was little doubt that the Soviets wished to draw China away from any *de facto* alliance with the United States and Japan, so as to reduce the perceived risk of the three countries linking up against them, thereby causing the global "correlation of forces" to turn

12. This point is argued in *Charles D. Lovejoy, Jr., "China and Its Military Modernization: The Problem of Perspectives"*, in *Charles D. Lovejoy, Jr., and Bruce W. Waston (eds.), China's Military Reforms: International and Domestic Implications*, Westview Press Inc., 1986, (Preface)
13. *Li Peng, "Government Working Report"*, *People's Daily*, April 15, 1988. The report was delivered by Li Peng in the capacity of the Acting Premier of the State Council of China at the first session of the 7th National People's Congress (NPC) on March 25, 1988.

adversely for the Soviets.<sup>14</sup> Earlier in February 1986, at the 27th Party Congress, Gorbachev had said that "the distinctions in attitudes, in particular to a number of international problems, remain [between the Soviet Union and China]. But we also note something else--that in many cases we can work jointly, cooperate on an equal and principled basis...In thinking of the future, it may be said that the potentialities for cooperation between the USSR and China are enormous".<sup>15</sup> This marked a change from the Soviet Union's stance in 1976, and a further step in the attempt at rapprochement intended by Brezhnev in March 1982.<sup>16</sup>

Further, the Soviets would also like to ease tension with China, so as to create a peaceful environment along the border and thereby be able to redirect resources for acceleration of socio-economic development in Siberia and the Far East. Clearly, reduced tension between the two giant countries would be mutually beneficial, as would be greater economic cooperation. Both sides now needed a peaceful environment to revitalise their respective

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14. The "correlation of forces" is the term used in the Soviet Union to describe the power relationship between socialism and capitalism. It is a broader concept than the Western terms, "balance of power", or "balance of forces", for it embraces not only military, but also political, economic, moral elements, etc. For a discussion, see *David Holloway, The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1983, p.82. However, it is worth noting that in his speeches and writings Gorbachev hardly ever uses this term, in contrast to his predecessors such as Khrushchev and Brezhnev.
15. *Mikhail Gorbachev, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress"*, in *Robert Maxwell (ed.), M.S. Gorbachev: Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986, pp.80-81
16. "Brezhnev's Speech in Tashkent, March 24, 1982", *Pravda*, March 25, 1982



national economies, and seemed willing to further expand economic and cultural links and border trade.

Indeed, Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech contained a number of conciliatory shifts in Moscow's underlying attitude towards the disputes with China. The most significant overture was his announcement of intention to withdraw six regiments of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and a substantial number of Soviet troops from Mongolia. Now for the first time, a Soviet leader made a clear and public gesture to China by directly addressing the substance of the "three major obstacles"<sup>17</sup> which, in the Chinese view, had impeded any serious improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. This indicated that Gorbachev might be prepared to make a move on all of them although he did not describe the "obstacles" as such or link his proposals on them specifically to Soviet-Chinese relations.

In Vladivostok, Gorbachev also offered to compromise on the Sino-Soviet border issue along the Heilong River (Amur River), over which his predecessors had never showed any flexibility. He accepted that "the official Sino-Soviet border could pass along the main ship

17. In 1982, China claimed that the major obstacles to a full normalization of relations between China and the Soviet Union were: 1. withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Sino-Soviet border area and Mongolia; 2. withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; 3. ending of Soviet support for Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea. For a discussion, see *Yao Wenbin*, "Soviet Military Deployments in the Asian-Pacific Region: Implications for China's Security", in *Solomon and Kosaka* (ed.), *The Soviet Far East Military Buildup*, Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, p.103

channel",<sup>18</sup> as requested by China, not on the Chinese river bank as previously claimed by the Soviet Union. Moreover, Gorbachev highlighted additional areas for expanded contacts and cooperation, such as joint development of Amur River resources and space exploration.

Gorbachev did not in his Vladivostok speech make any specific offer to terminate support for Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea, which Beijing at that time regarded as a major obstacle to improved Sino-Soviet relations. He did, however, state that a solution to the Kampuchean issue "depends much on the normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations", and that "it is a sovereign matter of the governments and the leadership of both countries".<sup>19</sup> This could be taken as a hint to both Beijing and Hanoi that Soviet support for Vietnam in its dispute with China was not unconditional. This hint was reinforced by a passage elsewhere in his speech to the effect that "if the United States gave up its military presence, say, in the Philippines, we would not leave this step unanswered",<sup>20</sup> the most obvious "answer" being Soviet withdrawal from the bases in Vietnam. This withdrawal would, of course, nullify what had been the most significant Soviet strategic gain in Asia in recent years, but would have been more than adequately

18. This is known under international law as the "Thalweg" principle.

19. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.30

20. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.36

compensated by removal of the much larger US presence. It seems probable that the reference was aimed not so much at the US and Philippines governments as at those of Vietnam and China, by indicating that the bases, and the support for Vietnam which the Soviet presence implied, were linked to superpower rather than regional relations, not meant as "encirclement" of China, and not envisaged as a permanence. That this was the purpose behind the hints in the speech was confirmed by later events; Sino-Soviet relations were "normalised" in May 1989, by which time Vietnam had agreed to withdraw its forces from Kampuchea, a process completed by the end of 1989; and in January 1990, it was reported in the Western press, for example in the International Herald Tribune of January 16 1990, that all Soviet strike aircraft, major surface warships and submarines had been withdrawn from Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay during the preceding few weeks. This withdrawal was probably part of the detente with China, and for cost reduction, rather than linked to US activities in the Philippines.

### **Japan**

In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev expressed Moscow's respect for and recognition of Japan's economic successes, by saying:

*Japan has turned into a power of foremost importance. The country...has traversed a great*

path within a brief period, and has achieved outstanding successes in industry, trade, education, science and technology... [emphasis added] 21

Then in 1986, it was generally believed that Japan was a country with the third largest economy in the world, only smaller than those of the United States and the Soviet Union;<sup>22</sup> though some sources suggested that the Soviet economy might already been overtaken by Japan. Gorbachev's remark clearly underscored the need of the Soviets to learn from the Japanese people's unique capability to creatively master technology. Also implicit in his remark was Moscow's recognition that Japan's economic capacity and industrial technology could give a strong impetus to the economic revitalization and development of Siberia and the Soviet Far East to a level far beyond that which the Soviets could achieve on their own. Japan's cooperation could have a dramatic impact for the future of the entire Soviet economy. Moreover, a transformation in Soviet-Japanese economic relations, as Ross Babbage noted, could deal the Soviet Union into the economic dynamo of Northeast Asia to an extent that would

21. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.26

22. According to **The Military Balance 1988-1989**, in 1986, the GNP of the Soviet Union was \$US 1740-2230 bn and the GDP of Japan was \$US 2119.6 bn. See **The Military Balance 1988-1989**, IISS, London, 1988, pp.33 and 164. According the same source, in 1988, the GNP of the Soviet Union was \$US 1900-2487 bn and the GDP of Japan was \$US 2974.60 bn. See **The Military Balance 1989-1990**, IISS, London, 1989, pp.32 and 162

simply not be possible by other means.<sup>23</sup>

In his speech, Gorbachev clearly expressed Moscow's desire to promote economic ties and cooperation. He proposed establishing joint ventures in adjacent and nearby regions of the Soviet Union and Japan, and long-term cooperation in research on and comprehensive use of the ocean resources as well as programs for the peaceful study and use of space. It appeared that Gorbachev's motive for improving bilateral Soviet relations with Japan was largely economic and technical, through what he called "economic diplomacy" to secure Japanese assistance for the development of Siberia.

Gorbachev's proposals for greater Japanese involvement in the economic development of Siberia were clearly a gesture to Japan which, on the other side, also had some incentives for pursuing good neighbourly relations with the Soviet Union. However, Gorbachev's approach in handling bilateral Soviet relations with Japan made it clear that Moscow was not at that time prepared to make substantial concessions over the unresolved issue of the "Northern Territories" which the Soviet Union seized from

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23. *Ross Babbage*, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.6

Japan at the end of World War II.<sup>24</sup> In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev asserted:

The objective position of our two countries in the world demands profound cooperation on a sound and realistic basis, and *in a calm atmosphere free from problems of the past.* [emphasis added]<sup>25</sup>

This remark referred to the Soviet Union's possession--and militarisation--of the four disputed islands off the northeastern coast of Hokkaido. Discussion of this issue, with a promise of "tangible results", is likely to settle what Japan regards as the primary obstacle to improved Soviet-Japanese relations although it would be difficult politically for either Moscow or Tokyo to give significant ground over the Northern Territories issue. Without this issue being settled to Japan's satisfaction, the scope for Soviet-Japanese economic ties and cooperation would necessarily be limited. Nothing in Gorbachev's speech suggested a way of resolving this

24. In Japanese terminology, "the northern territorial issue" refers, in the broader sense, to all the territories north and northeast of Japan proper that were under Japanese sovereignty before World War II, encompassing southern Sakhalin (Karafuto) south of 50 northern latitude, the entire Kurile island chain, Shikotan and Habomai off Hokkaido. However, in the narrow sense, it refers to the southern Kuriles (comprising Etorofu and Kunashiri), Shikotan and Habomai. The official claim of the Japanese government now is confined to the second sense, that is, the four northern islands of Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu. Unless specified otherwise in this sub-thesis, the "northern territorial issue", or "Northern Territories" will refer to the four northern islands only. For further details about the territorial dispute, see *Young C. Kim*, "Japanese-Soviet Relations: Interaction of Politics, Economics and National Security", *The Washington Papers*, Vol.2, No.21, Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1974, pp.17-53, and also Wolf Mendl, "The Soviet Union and Japan", in *Gerald Segal* (ed.), *The Soviet Union in East Asia*, Westview Press, Inc., 1983, pp.65-67

25. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.30



issue; however, possible grounds for a compromise solution are discussed in chapter four.

Further, Gorbachev's search for closer economic cooperation with Japan also suggested Moscow's hope for more conciliatory relations. But he was uncertain how to deal with Japan's armaments policy or Japan's involvement with the United States. Gorbachev criticised Japan's armaments policy, but short of openly threatening Japan in counterproductive ways, as Paul Keal argued, there is not much that the Soviet Union can do to change the situation.<sup>26</sup> In the long term, Moscow would clearly like to loosen Japan's defence ties with the United States, in an effort to counter U.S. influence in Northeast Asia but it is prepared to be patient, if only because it has no alternative.

### The United States

The United States is clearly the primary rival of the Soviet Union in both global and regional terms. "The relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States is an extremely important factor in international politics," Gorbachev said shortly after his accession, "however we do not view the world solely through the prism of this relationship. We understand the importance

26. Paul Keal, "Implications for Northeast Asia", in Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer (eds.), *The Soviet Union as an Asian Pacific Power--Implications of Gorbachev's 1986 Vladivostok Initiative*, Westview Press, Inc., 1986, p.75

of other countries."<sup>27</sup> This statement hinted that he had doubts about the bi-polar model of the world, and wanted to repair the damage to Soviet diplomacy in the Asian-Pacific region inflicted by Brezhnev's bi-polar world outlook, rather than confine himself to playing out adversary relations with the United States. However, this did not in itself mean that Gorbachev's Soviet Union would not continue to compete with the United States for global power and spheres of influence. Its capacity to do so has been weakened by its economic and political problems, but if Gorbachev's attempts at reform are successful its capacity to compete would be restored. The balance he or her successors would wish to maintain between competition and cooperation cannot be forecast at this time. It can, however, be reasonably assumed that they would wish to prevent the emergence of a *de facto* anti-Soviet coalition including China in Northeast Asia. In his Vladivostok speech, while stressing Moscow's arms control proposals in the Asian-Pacific region, Gorbachev explicitly showed Moscow's intention to project the United States, and not the Soviet Union, as the "outside power" threatening regional security. He stated that:

...the Soviet Union is a dedicated advocate of disbanding the military groupings, renouncing the possession of military bases in Asia and in the Pacific Ocean and withdrawing troops from the territories of other countries...we are strongly

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27. Pravda, April 8, 1985



*opposed to the US attempts to extend NATO's "competence" to the entire world, including Asia and the Pacific Ocean. [emphasis added]* <sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Gorbachev's proposal for integrating the Asian-Pacific region into "the general process of establishing a comprehensive system of international security" also reflects this intention. This concept is a renewed version of a policy to create a collective security system in Asia which the Soviet leaders have intermittently been advancing since the late 1960s.

At the same time, Gorbachev unmistakably recognized US interests and role in the Pacific region, by saying:

We recognize clearly that the United States is a *great Pacific power*...Furthermore, the United States, undoubtedly, has important and legitimate economic and political interests in the region. No doubt, without the United States and its participation, it is not possible to resolve the problem of security and cooperation in the Pacific Ocean to the satisfaction of all nations in the region. [emphasis added] <sup>29</sup>

Gorbachev thus publicly recognized the global as well as American perception that the United States is the strongest Pacific power. Indeed, the most powerful US military forces outside the continental United States can be found in the Pacific, including the most extensive

28. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.33

29. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.31

unified military command (PACOM), the largest US fleet (the Seventh Fleet), and the largest US bases on foreign territory (the Subic naval base and Clark air base in the Philippines). All of this suggests that the perceived security interests of the United States are as deeply engaged in the region as they are in Europe.

Geopolitically speaking, Gorbachev's description of the United States as a Pacific power is accurate. However, its political implications are significant given his description of the Soviet Union as an Asian-Pacific country. Moscow's recognition of the United States as a Pacific power does not in any sense mean that the Soviets would accept the United States's power position as it is in the region without challenge. "We want America to participate," said Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa in an interview with *Far Eastern Economic Review* in 1986, "but the Pacific belongs to everybody...to all who live there. So when [US Deputy Defence Secretary Richard] Armitage says that the borders of the US extend 5,000 miles from the American West Coast, well that is rubbish--pure imperialism--and nobody can agree if America tries to convert the Pacific into its internal lake."<sup>30</sup> There can be little doubt that a special place in Soviet foreign policy priorities in the Asian-Pacific region goes to the role of the United States in the area. The vast Pacific Ocean is clearly viewed in Moscow as an

30. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 14, 1986, p.33

arena of vital significance for the Soviet Union to establish itself as a Pacific power, with an acknowledged role to play in solving security issues. Gorbachev's acknowledgment of the United States as a Pacific power could serve to probe US willingness to acknowledge and accommodate Soviet interests in the region.

Finally, Gorbachev also expressed Soviet intentions to strengthen friendship and promote bilateral relations with North Korea and Mongolia. This may have meant that in 1986 he as yet saw no need for major changes in relations with them. However, subsequent events-- withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Mongolia agreed by both Moscow and Ulan Bator, and apparent acquiescence in moves for internal political change there, and the assiduous buildup of trade and political relations with South Korea, tends to suggest the opposite.

## Chapter 2

### Major Determinants

In general, as R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby argued, for certain fairly long periods the formulation and conduct of Soviet foreign policy has been relatively less dependent on domestic factors than is true of most major powers.<sup>1</sup> An important point worth noting, however, is that the relationship between domestic and external factors is a dialectical one. In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev called not only for accelerated economic development of the Soviet Far East, but for good and peaceful relations with all neighbouring countries without exception. Gorbachev seemed more aware than his predecessors that foreign policy is tightly linked with domestic policy. According to the Soviet Ambassador to Australia Evgeni Samoteikin, "we simply won't be able to reach our goals at home in a hostile international environment, spending material and intellectual resources of our society on arms race and confrontation."<sup>2</sup> It is clear that in the Soviet Union domestic policy considerations are exerting a considerable influence on foreign policy-making.

1. R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby, "Domestic Determinants of Soviet Foreign Policy: Prospects for Change in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.1
2. Evgeni Samoteikin, "The Goals of Vladivostok", in *Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer* (eds.), *The Soviet Union as an Asian Pacific Power--Implications of Gorbachev's 1986 Vladivostok Initiative*, Westview Press, Inc., 1986, p.11

What determinants lay behind this major foreign policy speech of Gorbachev's in Vladivostok? It seems that it reflects that Moscow's foreign policies towards Northeast Asia are influenced by both the "many tangled knots" of external tensions and economic "pre-crisis" situations left behind by his predecessors. This chapter explores those major determinants, such as Soviet strategic environment in the region, security concerns about the Soviet Union's eastern frontiers and domestic economic development in Siberia and the Soviet Far East.

## 2.1 The Strategic Environment

The history of the Soviet Union since the end of World War II has been, as Geoffrey Jukes put it, "one of slow but steady movement from the position of an extremely strong regional power to that of a genuine global power, possessing weapons systems comparable to those of the other superpower, the United States".<sup>3</sup> There is little doubt that the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower, then with the second largest economy in the world, completely changed its international position, albeit buttressed mainly by its military rather than its economic strength.

During the periods of Gorbachev's recent predecessors--Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko,

3. *Geoffrey Jukes, "Soviet Strategy", in Desmond Ball (ed.), Strategy and Defence: Australian Essays, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986 (Second Impression), p.185*

the remarkable growth of Soviet military power in the Asian-Pacific region had, according to Harry Gelman, "cumulatively brought about a fundamental change in force posture, carrying with it an even more radical improvement in the Soviet position in the balance of forces in the East than...in the West".<sup>4</sup> However, the Soviet military buildup, as Ross Babbage noted, had not only failed to achieve a favourable regional balance of power but it had also generated fears of Soviet intentions in the region and undermined Moscow's broader economic and political objectives.<sup>5</sup>

The Soviet military buildup in the Pacific area was prompted by both regional and general factors. Regionally, deterioration in the relationship with China was followed by an increase in ground and air forces along the Sino-Soviet border. However, the principal factor prompting both numerical increases and qualitative improvement was a general one--the abandonment by the Soviet leadership after the overthrow of Khrushchev of his belief that a future general war would inevitably and quickly become nuclear. During Khrushchev's ascendancy there had been a number of signs that many of the military contested this belief and the principal conclusion he drew from it, that the certainty of ability

4. *Harry Gelman*, "The Soviet Union, East Asia and the West: The Kremlin's Calculus of Opportunities and Risks", IISS: *Adelphi Papers*, No.217, Spring 1987, p.3
5. *Ross Babbage*, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.9

to answer a nuclear attack with nuclear retaliation against American cities itself made deterrence possible, without any need to match American numbers of nuclear weapons or to maintain conventional forces at their mid-1950s level. After his overthrow in October 1964, Soviet strategic nuclear forces were built up relatively quickly towards approximate overall parity with those of the United States, and from 1966 onwards the conventional forces were in all cases modernised and in some cases increased in numbers as well, to meet the requirements of a new doctrinal point. This was that increased Soviet nuclear capacity might prevent a general war becoming nuclear, but equally might not deter it from breaking out; Soviet forces therefore had to be able to fight a large-scale conventional campaign and at least not lose it. And military planners had to assume that the United States, if confined to conventional warfare by fear of nuclear devastation, would attempt to wage such warfare as broadly as possible, making maximal use of the very elaborate US alliance system. In the mid-1960s, this gave a worst-case scenario of conventional warfare involving NATO along the Soviet bloc's western borders and territorial waters from the north coast to the Black Sea, and the Central Treaty Organisation in the south along the borders with Turkey and Iran. Further east the worst-case was of attack by the United States with its *de jure*



allies of Japan and South Korea, along with China as a *de facto* ally.

Measures taken to meet this scenario in the Far East involved substantial increases in ground, air and naval forces from the late 1960s onwards. While these undoubtedly improved Soviet strategic capability they also increased the perception of a Soviet threat in China, Japan, the United States and many other countries of the Asia-Pacific region, to the detriment of Soviet diplomatic efforts to gain acceptance in the region.

It seems that never in the decades since the end of World War II had the regional situation been so unfavourable and uncongenial for the Soviets as in the first half of the 1980s. Due to antagonism with its neighbours--the United States, Japan, China and others, the Soviet strategic situation in Northeast Asia deteriorated even though Sino-Soviet relations appeared to have improved a good deal since Brezhnev's 1982 speech in Tashkent.<sup>6</sup> Gorbachev's Vladivostok initiatives to impart new momentum to bilateral Soviet relations with all neighbouring countries without exception indicated that he recognized that the Soviet Union was in a relatively weak position in Northeast Asia.

A brief overview of the regional situation that the Soviet Union confronted before Gorbachev's accession in

6. "Brezhnev's Speech in Tashkent, March 24, 1982", *Pravda*, March 25, 1982



1985 reveals that the balance of forces was quite unfavourable for the Soviet Union, simply because of an emerging "anti-Soviet front" between the United States, China and Japan; strained Sino-Soviet relations; strong US defence relations with its fast growing allies--Japan and South Korea; and unstable Soviet-North Korean relations. And all this must to some degree be considered a major failure of Soviet foreign policy.

#### **An Anti-Soviet Front**

In June 1980, the then Soviet Chief of the General Staff Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov stated in a speech to military leaders that:

A serious threat to peace is presented by strengthening military-political rapprochement of the United States, China and Japan, the attempts to form a unified anti-Soviet front in which the military might of the United States and the European countries of NATO in the West would be united with the manpower resources of China and the industrial potential of Japan in the East...In fact what is happening is the creation of a military alliance between the United States, China and Japan similar to the 1930s Rome-Berlin-Tokyo "axis" of sad memory.<sup>7</sup>

This reflected Soviet military concern that developments in the relationship between the United States, China and

7. Quoted in *David Holloway, The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1983, p.94. For further details, see *N.V. Ogarkov, "In the Interests of Raising Combat Readiness", Communist of the Armed Forces*, No.14, 1980, p.26

Japan from 1978 onwards had created a potentially threatening situation for Soviet interests in Northeast Asia. In the face of a growing Soviet threat resulting from the rapid expansion of its military strength in the Far East since the mid-1960s, the United States, China and Japan appeared then to have come to the conclusion that an emerging but weak China, an economically strong but militarily weak Japan and a still strong but at that time weakening US presence would together balance the power of the Soviet Union in the east.<sup>8</sup>

In August 1978, China and Japan signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship. The treaty, which included a clause opposing "hegemony"--a Beijing codeword for the Soviet Union--was viewed in Moscow as anti-Soviet in its implications. In December, China and the United States simultaneously announced the establishment of diplomatic relations in response to a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Moscow signed with Hanoi, which was quickly followed by Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea in November. However, the United States, China and Japan drew closer together in strategic cooperation to build political counterpressures against mounting Soviet challenges only when the Soviets began deploying air and naval forces to

8. In the early 1970s, there were indications of a weakening US commitment to the region. This is widely perceived as a result of the 'Guam Doctrine' espoused by US President Richard Nixon in Guam in 1969, calling for its allies to make greater contributions towards their own security, and to assume the primary responsibility of providing for their own defence. And this is also the result of the US strategic 'retreat' from East Asia after the Vietnam War in 1975.

Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang in Vietnam, immediately after Sino-Vietnamese relations deteriorated into an open border conflict in February 1979. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 gave further impetus to this cooperation, for these Soviet moves were viewed by the United States, China and Japan as further evidence of Soviet expansionism and willingness to use military force around the world to further its political ambitions.

The view that the Soviet Union was being threatened by a new encirclement was again expressed by the then Soviet Defence Minister Ustinov in June 1981:

The Washington-Beijing-Tokyo triangle has recently acquired increasingly clear outline as an aggressive alliance in the Far East.<sup>9</sup>

Soviet worries about the formation of a Washington-Beijing-Tokyo alliance resulted in a mirrored response from the other side. Notwithstanding their common interest in opposing Soviet expansion, however, no Washington-Beijing-Tokyo alliance has emerged because of China's foreign policy of equidistance between the two superpowers. Yet, the United States, China and Japan drew closer together as a result of the growth of Soviet military power and the assertiveness of Soviet foreign policy.

9. Quoted in *F. David Armstrong, "The Soviet Union and the United States", in Gerald Segal (ed.) The Soviet Union in East Asia, Westview Press, Inc., Boulder, Colorado, 1983, p.44. For further details, see "Peace in Asia is a Common Concern of the Continent", Far Eastern Affairs, Moscow, No.1, 1982, p.43*

### Strained Sino-Soviet Relations

Generally speaking, bilateral Sino-Soviet relations have long followed an historical pattern of conflict and hostility although there was a brief "honeymoon" period of Sino-Soviet cooperation in the 1950s. The Sino-Soviet honeymoon, as Christina Holmes put it, was an aberration in history, not the norm.<sup>10</sup> It reflected Chinese economic and international weakness at the time, coupled with a belief in the Soviet model of development. But after the death of Stalin, Beijing and Moscow began to drift apart. With the coming to power of Khrushchev, differences between the Communist Party of China (CCP) and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) over issues of global and nuclear strategies, ideological theories, and touchy state interests, compounded with historical memories, were dramatically transformed into an open polemical dispute in 1963. During the Brezhnev period, the dispute escalated for a time to a point of hostility--a series of armed clashes on the border in 1969. There is little doubt that the border clashes reopened concerns in both Beijing and Moscow about the threat each posed to the security of the other mainly along the Sino-Soviet border. Moreover, they led to the Sino-American rapprochement in 1972, a development the former US President Richard Nixon called one of the most

10. *Christina Holmes, "The Soviet Union and China", in Gerald Segal (ed.) The Soviet Union in East Asia, Westview Press, Inc., Boulder, Colorado, 1983, p.26*

significant geopolitical events since the Second World War.<sup>11</sup>

It may be argued that bilateral Sino-Soviet relations reached a low point after 1969 although since then there has been no major border clash between China and the Soviet Union. Many aspects of Sino-Soviet state-to-state relations remained severely strained. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance was allowed to lapse in 1980, with no new agreement to take its place. Moscow sought to improve relations with China, claiming that "there is no problem in relations between the USSR and the People's Republic of China which could not be solved in a spirit of good-neighbourliness".<sup>12</sup> Of far greater importance was a major initiative by Brezhnev in his Tashkent speech on March 24 1982,<sup>13</sup> in which he made a strong call for a restoration of friendship with China:

...we remember well the time when the Soviet Union and People's China were united by bonds of friendship and comradely cooperation. We have never considered as normal the state of hostility and estrangement between our countries. We are prepared to come to terms, without any preliminary conditions, on measures acceptable to both sides to improve Soviet-Chinese relations on

11. *Richard Nixon, Real Peace*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1983, p.72

12. Brezhnev's speech at the CPSU's Central Committee in October 25, 1976, quoted in *Peter Jones and Sian Kevill (compiled), China and the Soviet Union 1949-84*, Longman Group Ltd, 1985, p.129

13. "Brezhnev's Speech in Tashkent, March 24, 1982", *Pravda*, March 25, 1982

the basis of mutual respect for each other's interests, non-interference in each other's affairs and mutual benefit--and certainly not to the detriment of third countries.<sup>14</sup>

Still resentful about Soviet treatment of China in the 1960s,<sup>15</sup> Beijing responded to Brezhnev's initiatives with marked reserve. Demanding actual deeds, Beijing asserted that Moscow must take measures to remove the threats to China's security presented by the deployment of Soviet troops on the frontier and in Mongolia, Soviet support for the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

Since coming to power, Gorbachev was particularly eager to improve relations with China. He must have realised that some progress was made in Sino-Soviet relations under Brezhnev (during his late period), Andropov and Chernenko. For example, bilateral trade increased fivefold between 1981 and 1985, reaching a total value of over 1.6 billion Roubles that year.<sup>17</sup> This, however, was minute when related to the size of the two economies and their overall international trade, and nothing else had been done to reduce tension between the two countries

14. "Brezhnev's Speech in Tashkent", March 24, 1982, Pravda, March 25 1982

15. What is worth noting here is that besides the 1969 border clashes, the Chinese have not forgotten their suffering and hunger during the "three terrible years" following the withdrawal of Soviet experts in the early 1960s.

16. For a discussion, see *Hu Yaobang's* report to the 12th Congress of the CCP, *People's Daily*, September 2, 1982

17. *Fang Yukuan*, "China's Foreign Trade", *International Trade Report*, Beijing, Winter 1987, p.20



except for a marked decrease in verbal hostilities. There had been no real breakthrough in Sino-Soviet relations, especially in party-to-party relations. As he acknowledged at the 27th Party Congress "the distinctions in attitudes, particularly to a number of international problems, [still] remain" between the Soviet Union and China.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Strong US Relations with Japan and South Korea**

Japan and South Korea are firmly allied to the United States. They both have mutual security treaties with the United States, which has troops and nuclear weapon delivery vehicles forward-deployed in both countries. In 1986, the numbers of US troops stationed in Japan and South Korea were estimated to be some 50,000 and 40,000 respectively.<sup>19</sup> A strong presence of US military forces in Northeast Asia was viewed by both Tokyo and Seoul as critical to their security and maintaining the regional military balance vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. In the American view, according to Bonnie S. Glaser, American forward-deployed forces in the region--both land-based

18. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress", in *Robert Maxwell* (ed.), *M.S. Gorbachev: Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986, pp.80-81

19. For further details about US force deployment in Japan and South Korea, see *The Military Balance 1986-1987*, IISS, London, 1986, pp.28-30



and sea-based--played a role in US strategy for deterring global conventional and nuclear war.<sup>20</sup>

In the late 1980s, the United States enhanced its security relations with Japan and South Korea, leading to what Gorbachev described as a *de facto* "militarised Washington-Tokyo-Seoul triangle". Since 1981, the United States and Japan carried out joint military exercises according to the "Guidelines for US-Japan Defence Cooperation" adopted in 1978. The US-South Korea security alliance was also strengthened by their joint "Team Spirit" exercises. Further, Japan and South Korea cooperated with the United States more actively in security affairs. Japan assumed some costs for bases and facilities required for the stationing of American forces on Japanese territory. According to Hiroshi Kimura, Japan spent more than one billion US dollars annually--a cost of US\$21,000 per American soldier, the highest share of the cost of US overseas deployments anywhere in the world.<sup>21</sup> Tokyo also announced its decision to join at least the research portion of the US Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) project to gain access to some of the innovative technology that could be developed.<sup>22</sup>

20. *Bonnie S. Glaser*, "Soviet, Chinese and American Perspectives on Arms Control in Northeast Asia", (A paper for the Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, Canberra, August 1987), p.32
21. *Hiroshi Kimura*, "The Soviet Military Buildup: Its Impact on Japan and Its Aims", in *Richard H. Solomon and Masataka Kosaka* (eds.), *The Soviet Far East Military Buildup*, Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, p.112
22. *Byung-yoon Ahn*, "The Role of Japan in Northeast Asia", *Journal of East and West Studies*, Vol.XVI, No.1. Spring-Summer 1987, p.45

### Unstable Soviet-North Korea Relations

Since the early 1960s, Soviet relations with North Korea have experienced ups and downs owing to the constant inverse relationship between Sino-North Korean and Soviet-North Korean relations.<sup>23</sup> At any given time, Pyongyang's relations with Beijing were better than those with Moscow or vice versa. Perhaps, the most important reason for the poor state of relations was a basic incompatibility of interests between Moscow and Pyongyang. Moscow's foreign policies towards North Korea seemed to be ambivalent. While giving vocal and political support to North Korea's strategy for unification, the Soviets probably believed that, as Donald S. Zagoria argued, there could be no North Korean victory without Moscow's running the risk of a Soviet-American military confrontation.<sup>24</sup> Short of a new Korean war, a two-Koreas solution seemed to be the most likely prospect. There was no evidence that the Soviets had any desire to get embroiled in a war with the United States on the Korean issue in its present form. Indeed, the main factor in this very complicated Korean issue, in the Soviet viewpoint, was the military and strategic one: the presence of US forces in South Korea and the clear continuation of US commitment to defend South Korea. The

23. For further details, see *Helen-Louise Hunter*, "North Korea and the Myth of Equidistance", in *Tae-Hwan Kwak* (ed.), *Two Koreas in World Politics*, The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Kyungnam University, 1983, pp.195-210
24. *Donald S. Zagoria*, "The Strategic Environment in East Asia", in *Donald S. Zagoria* (ed.), *Soviet Policy in East Asia*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1982, p.11

Soviets were deeply concerned about any military initiatives by North Korea against South Korea, which were likely to stir the pot in Korea. It seems that no major power is now able to exercise meaningful leverage on North Korea to induce it to accept a divided Korea, but that it is incapable of forcing a military solution unaided.

Also, Moscow did not want its ties with Pyongyang to seriously inhibit its developing and potentially valuable economic relations with South Korea.<sup>25</sup> Development of Soviet relations with South Korea was for a long time inhibited by Soviet reluctance to upset North Korea and by South Korean laws which barred diplomatic and economic relations with Communist countries. Since 1973, Moscow appeared to have cautiously opened its door to the South Koreans. However, developments in the late 1980s made North Korea more marginal to Soviet concerns; detente between the Soviet Union and China in particular rendered North Korea of less military importance, and made it a matter of relative indifference to Moscow whether it went closer to China or not; and with the emphasis switching from defence of the Soviet Far East to its economic development. The economically dynamic South Korea clearly had far more to contribute than the relatively less developed and inward-looking North Korea. On the South

25. This point is argued by *Ross Babbage*, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988) p.4

Korean side, interest in use of the Trans-Siberian Railway for transport of high-value cargoes to Europe, and in the opportunities for business enterprises in the Soviet Far East, brought about a relaxation of restrictions on dealings with Communist countries. The rapid pace of change in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during 1989 looked likely to accelerate the shift, isolating the North Korean dictatorship even more from its Soviet bloc allies.

## 2.2 Security Concerns

While Moscow's primary security emphasis remains in Europe, the importance of the eastern frontiers to the Soviet Union's security is far from negligible. Since the mid-1960s, Soviet military forces stationed in the Far East Theatre (TVD) went through two major phases of buildup.<sup>26</sup> The first phase, approximately from 1967 to 1977, involved the buildup of Soviet ground and air forces along the Chinese border. This phase of buildup could be explained in terms of defensive requirements directed solely towards potential Sino-Soviet confrontation because of the deterioration of Sino-Soviet

26. According to *The Military Balance 1987-1988*, the Far Eastern Strategic Theatre (GTVD) encompasses Far East TVD, and Pacific and Indian Ocean OTVDs. For purposes of this sub-thesis, the term *Far East TVD* as used hereafter is defined to cover the operational and deployment zones of the Far East, Transbaikal (including Soviet troops in Mongolia), Siberian and Central Asian (The Central Asian Military District was abolished in 1989, and reabsorbed into Turkistan Military District, which is part of the Southern TVD.) Military Districts and the Pacific Fleet under the control of the Far East Theatre High Command. *The Military Balance 1987-1988*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, pp.44-45

relations in the early 1960s. The second phase, from 1978 to 1985, involved a major reorganization of ground and air forces structure, buildup of naval forces, and upgrading of nuclear forces. This phase seemed to mainly offset the worse-case possibility of eventual coalition of Washington and Tokyo with Beijing, rather than solely towards China. It included establishment of a new theatre command, to control Soviet conventional forces, including ground, tactical air and air defence forces deployed in the Far East, Transbaikal (including Soviet troops in Mongolia), Siberian and Central Asian (until its abolition in 1989) Military Districts, and naval forces in the Pacific Fleet (See Figure 2.1 and Appendix). By 1985, the Soviet ground force divisions had increased from some 17 in 1965 to 53 divisions of various categories, (See Table 2.1), about one-quarter of the total of all Soviet divisions. Soviet air and air defence forces also expanded in line with growing ground force requirements. The number of tactical combat fixed wing aircraft had increased from 300 in the mid-1960s to 2,200, more than one-third of the Soviet total tactical aircraft. The growth of the Soviet Pacific Fleet was the most impressive of all Soviet military services in the theatre. The number of principal surface combatants had increased from about 50 in the mid-1960s to 85 in 1985.<sup>27</sup> The Soviet Pacific Fleet contained 25 per cent of all

27. For further details of Soviet force deployment in the Far East TVD, see *The Military Balance 1985-86*, IISS, London, 1986, pp.29-30

Soviet naval assets in 1965; by 1975 the percentage was 28, and it stood at around 32 in 1985.<sup>28</sup>

Soviet nuclear forces based east of the Urals comprise strategic nuclear forces and theatre nuclear forces. Since the mid-1960s, Soviet nuclear delivery systems aimed against potential targets in the Asian-Pacific region, primarily the western parts of the United States, had also undergone a quantitative and qualitative increase, especially with the introduction of Delta III-class SSBNs, Tu-22M Backfire bombers and SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) into operation. (See Table 2.2)

Indeed, the Soviet Union was militarily stronger than ever before. The growth of Soviet military strength reinforced the rationale for characterizing the Soviet Union as an Asian-Pacific power. Yet this did not at all make the Soviet leaders feel more secure. Moscow's old concerns about a two-front war challenge and the geographic vulnerability of the Soviet Union's eastern frontiers still remained.

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28. The Soviet Pacific Fleet was numerically the largest of the four Soviet fleets. This was mainly because it had large numbers of small warships to defend its very long coastlines, but in firepower it ranked below the Northern Fleet. The figures were quoted from *Alvin H. Bernstein, "The Soviets in Cam Ranh Bay", The National Interest, Spring 1986, p.19*



### Two-Front War Challenge

Moscow's concerns about a two-front war challenge seems well based in view of Russian history from the conquest of Russia by the Mongol Khans in the early thirteenth century through to the threat of attack by Japan in the east to reinforce the German invasion during World War II.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 seemed to resolve Moscow's two front security problem. The Sino-Soviet alliance relationship of the 1950s created a friendly "buffer" state for the Soviet Union in the east. The deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations in the early 1960s, and particularly the military clashes along the disputed Sino-Soviet border in 1969, reopened Moscow's security concerns about its eastern frontier. After China's rapprochement with the United States and Japan in the 1970s, Soviet politico-military decision-makers in Moscow began to show an ever growing interest in the long-term security of Siberia, the Soviet Far East and the adjacent oceanic expanses. These interests included the peace-time projection of a formidable military presence to remind major neighbouring countries, such as China and Japan, of the reality of Soviet power. Against the contingency of war, the Soviets had to develop a military capability in the theatre to fight the other superpower--the United States and its



allies, particularly Japan, and handle the possibility of conflict with China.<sup>29</sup> The establishment of a separate theatre command at Chita in early 1978 was clearly an important strategic step intended to strengthen its military posture in the East and improve its capabilities to fight a two-front war.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike in Europe, the Soviet Union lacks a buffer of closely allied states between itself and its adversaries, with the exception of the barrier Mongolia provides along a portion of the Soviet border with China. Mongolia is a Soviet ally. Its primary value was limited as a Soviet-manned military buffer against China; but it had been turned into a forward military base for the Soviets to station troops against China after 1966. Seen from Moscow, North Korea was probably only a partial ally, as it had to compete for influence with Beijing. As a result, the Soviet Union was surrounded by strong, unfriendly neighbours--China and Japan, as well as the United States just across the Bering Strait.

From the Soviet perspective, in any future major European war, the Soviet Union could be attacked in geographical escalation from the east where it is the weakest. Soviet

29. This point is argued by *Paul Dibb*, "The Soviet Union as a Pacific Military Power", (Working Paper No.81, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1984) p.1

30. For a discussion, see *Yao Wenbin*, "Soviet Military Deployments in the Asian-Pacific Region: Implications for China's Security", in *Richard H. Solomon* and *Nasataka Kosaka* (eds.), *The Soviet Far East Military Buildup*, Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, pp.100-101 and *Xie Wenqing*, "The Soviet Strategy in the Asian-Pacific Region and Its Prospects", *International Strategic Studies*, No.1, March 1987, p.20

military planners feared that the United States and its allies might not only open a second front in the Far East but possibly attempt to detach Siberia and threaten the Soviet homeland through its "back door".<sup>31</sup> This also raised the prospect of attack from China. Although the Soviets took substantial steps to improve their capabilities to fight a two-front war after 1965 and became capable of large-scale offensive as well as defensive operations, they were far from strong enough to fight two wars simultaneously in Europe and Asia, especially prolonged ones.

The Vladivostok speech contained a general reference to the need to prevent militarisation of the Pacific going as far as it had in Europe, and references to international security issues grouped under five headings--first, regional settlements in Southeast Asia, the Koreas and Afghanistan; second, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and possible creation of nuclear-free zones in the South Pacific, Korean Peninsula and Southeast Asia; third, reduction of naval forces in the Pacific and establishment of a "Peace Zone" in the Indian Ocean; fourth, reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments; fifth, a conference to discuss confidence-

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31. For a discussion of the concept of dismembering the Soviet Union in a two-front war, see *Paul Dibb, The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p.56 and also *Ross Babbage, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s"*, (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988) p.2

building measures.<sup>32</sup> Steps towards implementing some of these subsequently found expression in agreed or unilateral force reductions; the intermediate nuclear forces (INF) agreement of 1987 resulted in abolition of the SS-20 missiles, including those directed at Asian targets, as Gorbachev had indicated it would in the Vladivostok speech<sup>33</sup> and substantial unilateral reductions in Soviet conventional forces, especially ground forces, in Mongolia and the Far East took place during 1988-1989. Together with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, completed in February 1989, and the pressure on Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea, which it did by the end of 1989, these confirmed the shift in Soviet policy proclaimed by Gorbachev at Vladivostok and elsewhere away from reliance on sustaining or increasing Soviet influence by military strength towards a policy based more upon detente and economic cooperation.

#### Geographic Vulnerability

Still of considerable concern to Moscow is the fact that the Pacific Fleet is separated from the other three fleets; the Soviet Pacific Fleet is based in Vladivostok, Sovetskaya Gavan along the Sea of Japan and Petropavlovsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula. All Soviet bases there, except Petropavlovsk, front a major geographical barrier.

32. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, pp.35-37

33. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, pp.33-34

There are several choke points such as Tsushima, Tsugaru and Soya Straits leading in and out of the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, which are of crucial importance in the event of war. Enemy control of these choke points would restrict Soviet passage from those waters to the open sea, although Soviet control would restrict enemy naval force entry to either sea. The Soviets have attempted to lessen this problem by deploying some modern nuclear-powered ballistic missile-firing submarines (SSBNs) in the Sea of Okhotsk, which is shielded by the Kurile islands chain. With the deployment of Soviet long-range submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SS-N-8 and its successors) it became increasingly possible for Soviet SSBNs to operate at sea in reach of their assigned targets without leaving home waters.

Another concern to the Soviets is the strategic vulnerability of Siberia and the Soviet Far East because of its geographic isolation (Vladivostok is over 9000 km away from Moscow) and poor communications. Despite strenuous efforts over many decades, communication channels of such extraordinary lengths are still the Achilles' heel of securing the Soviet Union's distant yet sparsely populated eastern frontiers. The Trans-Siberian Railway--now the most important overland transport option in the Soviet Union--is vulnerable to interdiction in wartime because of its close proximity to the Chinese border, although the new Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM)

Railway can alleviate this vulnerability somewhat when it is completed (See Figure 2.2). Air transport is expensive and too difficult to be used extensively due to terrain and other natural constraints. The sea routes via the Arctic and Indian Oceans are circuitous and their distances are great. For example, the southern sea route through the Indian Ocean ranges from 9,000 miles between the Black Sea and Vladivostok via the Suez Canal to 17,000 miles from Murmansk to Vladivostok via the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, there are a number of choke points enroute, such as the Suez Canal, the Malacca Straits and Tsushima Strait, which are a serious menace to Soviet naval ships travelling to Vladivostok in wartime if controlled by the US and its allies. The northern sea route via the Arctic Ocean, although shorter, is open for only a few months in the year.

The shifts in Soviet policy proclaimed at Vladivostok and pursued since 1986 have reduced the political likelihood of a war in the Soviet Far East. However, they raise the possibility of tension arising in future with the military leadership, whose function is to be able to conduct such a war successfully if it arises, and who are being given fewer resources with which to do so. It is perhaps significant of the "new line" in Soviet strategy that the holders of the two highest military posts,

34. See *Donald C. Daniel and Harlan W. Jencks, "Soviet Military Confrontation with China: Options for the USSR, the PRC, and the USA", The Journal of East Asian Affairs, Vol.III, No.2, Fall/Winter 1983, p.381*

Minister of Defence Yazov and Chief of General Staff Moiseyev, both commanded the Far East Military District in the recent past; Yazov was in command there at the time of Gorbachev's visit to Vladivostok, and Moiseyev, then his deputy, first succeeded him when he was transferred to Moscow a few months later, then followed him on appointment as Chief of General Staff early in 1989. The forces in the Soviet Far East are the only elements of the Soviet armed forces which could be certain to be outnumbered from the outset in a general war; because of this and their remoteness from sources of reinforcement and resupply the Far East theatre is especially demanding of military skill in training and utilising manpower and weaponry. The experience gained there by Yazov and Moiseyev may therefore be seen as especially relevant to the new defence-based strategy and the reduced resources to be made available for it. Whether this is so or not, their knowledge of the Far East theatre is likely to ensure that its special requirements are not neglected.<sup>35</sup>

### 2.3 Economic Slowdown

It is widely perceived that the comparatively rapid growth of the Soviet economy began to falter in the late 1960s and by the early 1980s had given way to stagnation.

35. For a discussion, see *Geoffrey Jukes, "Development of Soviet Strategy"*, in Chapter 3 of second edition of *Strategy and Defence--Australian Essays*, and also *Geoffrey Jukes, "The Soviet Far East"*, *Canberra Studies in World Affairs*, both to be published in 1990.



The decline in the growth rate since the 1970s was steady and manifest, whether measured in Soviet national income statistics, or in Western estimates of Soviet GNP. (See Table 2.3) Moreover, the slowdown actually widened the gap between the Soviet and the US economies. In 1961, the CPSU, under Khrushchev, adopted a programme which proclaimed that the Soviet Union would surpass the United States in production per head of population before 1970, and build the material-technical basis of a communist society by 1980.<sup>36</sup> Some figures suggest that the Soviet economy was only 53 per cent of the size of the US economy in 1980, compared with 58 per cent in 1975 and 54 per cent in 1970,<sup>37</sup> and by 1988 it had sunk to somewhere between 40 and 52 per cent of the US level.<sup>38</sup>

One of the major impediments to economic growth was clearly a large defence investment for building up the Soviet Union as a global military power. According to Western estimates and subsequent Soviet admissions, during the Brezhnev years, Soviet defence expenditure consumed about 12-14 per cent of the Soviet Union's GNP.<sup>39</sup> In a country where the rate of economic growth declined steadily, such a large peacetime demand by the

36. *David Holloway, The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1983, p.168

37. *Paul Dibb, The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p.72

38. *The Military Balance 1989-1990*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1989, pp.16 and 32

39. These figures are from *William G. Hyland, "The USSR and Nuclear War"*, in *Barry M. Blechman* (ed.), *Rethinking the US Strategic Posture*, Ballinger Publishing Company, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982, p.64



defence establishment seemed out of any reasonable proportion, and could not but have a significant impact on the Soviet civilian economy. Whether the Western analyses overestimated or underestimated the growth rate of Soviet military outlays and the proportion of GNP devoted to defence, Soviet military spending, in any event, increased steadily from 1965 to 1976, and stabilised after that year at an excessively high level alongside the slowdown in economic growth, absorbing a comparatively large part of the GNP.<sup>40</sup>

Kremlin policy-makers must have worries along the lines of a judgment made by Samuel Huntington, who stated that in 50 years' time the United States would still be a great power, but questioned whether the Soviet Union would be.<sup>41</sup> If its economy continued to decline, the Soviet Union would be unable to compete with the United States effectively through its traditional means, military power. Short of a strong economic base, military power alone is not sufficient to buttress national power and international prestige. It must be backed by a growing "economic wealth, which is convertible into virtually all types of power and influence".<sup>42</sup> Further, if it fell too far behind the United States, the Soviet

40. *Geoffrey Jukes, "Development of Soviet Strategy", op cit, pp.64-65*

41. Quoted in *Christian Schmidt-Hauer, Gorbachev: The Path to Power*, (Translated by Ewald Osers and Chris Romberg), London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1986, p.16

42. *Klaus Knorr, Power and Wealth*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1973, p.75

Union would run the risk of losing its newly established position as a superpower.

The Soviet system is probably strong enough to withstand a limited period of economic stasis, but in the long run that can only result in the steady decline of the USSR as a world power. Gorbachev in his 1986 Vladivostok speech hinted at the essential element of Moscow's fear, by saying:

Of course we are aware that the arms race, which is gaining momentum, serves not only the aims of making superprofit and of war preparations, but also--and this is not of the least importance--other immoral aims, which are essentially to exhaust the Soviet Union economically, frustrate the Party's course for achieving a further rise in the living standards of the people, and hamper the implementation of our social programme.<sup>43</sup>

These remarks may be read as a reflection of Moscow's recognition that, as Ross Babbage noted, during the previous fifteen years the Soviet Union had overstretched its real capacities and its potential to compete effectively with the West had peaked, at least for the immediate future.<sup>44</sup> In order to secure its superpower status and global power in the twenty-first century, therefore, Moscow required a "breathing space" for accelerated economic development, to strengthen the

43. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.21

44. Ross Babbage, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.9

economic basis of the Soviet military power. In the long run, development of the Soviet economy probably depends more on restructuring for greater efficiency than on absolute increases in extraction of raw materials. However, in the short term raw materials, especially oil, natural gas and timber remain the Soviet Union's most important export earners. Most of these originate in Siberia and the Soviet Far East. Exploited and exploitable resources in West Siberia and most of Transbaikalia are mostly directed westwards, but for those in Yakutia and the Soviet Far East distance makes the nearer Pacific rim the more natural outlet.

Seen from Moscow, the Soviet Far East is "a territory of vast natural wealth, huge social and economic possibilities, and great international prospects".<sup>45</sup> Its economic potential is indeed immense. Siberia and the Soviet Far East contains almost three-quarters of the country's mineral, fuel and energy resources, over half its hydro-electric resources, about half its commercial timber resources and one-fifth of its cultivable land.<sup>46</sup> (See Figure 2.3) However, as Gorbachev acknowledged in his Vladivostok speech, "the full-scale development of the Far East is not an easy job", and "the region's share in the country's production, far from increasing, is

45. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.18

46. See Paul Dibb, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p.57

diminishing."<sup>47</sup> Another point worth noting is that Moscow's trade with the Asian-Pacific region is still small. In 1986, the region sent less than four per cent of its exports to the Soviet Union and received less than one per cent of its imports from there.<sup>48</sup>

It seems certain that Moscow has also realised the critical significance of Siberia and the Soviet Far East to the country's economic potential. In light of the special priority given to Siberia and the Soviet Far East in the Soviet Union's "strategy of accelerated social-economic development" put forward by the 27th CPSU Congress, and the seven urgent developmental tasks underlined by Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech,<sup>49</sup> the Soviet Union's economic development could be directed towards the Pacific in the coming decade. The wealth of natural resources in Siberia and the Soviet Far East will offer the Soviet Union the possibility of strengthening its position as an Asian-Pacific power, both economically and militarily, provided that the restructuring of the economy is successful. Unlike the western and southern parts of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Far East is not affected by ethnic unrest or pressures to secede. Its

47. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.10

48. Time, November 24, 1986, p.14

49. The seven urgent developmental tasks are: (1) ocean resources, (2) rich natural resources, (3) fuel and power (especially Sakhalin gas), (4) the production infrastructure, especially railways and maritime transport, (5) adaptation of latest technology, (6) further enhancement of export-oriented Far Eastern economy, and (7) more attention to consumer needs, especially improvement of agriculture and food-industry sectors. See Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, pp.12-16

population is overwhelmingly Russian, and so is most likely immigration from other parts of the Soviet Union. This means that continued political stability is likely, and may prove important in determining the extent to which Moscow will permit it to strengthen its economic links with the Pacific basin countries at the expense of its links with the rest of the Soviet Union.

Soviet economic weaknesses are not new. The Soviet economy may no longer be dynamic, but it is still an enormously strong machine, capable of filling most of the Soviet Union's needs, including defence requirements. Slow growth rates and declining productivity are not phenomena limited only to the Soviet Union. Yet there can be no doubt that the poor state of the Soviet economy must be added to the strategic and military factors which make up the list of major determinants when Gorbachev's latest initiatives towards Asia and the Pacific are seriously analysed. Economic factors will largely determine what the Soviet Union can or cannot do in Northeast Asia in the years ahead.

### Chapter 3

#### The Scope of Change Under Gorbachev

Gorbachev is the eighth Soviet leader, following after Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1917-24), Josef Stalin (1924-53), Georgy Malenkov (1953, only for a few days), Nikita Khrushchev (1953-64), Leonid Brezhnev (1964-82), Yuri Andropov (1982-84) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-85). When he succeeded Chernenko as General Secretary of the CPSU in March 1985, many in the West believed that "a new style of leader had emerged",<sup>1</sup> foreshadowing significant changes within the Soviet Union.

As one Western expert on the Soviet Union said, the "coming to power of any new top leader in the Soviet Union changes, to a greater or lesser extent, the correlation of forces among the various institutional interests, opinion groupings and issue networks which exist within both the domestic and foreign policy making realms".<sup>2</sup> During his first five years in office, Gorbachev has proved no exception to this rule. From the day he took office, Gorbachev seems to have been bent upon a revitalization of the stagnant Soviet economy through his formula--*Uskoreniye* (acceleration), *glasnost'*

1. *Christian Schmidt-Hauer, Gorbachev: The Path to Power*, (Translated by Ewald Osers and Chris Romberg), London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1986, p.6
2. *Archie Brown, "Change in the Soviet Union"*, *Foreign Affairs* No.64, Summer 1986, p.1060



(speaking out publicly), *perestroika* (restructuring), and *novoye myshleniye* (new thinking).<sup>3</sup>

However, he is of a different generation from all his predecessors in the Soviet leadership. Gorbachev, as R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby put it, is the first Soviet leader for a generation endowed with the imagination, energy, courage and political skills to take up and push through a program of "radical reforms".<sup>4</sup> He is also the first Soviet leader to have no connections with the Soviet military through civil or world war experience.

But to what extent can Gorbachev match his peace gestures with deeds in Northeast Asia? Could Gorbachev's "new thinking" be crushed by the intractable problems to which his predecessors have never found a solution? This chapter discusses Gorbachev's inheritance, examines his new thinking on security, and then explores the implications for Soviet security concerns.

3. *Uskoreniye*, a term much used in Gorbachev's early period in office but virtually dropped later, is referred particularly to speeding up the making and implementation of decisions. *Glasnost'* literally is the substantive of the verb *glasit'*, meaning "to say", and as a noun it connotes speaking out publicly, making known. *Perestroika*, meaning "restructuring", is less ambiguous in translation but has a more complex connotation in Russian. *Novoye myshleniye* translates literally as "new thinking", a responsibility to abandon the old work style in favour of a new effective style that Gorbachev places on the leading party and state cadres. For a discussion, see *William E. Odom*, "How Far Can Soviet Reform Go?", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXXVI, November-December 1987, p.18
4. *R. F. Miller and T. H. Rigby*, "Domestic Determinants of Soviet Foreign Policy: Prospects for Change in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.10



### 3.1 Gorbachev's Inheritance

Gorbachev inherited a Soviet Union with serious economic problems. This is largely because Gorbachev's immediate predecessors were more committed to making their country a great military power than making it a great economic power, thereby being unable or unwilling to press for major economic reforms. For most of the post-Khrushchev period they were able to combine the growth in military expenditure with steady improvements in the standards of living and a continuing increase in the economic and scientific-technological might of the country. By the late 1970s, they were no longer able to sustain this pattern. By the mid-1980s when Gorbachev took office, the Soviet Union had been brought to what a Soviet associate professor of economics I. Kulikov described as "a dangerous verge of economic stagnation and pre-crisis state in its internal development".<sup>5</sup>

This, however, is the negative side of the Soviet Union Gorbachev inherited. On the credit side, the Soviet Union which he came to rule was already a global military power, with a nuclear arsenal on a par with the United States, and massive conventional forces organized, equipped and trained to conduct large-scale theatre operations. Gorbachev's formative years coincided with the rise of the Soviet Union to a superpower, albeit

5. See I. Kulikov, "The International Aspect of Defence Policies", *Communist of the Armed Forces*, No.7, 1989

mainly through its military achievements, but he came to power after the consequences of overemphasis on military expenditure had been apparent for several years in sharply declining growth rates and growing public alienation.

In this regard, Gorbachev's calls for "perestroika" or "restructuring" must be seen not only as his recognition of what Seweryn Bialer called "the internal decline of the Soviet Union",<sup>6</sup> but at the same time demonstrate his determination to reverse the decline, through "glasnost" or "speaking out publicly" for "novoye myshleniye" or "new thinking" to push for revolutionary changes in society, so as to get the Soviet Union lifted out of stagnation in its socialist development, and to "guarantee a consolidation of [the Soviet Union's] position in the international arena and permit it to enter the next millenium as a great, flourishing state."<sup>7</sup> Gorbachev appears to be firmly committed to making the Soviet Union a great economic and technological power. Now central to Gorbachev's programme for reviving the Soviet Union is the question of a "radical reform". The essence of his reform is designed to loosen up the constraints that currently hinder economic advance. The heavy economic burden of defence, in his view, is no

6. For a discussion, see *Seweryn Bialer, The Soviet Paradox, External Expansion, Internal Decline*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1986

7. Quoted in *Christian Schmidt-Hauer, Gorbachev: The Path to Power*, (Translated by Ewald Osers and Chris Romberg), London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1986, p.13. This remark was made by Gorbachev in addressing ideological officials in Moscow on December 10 1984.

doubt a factor in the past Soviet economic slowdown, but it is by no means the only one. It also creates one of Gorbachev's major dilemmas in deciding on his priorities for "perestroika" or "restructuring", for, in practical terms, Soviet military power is the Soviet Union's only claim to superpower status. However, he clearly believes that the Soviet Union's superpower status would not be forfeited by reductions in military expenditure, but could well be lost if economic development continued to stagnate. Aware that the past Soviet policy of matching any combination of opposing forces is economically unsustainable and fuelled the arms race, he called for "a new mode of thinking", and "a radical break with traditions of political thinking, and with views on problems of war and peace...and on international security".<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 New Thinking on Security

New thinking on security has been an important area of discussion and revision in recent years in the Soviet Union. Without question, Gorbachev has set a bold new course for Soviet foreign, security and arms control policy. The Soviet leadership, as Gorbachev acknowledged at the 19th Party Conference in 1988, has come to realise that:

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8. *Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Political Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1987, p.140, and *Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech*, p.18

while concentrating enormous funds and attention on the military aspect of counting imperialism, we did not always make use of the political opportunities opened up by the fundamental changes in the world in our efforts to assure the security of our state, to scale down tensions, and promote mutual understanding between nations. As a result, we allowed ourselves to be drawn into an arms race, which could not but affect the country's socio-economic development and its international standing.<sup>9</sup>

In speeches and statements, Gorbachev has never presented himself as a cold warrior or as a spokesman for increased armaments. Security, in his view, could no longer be guaranteed by military means. The Gorbachev leadership appeared to have come "to the conclusions that made us review something which once seemed axiomatic. Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, war has ceased to be a continuation of politics by other means", asserting that "war cannot be a means of achieving political, economic, ideological, or any other goals", and "the arms race, just like nuclear war, is unwinnable".<sup>10</sup>

Geoffrey Jukes has summarised the changes in Soviet foreign and security policies by saying that "...the

9. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "On Progress in Implementing the decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress and the Tasks of Promoting Perestroika, June 28 1988", *Documents and Materials of the 19th All-Union Party Conference of the CPSU*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1988, p.31
10. "Gorbachev's Speech at the International Conference on Striving for Nuclear-Free World and Human Survival", *Pravda*, February 17, 1987, and *Mikhail Gorbachev, Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Political Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1987, pp.143 and 140

Party and society are being told that the Soviet relationship with the outside world is not solely nor primarily adversarial; that while there is a danger of war, and the United States in particular remains hostile, there is also scope and need for cooperation with the major centres of capitalism, and purely military solutions for security problems are no longer possible for any country".<sup>11</sup> Evidence for Gorbachev's agreement with this is found in his statement at the 27th Party Congress in 1986 that:

...the objective--I emphasize, objective-- conditions have taken shape in which confrontation between capitalism and socialism can proceed *only and exclusively in forms of peaceful competition and peaceful contest.*  
[emphasis as origin] <sup>12</sup>

Implicit in Gorbachev's remark was the recognition that past Soviet emphasis on military power had not produced commensurate political benefits and had in fact stimulated an increased military threat of war. "Assuring the security of states", as Gorbachev claimed, "will shift increasingly from the sphere of a correlation of military potentials to the sphere of political interaction and the strict fulfilment of international

11. *Geoffrey Jukes*, "Gorbachev on Foreign Policy and Defence, 1986", (A seminar paper, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, November 20, 1986), p.14
12. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress", in *Robert Maxwell* (ed.), *M. S. Gorbachev: Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986, p.73

commitments".<sup>13</sup> Gorbachev's security policy perspectives, therefore, represent not merely a significant difference in the style and rhetoric from those of his predecessors, but also a difference in substance. He has urged a reversal of the policy of tension, wishing to replace it with one of cooperation and dialogue.

### Reasonable Sufficiency

The Gorbachev period has been marked by an increasingly active discussion of Soviet military doctrine. Much of this discussion has centred on the concept of reasonable sufficiency for defence. At the 27th Party Congress in 1986, Gorbachev claimed that the Soviet Union favoured "limiting the military potential to reasonable sufficiency".<sup>14</sup> In his 1988 United Nations speech, he assured the world that:

The Soviet Union will maintain its defence capability at a level of *reasonable and reliable sufficiency*, so that no one is tempted to encroach on the security of the Soviet Union and its allies. [emphasis added]<sup>15</sup>

13. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "On Progress in Implementing the decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress and the Tasks of Promoting Perestroika, June 28 1988", *Documents and Materials of the 19th All-Union Party Conference of the CPSU*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1988, p.36
14. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress", in *Robert Maxwell* (ed.), *M. S. Gorbachev: Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986, p.76
15. "Gorbachev's Speech at the United Nations", *Pravda*, December 8, 1988



At first glance there appeared to be what Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott called little if any difference in the meaning of "reasonable sufficiency" as stated by Gorbachev" and "fully sufficient" as used by Brezhnev.<sup>16</sup> In March 1966, Brezhnev stated at the 23rd Party Congress that "the armaments of Soviet troops are maintained at the level of contemporary requirements and their striking power and fire power are fully sufficient to crush any aggressor".<sup>17</sup> In his Tula speech of 1977, Brezhnev stated that the allegations that the Soviet Union "is going further than is sufficient for defence...is absurd and totally unfounded".<sup>18</sup> The current Soviet emphasis on reasonable and reliable sufficiency for defence, therefore, demands careful study. According to the Soviet Deputy Defence Minister Army General Mikhail Sorokin, "reasonable sufficiency means that our means will be sufficient for essential defence, and that we refrain from redistributing them, which could alarm the other side... Reliable sufficiency means maintaining a country's defence ability on a level that would discourage anyone from succumbing to the temptation to infringe on the security of the USSR and its allies".<sup>19</sup> Gorbachev's new thinking on security has already prompted

16. *Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, Soviet Military Doctrine*, Westview Press, 1988, p.260
17. *Brezhnev's Report to the 23rd Party Congress of CPSU*, Political Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1966, p.93
18. "Brezhnev's Speech in Tula, January 18, 1977", *Pravda*, January 19, 1977
19. These remarks of Army General Mikhail Sorokin were made in an interview with Dmitriy Bel'skiy, *Novosti* military commentator on the eve of the celebrations of the 71st anniversary of the establishment of the Soviet armed forces. See *Pravda*, February 23 1989



new initiatives in realising the transition from an offensive to a defensive military doctrine. Moscow has frequently announced withdrawal of Soviet troops from outside the Soviet Union, reductions in deployed Soviet military forces and Soviet defence spending. By 1991, Soviet military forces, for example, would be reduced by 500000 men. Its military spending would be reduced by 14.2 per cent and production of arms and military equipment by 19.5 per cent.<sup>20</sup> In 1990, its military spending would be cut by 6.3184 billion rubbles, or 8.2 per cent as compared with 1989, amounting to 70.9758 billion rubbles.<sup>21</sup> There can be little doubt that the Soviet military doctrine is undergoing a radical change. But they do not amount to an abandonment of the long-term Soviet objective of shifting "the correlation of forces" in its favour. The Gorbachev leadership is as keenly aware as its predecessors that the Soviet Union's superpower status and its ability to achieve its strategic objectives derive from its military power. The "purely defensive" military posture of Soviet forces, as General Moiseyev pointed out, "does not reduce but, on the contrary, makes higher demands for the combat

20. See "Gorbachev's Speech at the United Nations", *Pravda*, December 8, 1988, and *N. Moiseyev*, "Soviet Military Doctrine--Realization of its Defensive Trust", *Pravda*, March 13, 1989. In his UN speech, Gorbachev also pledged to eliminate 10000 tanks, 8500 artillery pieces and 800 combat aircraft from Soviet forces now deployed in Eastern Europe, including European USSR. General Moiseyev later announced in a *Pravda* article that the number of combat aircraft to be cut is 820. *Pravda*, March 13, 1989

21. *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), Moscow, December 16, 1989. According to *The Military Balance 1989-1990*, the Soviet defence budget in 1989 was 77.3 bn roubles (around \$US 120 bn at prevailing exchange rates). *The Military Balance 1989-1990*, IISS, London, 1989, p.32

readiness of the armed forces and their ability to repulse any aggression and reliably defend the socialist homeland".<sup>22</sup> To compensate, the Soviet military will upgrade the quality of weapons. In this regard, the nature of restructuring in the Soviet armed forces is to ensure the effectiveness of Soviet defence buildup on the basis primarily of qualitative indicators. This much was stated by Gorbachev at the 19th Party Conference:

...the efficiency of [the Soviet defence development] must henceforward be assured primarily by *qualitative parameters*--both in terms of technology and military science, and in terms of the composition of the armed forces. This must guarantee the Soviet state and its allies reliable security, and must be achieved in strict conformity with our defence doctrine. [emphasis added]<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, the qualitative indicators of the Soviet armed forces will be determined largely by what the Soviet Defence Minister General Yazov described as "the need to ensure that war is prevented and possible aggression is reliably repulsed irrespective of the conditions in which it is launched".<sup>24</sup> All this suggest that the Gorbachev leadership believes that the danger of war still exists although the immediate threat of a world war is scaled

22. Pravda, March 13, 1989

23. Mikhail Gorbachev, "On Progress in Implementing the decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress and the Tasks of Promoting Perestroika, June 28 1988", Documents and Materials of the 19th All-Union Party Conference of the CPSU, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1988, p.36

24. Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), March 12, 1989

down; it would be premature to assume that the current positive changes in international relations are irreversible due to the West's pursuit of its strategy of "nuclear deterrence" and "flexible response"; the existing parity in the correlation of forces is now still a decisive factor in preventing war.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that the main element of Gorbachev's concept of reasonable sufficiency is designed to shift from quantitative to qualitative indicators in Soviet defence buildup while achieving parity at a lower level.

#### Equal Security

Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech denounced the "egotistical" attempt to strengthen the Soviet Union's security at someone else's expense, implicitly denouncing Brezhnev's overly militarised foreign policy. "In the military sphere", he said at the 27th Party Congress, "we intend to act in such a way as to give nobody grounds for fears, even imagined ones, about their security. But to equal extent we and our allies want to be rid of feeling that we are threatened."<sup>26</sup> This reflected a recognition in the Soviet leadership that, as General Moiseyev acknowledged, "the military threat is the main source of distrust. While it exists, suspicion will persist, which

25. For a discussion, see Marshal *Akhromeyev*, "Our Military Doctrine", *Za Rubiezhom* (Abroad), Moscow, No.46, 1989

26. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress", in *Robert Maxwell* (ed.), *M. S. Gorbachev: Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986, p.74

in turn leads to instability, nervousness and the desire not to lag behind, but to meet the challenge with equivalent force or, still worse, acquire unilateral military advantages in the illusory hope of inflicting a defeat on the adversary while remaining unscathed".<sup>27</sup> There is no doubt that security can only be mutual. It is vital that all should feel equally secure, for peace to be maintained.

Moscow does not claim to need more security and acknowledges that the Soviet Union can only be secure if its adversaries, too, feel secure. "Striving for equal security", as the Soviet leadership asserted, "the Soviet Union, in contrast to the notions which existed in the 1950s and 1960s, will not like to see any shifts in the military strategic balance in its favour; diminished security for the other side will not offer the Soviet Union any advantages as it will invite suspicion of the other side and will increase instability."<sup>28</sup> Clearly, nobody's security can be ensured at the expense of others. Gorbachev's view suggests that security can no longer be built endlessly on fear of retaliation, or on the doctrines of "containment" or "deterrence". By advocating "equal security", Gorbachev has played down the "threats to Soviet security". He wishes to avoid inflating Moscow's disputes with China and Japan, so as

27. Pravda, March 13, 1989

28. Quoted in Gorbachev's Force Reductions and the Restructuring of Soviet Forces, US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1989, p.9

to gain time for modernization. Modernization is, in part, dependent on reduced arms expenditure, and reductions in military costs are themselves only possible with improved relations with all countries.

The Soviets have, however, set limits to the extent of their unilateral arms reductions. "We have to take measures in response..." said Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze at a press conference in Canberra in March 1987, "when the potential foe is increasing its arsenals we have to take this into consideration."<sup>29</sup> And much later the Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Chernavin, expressed disquiet at the alleged failure of other powers, notably the United States, to respond to what he claimed as reductions in the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

### Nuclear War

In his Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev renewed the proposal for the total abolition of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction before the end of this century, and at the same time warned of the harsh realities of nuclear war by saying:

...a nuclear war would not be clash of only two blocs, two confronting forces. It will lead to a

29. Quoted in *Brian Cloughley*, "Bring the boys home from the Kuriles, too", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 7 1988, p.29

30. See "Restraint must be mutual", *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), December 15, 1988

global disaster, in which human civilization will be threatened with destruction.<sup>31</sup>

In the context of the new thinking, clearly, the Soviets have undertaken a radical review of their traditional views about future war in the nuclear era, and come to the conclusion that "there would be neither winners nor losers in a global nuclear conflict: world civilization would inevitably perish. It is a suicide, rather than a war in the conventional sense of the word. But...even a non-nuclear war would now be comparable with a nuclear war in its destructive effect. That is why it is logical to include in our category of nuclear wars this variant of an armed clash between major powers as well".<sup>32</sup> Now the Soviets have openly recognized the devastating consequences of either a nuclear or a conventional war, asserting that such a war cannot be won and should not be fought. Continuation of the nuclear arms race will inevitably heighten this threat and may bring no political gain to any country. This change is also evident in Gorbachev's political report to the 27th Party Congress. He said:

...it is no longer possible to win an arms race, or nuclear war...The continuation of this race on earth, let alone its spread to outer space, will

31. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.19

32. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Political Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1987, p.143



accelerate the already critically high rate of stockpiling and perfecting nuclear weapons.<sup>33</sup>

In his book *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, he also said:

The only way to security is through politics: decisions and disarmament. In our age genuine and equal security can be guaranteed by constantly lowering the level of the strategic balance from which nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction should be completely eliminated.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear that the consequence of stockpiling and modernization of nuclear weapons is extremely dangerous. Gorbachev in 1986 may also have thought that, as Malcolm Mackintosh argued, the only fundamental threat to the Soviet regime and to its political system is total defeat and "breakdown" in war,<sup>35</sup> but it is equally likely that in deliberately downplaying the importance of the military factor he was relying on existing nuclear stockpiles and the sheer size of the Soviet Union to deter invasion. As Carl von Clausewitz warned after the Napoleonic Wars "Russia...has taught us...that an Empire of great dimensions is not to be conquered."<sup>36</sup> In a realistic analysis, therefore, the forces which are

33. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, "The Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress", in *Robert Maxwell* (ed.), *M. S. Gorbachev: Speeches and Writings*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986, p.73
34. *Mikhail Gorbachev*, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, Political Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1987, p.144
35. *Malcolm Mackintosh*, "Gorbachev's First Three Years", (A seminar paper, Department of International Relations, Australian National University, April 28, 1988), p.16
36. *Anatol Rapoport* (ed.), *Carl von Clausewitz on War*, London: Penguin Books, 1976, p.295



capable of inflicting such a measure of defeat on the Soviet Union are only the nuclear forces now operationally available to the United States, or NATO, although a substantial increase in China's nuclear capabilities could also, in the longer term, put its forces into this category in Soviet thinking. But like Khrushchev before him, Gorbachev apparently believed deterrence assured at much lower levels, hence his proposals for large numerical cuts in nuclear weapons, with a declaratory aim of ultimately abolishing them altogether.

### Threat Perceptions

Another significant aspect of Gorbachev's new thinking on security is his recognition of the fact that the threat to the Soviet Union today "is qualitatively different from that which the [Soviet] people encountered in the interwar period or immediately after the Second World War".<sup>37</sup> Narrow interpretation of the threat can lead to serious errors in foreign policy. There is evidence which may indicate that the younger generation of the Soviet leaders tend to believe that the competition between the East and West is now much broader; it is conducted in a variety of spheres in addition to the military one. The West, in one Soviet view, hopes to attain the economic

37. Quoted in *Jeffrey Checkel*, "New and Old Thinking on Soviet National Security", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 25, 1988, p.2

exhaustion of the Soviet Union, by a continuing arms race. The US Strategic Defence Initiative and Japan's rearmament program are all seen as part of the West's strategy of economic exhaustion.<sup>38</sup> It is, however, unlikely that assertions of a Western campaign to exhaust the Soviet Union economically are literally meant. Those who made them (for example Zhurkin, Karaganov and Kortunov in the article cited above) also argued against Soviet involvement in regional conflicts and attempts to match Western military expenditures, and stated unequivocally that neither in the United States nor in Western Europe were any influential political forces which intended to attack the Soviet Union or its allies. The "economic exhaustion" argument is probably a tactical device, intended to discredit Soviet opponents of detente and arms reduction by claiming that they are really falling into a trap set by the Soviet Union's enemies.

This represents a change from the traditional assumptions of Gorbachev's predecessors who believed that military power was decisive in international affairs and was the prerequisite for advancing Moscow's political goals. This is largely because major turning points in Soviet history--the civil war and the German invasion--had been decided by military means. In post-war years, according to Army General I. Shavrov, a former Head of the Soviet

38. See V. Zhurkin, S. Karaganov and A. Kortunov, "Threats to Security--Old and New", *Kommunist*, No.1, 1988, pp.42-50

General Staff Academy, the Soviet Union achieved two major shifts in the correlation of forces.<sup>39</sup> The first was in the late 1950s, when the Soviet Union began to acquire a strategic missile force that was capable of striking Western Europe, and then the United States. The second was in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the Soviet-American strategic balance had reached parity. Growing military power was not the only reason given for these shifts, but it was seen as important in each case.

There is now a clear awareness among at least part of the Soviet politico-military leadership that the West, while not de-emphasising military competition, has gained greater politico-strategic mileage out of its advances in the economic sphere. This perhaps reflects the negative lessons drawn from Moscow's counterproductively overmilitarised foreign and security policies in past years. Purely military solutions to world security issues, in Gorbachev's view, are impossible in the nuclear era. Soviet security begins at home. The best way to meet the new challenge from the West is a successful reform of the Soviet economic mechanism and acceleration of the country's socio-economic development. Deeper participation in the World economy is seen as necessary for the development without which the international influence of the Soviet Union can only decline. The

39. For a discussion, see *Army General I. Shavrov*, "Local Wars and Their Place in the Global Strategy of Imperialism", *Military-Historical Journal*, March 1975. Note also that Gorbachev and those who support him hardly ever use the "correlation of forces" concept.

Soviet military buildup of the Brezhnev years was publicly defended as necessary to secure approximately parity with the United States, which was at least implicitly seen as ensuring equal security. Historically, however, parity is not necessary for a purely defensive doctrine, and Soviet pursuit of it inevitably led to some regional superiorities which caused concern to US Allies and China. Gorbachev's insistence on equal security rather than parity in armaments in fact constitutes a return to the position held by Khrushchev in respect of nuclear weapons, which was that as long as the Soviet Union could destroy America once it did not matter that the United States could destroy the Soviet Union several times over,<sup>40</sup> and who substantially reduced Soviet conventional forces on the grounds that provided the nuclear weapons were capable of surviving a US first strike, military power did not depend on the number of people "wearing military greatcoats".<sup>41</sup> The reasons for the abandonment of this position by his successors are beyond the scope of this sub-thesis which notes merely that Gorbachev has in effect returned to it.

This threat perception is leading to a shift towards a defence-oriented strategy in the Soviet Union. There can be little doubt that, as Jack Snyder argued, defence-oriented, lower budget, higher technology strategies

40. "Khrushchev's Speech of January 8 1961", Pravda, January 9, 1961

41. "Khrushchev's Speech of January 14 1960", Pravda, January 15, 1960

would be consistent with Gorbachev's economic reform at home.<sup>42</sup> Gorbachev has gone far in extricating himself from the offensive military policies of his predecessors, but considerations of global prestige and domestic politics ultimately set limits to process. Initially, he needed to promote his perception of defensive military strategy and the need for restructuring of entrenched military interests. However, qualitative improvements made while force reductions were effected could result in cheaper but equally or more effective forces.

### 3.3 The Impact on Soviet Security Concerns

What effect will Gorbachev's new security thinking have on Soviet security concerns about its eastern frontiers?

#### Strategic Focus

Moscow's primary strategic attention has been traditionally focussed in Europe. Since World War II, Soviet force deployments have been Europe-lopsided along the western borders. Russian history in recent centuries can help explain this fact. It is from the west that the country has suffered wave after wave of foreign invasions threatening its very existence; in the seventeenth century by the Poles, in the eighteenth century by the Swedes, in the nineteenth century by Napoleon and his

42. See *Jack Snyder*, "The Gorbachev Revolution: A Waning of Soviet Expansionism?", *International Security*, Winter 1987/1988, Vol.12, No.3, p.118

Grand Army, as well as twice in the present century by the Germans. During the German invasion of 1941-45, over 20 million Soviet citizens lost their lives.<sup>43</sup>

Since the end of World War II, the existence of the Soviet Union (as the Soviets see it) has been made even more precarious by the formation of the NATO security alliance in Europe headed by the United States. From the Soviet viewpoint, the principal arena of a future world war would most probably be on the European continent, in Central Europe, as in the past two world wars.

But, if "we base our conclusions on the course of events since 1949", Geoffrey Barraclough has pointed out, then "it would be...easy and...plausible to argue that the world was moving not into an Atlantic but into a Pacific age".<sup>44</sup> Today we have more reason than ever to believe that "The Pacific", as US President Ronald Reagan said in October 1984, "is where the future of the world lies". From an economic perspective, the Asian-Pacific region has experienced more rapid growth than any other region. For example, US trade with Asia topped \$116 billion in 1980, surpassing for the first time the combined value of exports and imports to Europe. By the year 2000, it is expected to account for 25 per cent of the US GNP.<sup>45</sup>

43. USSR'76, *Novosti Press Agency Year Book*, Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1976, p.27

44. *Geoffrey Barraclough, An Introduction to Contemporary History*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, p.22

45. "Rivalry in the Pacific", *Time*, November 24, 1986, p.13



Further, almost two-thirds of the world's population is estimated to live on the Pacific rim.

The Soviet leaders now also share the view that the Asian-Pacific region is to play an ever increasing role in future international relations. However, there is no reason to believe that the Soviet Union will shift its primary strategic focus from Europe to the Asian-Pacific region. "On the whole the Pacific region has not as yet been militarized to the extent Europe has", Gorbachev acknowledged in his Vladivostok speech, though "the potentialities of militarisation in the Pacific region are truly immense, and the consequences are extremely dangerous".<sup>46</sup> Europe is undoubtedly the primary Soviet security concern. Paul Dibb argues that it is more important than Japan or China in the Soviet scheme of things. Europe has the proximity, resources, economic and military bases, as well as historical affinity, in a way that Japan or China do not.<sup>47</sup> It may be argued that whatever role the present Soviet leadership may seek to play in the Asian-Pacific region, the Soviet Union will continue to operate as a European nation with global superpower interests and with a European-based sense of political mission rather than as an Asian-Pacific nation. Apart from the strategic importance of Europe, two

46. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.27

47. Paul Dibb, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p.118. See also Michael McCgwire, "Soviet Naval Doctrine and Strategy" in Derek Leebaert (ed.), *Soviet Military Thinking*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp.131-133



overriding reasons for continued Soviet orientation towards Europe are its acute economic problems and the desire to solve them without abandonment of "socialism". First, during the Reagan years the United States, while remaining the world's largest economy, lost growth relatively to Western Europe, and it became clear by 1989 that the massive aid necessary to revitalise the Soviet Union and East European economics would come mostly from Western Europe, not the United States. Secondly, in his major speech at the 27th Party Congress,<sup>48</sup> Gorbachev drew attention to the possibility that lessons could be learned from the European (reformist, not revolutionary) Social Democrats. The statement constituted a major doctrinal retreat, since Social Democrats had previously been denounced regularly as traitors to socialism. But by 1988, European countries with strong Social Democratic Parties (specially Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and West Germany) had achieved economic levels measured in per capita GNP which were higher than that of the United States, while at the same time making much more comprehensive provision for health care, education and welfare than is the case in the United States (or Japan); and several other European countries with similar political traditions (France and Austria in particular) were close behind. For the Soviets, Western Europe offers a model combining the high living standards of

48. See *Mikhail Gorbachev: "Report of the Central Committee"*, at the 27th CPSU Congress, February-March 1986

competitive capitalism with welfare provisions comparable in scope (and often superior in quality) to those which are regarded as major benefits in all socialist societies.<sup>49</sup> By the end of 1989 Communist Parties in East Germany, Poland and Hungary were seeking reincarnation as Social Democratic Parties. At least towards the end of this century, therefore, the Asian-Pacific region, as Ross Babbage noted, "continues to be less than a first priority for the Soviet Union".<sup>50</sup>

#### Correlation of Forces

Essentially, Gorbachev has sought to enhance Soviet security in Northeast Asia by persuading potential adversaries to reduce their military potential rather than by further increasing that of the Soviet Union, and has embarked on a foreign policy of retrenchment. While asserting Soviet national interests in Northeast Asia, he has groped for a new correlation of forces at a lower level to create a favourable environment for Soviet modernization at home. This updated policy of detente is most evident in his search for an easier relationship with China and Japan. Accordingly, Moscow expressed new understanding of China's defence ties with the United

49. Data on per capita incomes extracted from GNP/GDP/NMP and population figures in *The Military Balance*, IISS, London, 1989, pp.16-72, 84-85 and 88-89.

50. *Ross Babbage*, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.1

States while emphasising that it no longer demands that Japan break its security relationship with Washington.<sup>51</sup>

In Moscow, China and Japan are clearly viewed as the two important factors affecting the regional balance of forces. The Soviet Union could not achieve a positive shift without a breakthrough in bilateral Soviet-Chinese and/or Soviet-Japanese relations. Due to historical conflicts and rivalry, each still views the other with unease, and as long-term competitors. Mutual distrust and suspicion remained deep-seated and strong. However, a strong mutual interest in economic modernisation and reduction of military expenditures brought about a relatively speedy rapprochement in Sino-Soviet relations, which were normalised at a summit meeting in Beijing in May 1989. However, prospects for Soviet-Japanese economic cooperation appeared likely to remain constrained by the Northern Territories issue and the ample opportunities available for Japanese investment elsewhere in the Asian-Pacific region. The new correlation of forces Gorbachev has attempted to achieve is not solely dependent upon Moscow's will. It is also dependent upon Chinese and Japanese perceptions of their respective national interests in light of Soviet intentions in Northeast Asia and other regions in the world. Further, their ties with the United States are clearly important factors in their bilateral relations with the Soviet Union.

51. *Richard Nations, "Moscow's New Tack", Far Eastern Economic Review, August 14, 1986, p.33*

### Troop Withdrawal

By February 15 1989, the Soviets had withdrawn all their forces from Afghanistan. Clearly, the Soviets had come to realise that, as Gorbachev said at the 27th Party Congress in 1986, Afghanistan was a "bleeding wound" for the Soviet Union. By Moscow's own estimate, the eight-and-a-half-year war had cost some 13830 Soviet soldiers their lives.<sup>52</sup> Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan met one of the Chinese and American demands for improved relations, and was seen as a Soviet gesture to forge trust and soften a hostile image in the Asian-Pacific region.

As a concession on a greater improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, Gorbachev offered a further withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia. During his visit to China in May 1989, he announced at a public gathering in Beijing that the Soviets would withdraw three ground force divisions, including two tank divisions, and all air force units from Mongolia during 1989-1990.<sup>53</sup> By June 22 1989, the Soviets had withdrawn 22000 troops, 3000 tanks, about 600 artillery systems and 50 aircraft from Mongolia.<sup>54</sup> According to the agreement reached between the Soviet Union and Mongolia on March 2 1990, the

52. *Pravda*, August 17 1989

53. *People's Daily*, May 18, 1989

54. This was disclosed by General Noiseyev in an interview with *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'* (International Life), *International Life*, Moscow, No.10, October 1989

Soviets would withdraw all their forces from Mongolia by 1993, and complete the withdrawal of main combat forces by 1992.<sup>55</sup> In any case, a complete withdrawal from Mongolia does not alter the military balance with China. A Soviet official conceded that a Soviet military presence in Mongolia is not essential: "if there is any emergency, we could move forces from the Soviet Union into Mongolia very quickly".<sup>56</sup>

As for the Soviet withdrawal from Vietnam, Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech appeared to have signaled a condition, by saying that "if the United States gave up its military presence, say, in the Philippines, we would not leave this step unanswered".<sup>57</sup> This statement did not even imply that if US withdrew from the Philippines the Soviet Union would certainly withdraw from Vietnam. However, a more definite undertaking to do so appeared in his speech at Krasnoyarsk in September 1988.

Soviet access to military bases in Vietnam extended the operational reach of the Soviet Pacific Fleet more than 4,000 km southwards to the South China Sea, and somewhat altered the naval balance in the Pacific. From the bases in Vietnam, the Soviets could in principle act more flexibly against US naval units operating in or passing through the South China Sea and counter the US presence

55. Pravda, March 3, 1990

56. Quoted in *Tai Ming Cheung*, "Reaching for Detente", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 2 1988, p.34

57. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.36

just across the sea in the Philippines; threaten and encircle China on the south; project their forces to either the Indian Ocean or the Pacific as required, thus reducing the need for a permanent Indian Ocean presence, and more readily gain access to the Southwest Pacific.

Compared with the United States's forces in the Philippines, however, the Soviet naval and air forces in Vietnam are far inferior. The Soviet bases in Vietnam are its only military asset in the region and thousands of kilometres away from Soviet forces while the US position in the Philippines is backed by several other fairly nearby bases and friendly neighbouring countries. In the event of a US-Soviet conflict, the Soviet military forces in Vietnam would be very vulnerable for lack of naval or air dominance in the region. Moreover, the Soviets would also find it extremely difficult to reinforce Cam Ranh Bay from Vladivostok due to its geographic remoteness from the Soviet homeland. Their lines of communication through the Sea of Japan, the Taiwan Strait and the Bashi Channel would be vulnerable to action by the United States and allied forces.<sup>58</sup>

Following the detente with China in May 1989, the continued presence of Soviet strike forces in Vietnam may have come to appear militarily less necessary and even politically embarrassing. In the last few weeks of 1989,

58. For a discussion, see *Tim Huxley and Amitav Acharya, Security Perspectives in Southeast Asia*, *International Defence Review*, 12/1987, p.1600



the Soviets withdrew all forces with offensive capability--strike aircraft, major surface warships and submarines--from Vietnam, leaving there only the reconnaissance aircraft and smaller warships such as minehunters and sweepers.<sup>59</sup> Provided that the maintenance and supply infrastructures have been retained (and the continued presence of some Soviet aircraft and ships suggests that they have) the strike aircraft could return to Vietnam within hours and the warships within days of a decision so to return them. However, their return would imply the existence of some kind of regional crisis and perhaps intensify it, so the withdrawal does imply some readiness to accept further constraints on their actions. It does not, however, imply that the linkage made by Gorbachev between Soviet withdrawal from Vietnam and US withdrawal from the Philippines has been abandoned--only complete removal of the residual presence, including maintenance and supply facilities, could have that effect.

### **Force Reductions**

During Gorbachev's first five years in office, the Soviet Union partially reversed the force buildup in the Far East TVD, which was initiated during the Brezhnev era. Although, according to *Soviet Military Power 1987*, Soviet ground forces divisions stationed in the Far East TVD

59. *International Herald Tribune*, January 16, 1990



increased from 53 in 1985 to 57 in 1987, available Chinese sources indicated that there was little increase in the total manpower of Soviet ground forces during this period of time.<sup>60</sup> General Yazov disclosed that "in recent years the Soviet Union has not increased its ground forces in the Far East. Rather it has even reduced the size of its ground forces along the Sino-Soviet border. In conducting military exercises, we have showed restraint, with no increase in force size and scope of the exercises."<sup>61</sup> During his visit to Beijing in 1989, Gorbachev announced that apart from a cut of Soviet forces in Mongolia by 75 per cent, the Soviet Union would unilaterally reduce its armed forces deployed in its eastern part by 200000 men, including 120000 in the Soviet Far East during 1989-1990, and that 12 ground force divisions and 11 air force regiments would be disbanded. 16 warships would be withdrawn from the Soviet Pacific Fleet.<sup>62</sup> There are evidences that Soviet force reductions in the Far East TVD are now well under way. As General Moiseyev disclosed the headquarters of the Central Asian Military District had been disbanded, so had four army headquarters and three army corps in the

60. For a discussion, see *Xie Wenqing*, "The Soviet Strategy in the Asian-Pacific Region and Its Prospects", *International Strategic Studies*, No.1, March 1987, p.20

61. *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), February 23, 1988

62. "Gorbachev's Speech at a Public Gathering in Beijing, May 17 1989", *People's Daily*, May 18, 1989

Far East and Turkestan Military Districts up to July 1 1989.<sup>63</sup>

These reductions are the first Soviet large cutbacks in more than 20 years since the mid-1960s when Soviet military forces increased dramatically in the Far East. They should be seen as Soviet initiatives to reduce the level of military tension and impart the requisite dynamics to the process of curtailing the arms race in Northeast Asia. But they will not significantly blunt the Soviet offensive capability. Unlike the reductions being undertaken in Eastern Europe, where the emphasis is on the withdrawal of major quantities of offensive weapons systems, including tanks, artillery pieces, and combat aircraft, such a pruning of similar resources has yet to take place in the Far East. Further, most of the announced reductions are being undertaken along the Sino-Soviet border, with so far little change in the line-up against Japanese and US forces.<sup>64</sup>

63. This was disclosed by General Moiseyev in an interview with *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'* (International Life), *International Life*, Moscow, No.10, October 1989

64. According to Tai Ming Chueng, in May 1989, the Soviet Defence Minister General Yazov disclosed that Soviet forces in the Far East TVD totalled almost 600000 troops, 12600 tanks and 1290 combat aircraft--excluding non-combat support personnel and units of the Strategic Rocket Forces based in the area. These forces are distributed between two army groups, one facing China, the other facing the US and Japan, and comprise around 25 per cent of the Soviet Union's 3 million strong armed forces. The army group deployed against China numbers 271400 troops, 820 aircraft, 8100 tanks, 10200 armoured personnel carriers and 9400 artillery pieces, while the army group arrayed against the US and Japan has 326200 men, 4500 tanks, 4100 armoured personnel carriers, 7000 artillery pieces and 870 combat aircraft--470 in the strike role. Quoted in *Tai Ming Cheung*, "Opening Gambit--Soviets Relax Guard Along Asian Land Frontier", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 31, 1989, p.31

As for nuclear disarmament, the Soviets are already eliminating their 162 SS-20 IRBMs deployed in Asia in accordance with the INF Treaty signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1988.<sup>65</sup> According to *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Soviets had eliminated all shorter-range missiles such as SS-23 up to October 27 1989.<sup>66</sup> The Soviets will most probably complete the elimination of SS-20 as promised by June 1 1991. Given that the Soviet Union and the United States currently hold about 95 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons, any steps towards nuclear disarmament such as the signing of the INF Treaty by Moscow and Washington should be welcomed as more than an historic agreement. For the first time in history, the two superpowers have agreed to destroy an entire class of missiles, and to permanently ban all their ground-launched missiles with a range of 500-5500 km. It is indeed a practical step of lessening the danger of a global nuclear war, at least in the short run.

Despite a series of initiatives in nuclear disarmament, the Soviet strategic forces currently deployed in the Far East are estimated to include 408 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), 354 submarine-launched

65. The INF Treaty refers to the Treaty Between the United States of America and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, which was signed on December 8 1987, and was ratified and went into effect on June 1 1988. In terms of the Treaty, INF missiles with a range of 500-1000 km are referred to as shorter-range missiles and those with a range of 1000-5500 km are called intermediate-range missiles.

66. *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star), October 29, 1989

ballistic missiles (SLBM), and 215 bombers.<sup>67</sup> Taking into account the changes in Soviet attitudes towards nuclear disarmament, it can be assumed that the Soviets will lay particular emphasis on the use of their strategic nuclear weapons as a deterrent means rather than an operational means, but will not renounce their capability of nuclear retaliation. Given the prerequisite for maintaining strategic parity with the United States, it is unlikely that the Soviets would conduct unilateral and large-scale reductions of their strategic forces before the START (strategic arms reduction talks) treaty is signed between Moscow and Washington.

### Force Buildup

Available sources concerning Soviet perceptions of the threat environment in Northeast Asia reflect Moscow's strong concerns about the security of its eastern frontiers.<sup>68</sup> In the Vladivostok speech, Gorbachev said that "one has to state that militarisation and the escalation of the war threat in this part of the world are taking place at a dangerously fast pace. The Pacific Ocean is turning into an arena of military and political confrontation".<sup>69</sup> "In a more general way", the Soviet Ambassador to Australia Evgeni Samoteikin said in a

67. *The Military Balance 1989-1990*, IISS, London, 1989, p.41.

68. For example, Marshal *N.V. Ogarkov* in *Communist of the Armed Forces*, 14/1980 and *Kommunist*, July 1981

69. *Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech*, p.28

Canberra conference in 1987, "we are concerned about the [Northeast Asian] region because it is potentially an area of military threat against us. That military threat results from American military presence in Japan, in South Korea...and also results from the policy of Japan itself which has recently stepped over the threshold of responsible moderation in increasing its military forces".<sup>70</sup> This remark has made it clear that large Soviet forces will still be needed to deter the perceived threat.

In this context, modernization of Soviet forces in the Far East is likely to continue. Moscow's priority will be given to qualitative rather than quantitative improvement. Western defence ministers and intelligence organisation, according to Gunther Wagenlehner, confirm unanimously that Soviet procurement programmes continue to modernise the Soviet armed forces with offensive weapons.<sup>71</sup> Even after 1987, new principal surface combatants, including a *Kirov*-class nuclear-powered guided-missile cruiser, a *Sovremennyy*-class guided-missile destroyer, and two *Udaloy*-class guided-missile destroyers, continued to join the Soviet Pacific Fleet. Soviet air and air defence forces received their latest *Mig-31 Foxhound*, *Su-27 Flanker* fighter aircraft with a

70. *Evgeni Samoteikin*, "The Goals of Vladivostok", in *Ramesh Thakur and Carlyle A. Thayer* (ed.), *The Soviet Union as an Asian Pacific Power: Implications of Gorbachev's 1986 Vladivostok Initiative*, Westview Press, Macmillan Australia, 1987, p.18
71. *Gunther Wagenlehner*, "Long Road for New Soviet Doctrine", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, November 25, 1989, p.1175



true look-down/shoot-down capability and Su-25 *Frogfoot* ground-attack aircraft.<sup>72</sup> Moscow's emphasis seems to be placed more on naval and air forces than on ground forces. Moscow's focus on modernization of the Soviet forces is clearly aimed at making an effective, independent, if smaller, fighting force against worst-case eventualities in the eastern frontiers.

Undoubtedly, during Gorbachev's perestroika years, changes in Soviet thinking on security and military doctrine are taking place. The Soviet armed forces may be restructured along the "purely defensive" lines promised by Gorbachev. Yet, the period of two years announced by Gorbachev to realise the transition from an offensive to a defensive military doctrine seems unrealistic as this transition will require the transformation of the entire Soviet military policy and radical changes in all training and service manuals, besides much larger reductions in Soviet military power. The whole process, as one Soviet colonel and professor of military science argued, would be possible in three stages and could be completed by the year 2000.<sup>73</sup> Even in the wake of

72. See *Soviet Military Power 1987*, US Government Printing Office Washington, 1987, p.18 and pp.68-69, *The Military Balance 1989-1990*, IISS, London, 1989, pp.41-42, and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 3, 1990

73. According to *Gunther Wagenlehner*, a Soviet colonel and professor of military science Vladimir Masarenko wrote in a military bulletin that the transition to a defensive military doctrine would take three stages and at least 12 years. During the first phase (1991-1994), the difference and asymmetries in terms of force levels and major arms would be eradicated. During the second phase (1994-1997), the forces would be reduced by 25 per cent and additional weapons systems have to be reduced against the background of these cuts to realise the principle of sufficiency. The final phases (1997-2000) would see the

unilateral and possibly negotiated reductions, Soviet forces in the Far East will remain large for the foreseeable future. These forces will continue to provide the Soviet Union with impressive capabilities for high-speed "offensive" actions in the Far East.



## Chapter 4

### Implications for the Power Balance

Gorbachev's new impetus for improving relations with China and Japan presaged if not a change in basic Soviet foreign policy, at least a major departure in the style of Soviet diplomacy. Faced with severe domestic problems and mounting difficulties abroad, the Soviet Union could no longer afford to disregard China and Japan. In Northeast Asia, a shift in the balance of power to the Soviet Union's advantage depended on a breakthrough in Sino-Soviet and/or Japanese-Soviet relations.

This chapter discusses the prospects for improved bilateral Sino-Soviet and Japanese-Soviet relations in light of recent developments, as well as Chinese and Japanese perceptions of Soviet threats to their respective security environments. In addition, as US policy is an important factor in the regional balance of power, Soviet-American relations and their impact on regional security and stability, as well as the prospects for US regional position will also be examined.

#### 4.1 China

After Gorbachev came to power in 1985, contacts between China and the Soviet Union increased noticeably in nearly

every sphere, particularly trade. A long-term trade agreement for the 1986-90 period was signed in Moscow during Chinese Vice Premier Yao Yilin's visit in July 1986, providing for a growth of bilateral trade to US\$ 5-6 billion by the 1990s--roughly double the projected figure for 1985.<sup>1</sup> Agreement was also reached for cooperation in constructing seven new projects and reconstructing seventeen old Soviet-built installations in China, mostly in the metallurgy, coal and chemical industries. This was the first Soviet technical assistance to China since the rift in relations in the early 1960s. Although commercial and economic contacts have increased considerably over the past few years, Sino-Soviet trade still accounts for only four per cent of China's total trade, and less than two per cent of the Soviet Union's. Japan is China's largest trading partner with exchanges worth US\$ 17.2 billion in 1986, followed by the United States and other Western countries.<sup>2</sup>

Gorbachev's policy of new political thinking has also enabled the Soviets to abandon the position of their predecessors that problems in Sino-Soviet relations were actually created by China. The Soviets have indicated that they no longer regard the Soviet model of socialism as superior and a model to be copied by all socialist countries. Moscow's increasing news reports on Chinese

1. *People's Daily*, July 10, 1987

2. *Fang Xukuan*, "China's Foreign Trade", *International Trade Report*, Beijing, Winter 1987, p.20

economic reform suggest that, as Gorbachev said in his Vladivostok speech, "the better our relations, the more we shall be able to share our experience";<sup>3</sup> something which might be of political advantage to both the Soviet Union and China.

Following from Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in 1986, the Soviets sought to maintain the momentum towards a rapid improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. In the belief that a Sino-Soviet summit would enable the two leaders to find a "mutually acceptable solution" to their problems, Gorbachev again proposed a summit with Deng Xiaoping in an interview with the Chinese journal Liaowang (Outlook) in December 1987, the first such opportunity given to a Soviet general secretary for almost thirty years.<sup>4</sup> Beijing responded with a denial that a summit was imminent, and at the same time reiterated the need to overcome the "three major obstacles" before there could be a significant improvement in political relations with the Soviet Union, including a resumption of party-to-party relations.<sup>5</sup> Beijing's cautious response to Gorbachev's initiatives was clearly based on its belief

3. Gorbachev: Vladivostok Speech, p.30

4. In November 1987, in a meeting with the Zambian leader Kaunda, Gorbachev for the first time proposed a Sino-Soviet summit, clearly in response to Deng Xiaoping's remark on Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in an interview with an American television network on September 8 1986. In the interview Deng Xiaoping was quoted as saying that "to be frank, I am over 82, already advanced in years and determined to make no more trips abroad. However, if the [Kampuchea] obstacle is removed, I will break the rule and go to meet Gorbachev anywhere in the Soviet Union". For further details, see *People's Daily*, September 8, 1986

5. *People's Daily*, January 12 1988

in the need for "actions not words" on the "three major obstacles". In the Chinese view, the obstacles were not merely a reflection of China's wider differences with the Soviet Union, but were the main elements of what the Chinese saw as a Soviet encirclement through military presence from the north, west and south. These were genuinely serious issues for China's national security, not merely a negotiating ploy.

Despite this denial, Beijing also had a growing interest in rapprochement with Moscow, even if it appeared to be the less keen of the two. Gorbachev's initiatives, seen from Beijing, indicated that the Soviets were prepared to give ground on the Chinese-claimed "three major obstacles", by withdrawing all forces from Afghanistan and Mongolia, and pressuring Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea before the end of 1989. The Soviets also showed willingness to discuss in the Sino-Soviet "normalization" talks the Kampuchea issue, which Beijing claimed to be the main obstacle blocking the normalization of relations between the two countries. All these led to a Chinese perception of increasingly benign Soviet strategic intentions in Asia, and gave sufficient justification for a summit meeting.

It was clear that no significant breakthrough in Sino-Soviet relations could take place without a summit meeting between Gorbachev and the Chinese leadership. In

1987, Beijing and Moscow still had fundamentally different attitudes towards a summit, Moscow seeing the Chinese-claimed obstacles as issues which should be solved at a summit, whereas Beijing saw them as issues created by the Soviets, which must be resolved before a summit. Ultimately, the Soviets appeared to have accepted the Chinese viewpoints; the process of unilateral concessions first begun in the Vladivostok speech was confirmed, and relations were "formally normalised" at the Beijing summit meeting in May 1989. The summit meeting--the first in 30 years since Khrushchev's last visit to Beijing in 1959, as Deng Xiaoping and Gorbachev announced, had "put an end to the unpleasant past and opened up a new era in the bilateral Sino-Soviet relations".<sup>6</sup>

#### Chinese Perceptions of Soviet Threat

China's primary national objective is internal modernization. As Deng Xiaoping indicated earlier in 1988, this requires a peaceful international environment for at least 50 years.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, a peaceful environment and an easing of tension with the Soviet Union are conducive to China's declared priority of economic

6. People's Daily, May 17, 1989

7. These remarks were made on January 20, 1988 when Deng Xiaoping met with Norwegian Prime Minister Ms Gro Harlem Brundtland who was on a visit to Beijing. For further details, see Ta Kung Pao, January 21, 1988, p.3

modernization, by reducing the need for heavy military expenditure.

In recent years, the bilateral Sino-Soviet relations have relaxed, and China's northern borders have become more stable and less likely to be disrupted by the Soviets than at any time since the 1960s. Yet because of the historical deep antagonism between China and the Soviet Union, nothing in Soviet overtures will alter China's basic perception of the Soviet Union as a potential threat to its security and stability. It is most likely that China will continue to regard the Soviet Union as a threat even though the Soviets believe, as Gorbachev asserted, "a danger and obstacle on the road of peace and progress--misunderstanding and occasional enmity between the two big socialist countries, the Soviet Union and China--has been removed".<sup>8</sup>

However, threat perception is not a fixed quantity. The ability to pose a threat depends on the perceived capability to do so, but the seriousness with which it is regarded depends on perceived intentions. Geographical proximity, a history of often hostile relations including past Russian expansion into territories historically regarded as subject to China,<sup>9</sup> Soviet attempts to assert

8. Pravda, February 23, 1989

9. During the mid-nineteenth century, taking swift advantage of chaos in China as a result of the wars with imperialist powers of Europe, the Russians imposed a series of "unequal treaties" on Manchu China. They seized a territory of more than 600,000 sq km north of the Heilong River (Amur River) and south of the Outer Hinggan Mountains (Stanovoi Mts.) in 1858, another territory of about 400,000 sq km east of the Ussuri River (including the



doctrinal primacy within Communism, more recent perceptions of Soviet policy as inherently expansionist and as engaged in superpower collusion with the United States, and the presence of large and technologically better-equipped Soviet armed forces along the Sino-Soviet border, in Mongolia and in Vietnam are the substance of Chinese perception of a Soviet threat. From the Soviet side, the remoteness of the Soviet Far East from main Soviet centres, China's proximity to it, the paucity and vulnerability of its lines of communication, border disputes in which China often displayed militancy, Maoist challenges to Soviet doctrinal hegemony within international communism and tendencies in late Maoist and post-Mao periods towards what was seen in Moscow as a *de facto* alliance with the United States and Japan make up the essence of the Soviet perception of a threat from China. In the post-Vladivostok period, many of these factors have diminished in importance, so that each country's perception of threat posed by the other is now much less acute than it was in the early 1980s. However, each remains capable of damaging the interests of the other. That mutual threat perception has diminished does not therefore mean that it has ceased to exist, or that its reduction has become irreversible.

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Kurile Islands) in 1860, and yet another territory of more than 440,000 sq km in western China in 1864, totalling about 1.5 million sq km of China's territory under the Treaty of Aigun and the Treaty of Peking. For further details see *Shi Da, A Short History of Tsarist Russia Against China*, Beijing Zhouhua Shuju, China, 1976, pp.23-53. See also *Qi Wen, China: A General Survey*, Beijing Foreign Languages Press, 1979, p.32

Even after the completion of the current troop reductions in the Far East, in the Chinese view, the Soviets still have overwhelming superiority over China in strategic nuclear forces, and the quality of their conventional forces is higher than that of the Chinese, although China retains overwhelming superiority in force size. Despite the Soviet leadership stress on the non-aggressive military posture of its forces along the Sino-Soviet border, analysts in Beijing tend to believe that while the intentions of restructuring may be genuine, Soviet forces still have a formidable offensive capability. Nevertheless, China believes that the Soviet military forces now opposite China are not sufficient to undertake a medium-to-large level conventional war without substantial reinforcements from the European USSR, reinforcements which are most unlikely to be available in a worst-case scenario of a two-front war. A full-scale military invasion and occupation of China, as Paul Dibb argued, is far beyond Soviet military capabilities, even if the Soviet Union were to devote most of its military assets to such a venture.<sup>10</sup>

During the 1989 summit meeting, both sides agreed to "take measures to reduce the military forces deployed along the Sino-Soviet border, to the lowest level appropriate to the normal good-neighbourly relations

10. *Paul Dibb, The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, pp.165-166

between the two countries".<sup>11</sup> Diplomatic and military experts from Beijing and Moscow have met and held two rounds of talks concerning the principles of mutually reducing the level of military presence along the Sino-Soviet border and establishing confidence-building measures in the military sphere.<sup>12</sup> It is most likely that an agreement will be reached on the principles governing force reductions along both sides of the Sino-Soviet border. If this takes place, the level of military confrontation between the two countries will be further decreased. However, Given Moscow's current internal preoccupations, there is little prospect of large Soviet force reductions in the near future. Soviet superiority over China will remain in military equipment and technological level. Until there is a significant Soviet force reduction along the border, that is, scaling back to the force level before 1964, the Soviet military threat to China remains a real one.

### Prospects

Within a period of four decades starting from 1949, Sino-Soviet relations have evolved from a state of alliance, through hostility, to a state of good-neighbourliness. Obviously, the Beijing summit meeting of May 1989 led to full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, including

11. *People's Daily*, May 19, 1989

12. *People's Daily*, November 28, 1989 and February 23, 1990

party-to-party relations. Both Beijing and Moscow showed willingness to end three decades of Sino-Soviet estrangement by "looking forward and doing more practical work to expand bilateral Sino-Soviet relations". Without Beijing's new viewpoints on the international political order and Moscow's new principles of political thinking, China and the Soviet Union could hardly have moved close to each other in their common interests of reform as said in China or perestroika in the Soviet Union. However, neither Beijing nor Moscow is likely to duplicate the military-political alliance relations of the 1950s, and the confrontation relations of the 1960s and 1970s. Both sides stated that the development of their state-to-state relations will be based on "the general principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence".<sup>13</sup> Clearly, a solid foundation for relations between the two countries is peaceful coexistence in the political field and equality and mutual benefit in the field of economy and cooperation.

The normalisation of relations between China and the Soviet Union in 1989 indeed offered grounds for hope that "a brand new stage" would be opened up in Sino-Soviet relations, including party-to-party relations. But, the brand new stage in Sino-Soviet relations, as Chinese and

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13. People's Daily, May 19, 1989

Soviet leaders anticipated, was soon overshadowed by the subsequent "Beijing Event" and drastic East European changes in the latter part of 1989. The reasons for all these happenings are beyond the scope of this sub-thesis which notes merely that they will have an adverse effect on the extent of improved Sino-Soviet relations.

There are signs of increasing divergence between the two countries in the fundamental attitudes towards questions of internal political order, particularly over the role to be played by the Communist Party. While each asserts its intention not to interfere in the other's internal affairs, it is not possible for either to prevent participants in internal power struggles citing the example of the other as a model to be followed or avoided, bringing about a kind of interference by proxy. In the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen crackdown, Gorbachev reacted very cautiously. However, he made it clear at the session of the Supreme Soviet in September 1989 that he did not see use of military force as a viable alternative to political reform.<sup>14</sup> The Chinese leadership has quietly voiced concern over the recent political changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and apparently found the renunciation of the leading role of the Communist Party in some countries to be ideologically unacceptable. In December 1989, General

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14. See "Gorbachev's Opening Speech at the session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, September 25 1989", Pravda, September 26, 1989

Secretary Jiang Zemin stated in a meeting with a high-level Soviet delegation that Beijing had to express concern over developments in other socialist countries, but that it would not interfere in their internal affairs. With regard to China's reform, he asserted that while aiming at improving socialism, it must adhere to the leadership of the Communist Party of China.<sup>15</sup> By encouraging political pluralism and greater public accountability for communist leaders in some East European countries, a Chinese scholar of international relations warned that Gorbachev might clash head-on with the Chinese leadership on ideological grounds,<sup>16</sup> thereby raising a danger of a new rift opening up. But so far there is no reason to expect that the divergence between Beijing and Moscow would be transformed into an open polemical dispute as happened in the early 1960s. Neither Beijing nor Moscow has showed any sign of altering the fundamental basis of Sino-Soviet relations, although they appear to be careful not to move too close to each other. How far full normalisation of relations will go for the foreseeable future appears to depend to a large extent on the convergence between Beijing's new international political order and Moscow's new political thinking.

There can be no doubt that both China and the Soviet Union have a strong interest in better bilateral

15. *People's Daily*, December 29, 1989

16. *Shao Wenguang*, "China's Relations with the Superpowers", *Survival*, Volume XXXII, No.2, IISS, March/April 1990, p.165



relations. Both sides stand to gain from a reduction of tension along their common border and from increased trade. Against this background, Sino-Soviet relations can be expected to develop steadily in the fields of economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and other contacts, including low-level military contacts. Soviet border trade and technical assistance are likely to be enhanced in coming years. This will be a useful Soviet complement to Western contributions to China's modernization. But given the economic and technological gap between the USSR and the West, as Ross Babbage noted, they are unlikely to approach the scale of Chinese-Western economic cooperation.<sup>17</sup> Relying on the Soviet economy, in the Chinese view, may slow down China's modernisation, and may well deprive it of other benefits that it stands to gain from economic cooperation with the West. Beijing will have to balance improved relations with Moscow against China's other political and strategic interests.

#### 4.2 Japan

Japanese-Soviet relations have been generally cool and lacking in harmony since the end of World War II. Due to Moscow's openly contemptuous and tough policies towards Japan, according to Kazuo Ogawa, contacts have never been marked by genuine friendliness although diplomatic

17. *Ross Babbage, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.11*

relations were restored between the two countries in 1956.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the view of many Western specialists is that Moscow's diplomatic approach in its dealings with Japan has been "little short of a disaster".<sup>19</sup>

Since Gorbachev took office in 1985, there have appeared some developments in Japanese-Soviet relations indicating, as Gorbachev noted in his Vladivostok speech, "a turn for the better". The most significant was the reciprocal visits of both countries' foreign ministers in 1986. Eduard Shevardnadze's visit to Tokyo was the first by a Soviet foreign minister since Andrey Gromyko went to Japan in 1976. This clearly was a major step towards improved Soviet-Japanese relations. Further, Gorbachev announced on April 7 1988 that he would consider a visit to Japan. If this takes place, it will be an unprecedented gesture, by the Soviet Union's highest leader, to post-war Soviet-Japanese relations.<sup>20</sup>

There can be little doubt that, seen from both Tokyo and Moscow, closer Soviet-Japanese economic cooperation proposed by Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech is of mutual interest. The Soviets need sophisticated economic

18. *Kazuo Ogawa*, "[Soviet] Economic Relations with Japan", in *Rodger Swearingen*, *Siberia and the Soviet Far East*, Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1987, p.158

19. See, for example, *Ross Babbage*, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.6

20. What is worth noting is that over the past four decades, Japanese Prime Ministers have visited the Soviet Union on four occasions (among these, the funerals of Soviet leaders), but not one Soviet top leader had expressed a desire to visit Japan despite repeated invitations from Japan. Although Gorbachev's proposed visit to Tokyo had not materialised by 1990, Moscow has not cancelled the visit.

management and technical know-how from Japan more than ever before for economic revitalization at home. For the Japanese, development of economic relations with the Soviet Union also has a strong attraction. Kazuo Ogawa argues that economic and trade relations are at the base of Japanese-Soviet relations; Japanese-Soviet relations without economic and trade links would be very fragile indeed.<sup>21</sup> It is clear that Japan hopes to use economic leverage as a political means to cool off raised tensions in Soviet-Japanese relations, and to continue talks with the Soviets on the return of the northern islands to Japanese sovereignty. A new Soviet-Japanese trade agreement for 1986-90 was signed in 1986, including provisions for talks on further Siberian development. A joint Japanese-Soviet commission on science and technology, inactive since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was revived in the same year.<sup>22</sup>

### The Territorial Issue

The Japanese must have paused for thought over Gorbachev's remarks about promoting economic cooperation "in a quiet atmosphere free from problems of the past". The remark suggested that there was little change in the substance of Soviet policy towards Japan over the pending

21. Kazuo Ogawa, "[Soviet] Economic Relations with Japan", in *Rodger Swearingen, Siberia and the Soviet Far East*, Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1987, p.159

22. For further details, see *Hiroshi Kimura, "Soviet Focus on the Pacific", Problems of Communism*, Vol.XXXVI, May-June 1987, p.7

territorial issue despite a distinct change in the tone. Gorbachev still wanted to obtain what Moscow needed from Japan, without making any political concessions in return.

There are a number of major impediments to improved Japanese-Soviet relations, such as the Northern Territorial issue, Japan's close defence alliance with the United States and the presence of US forces and bases, some with nuclear-capable aircraft or submarines, in Japan. However, none is more fundamental and intractable than the territorial issue, which Japan considers to be the most important obstacle to the normalization of Japanese-Soviet relations.

When the Soviet Union and Japan re-established diplomatic relations in 1956, the Soviets agreed "to transfer to Japan the Habomai islands and the island of Shikotan, the actual transfer of these islands to take place after the conclusion of a peace treaty".<sup>23</sup> In 1960, when the revised US-Japan Security Treaty was concluded, however, the Soviets claimed that no territories would be returned until all US troops had been withdrawn from Japan. Since then, little progress has been made towards a settlement, due to Soviet refusal to consider any Japanese claim on the return of all four islands (see Figure 4.1). Nor has a formal peace treaty ever been signed.

23. Quoted in *Brian Cloughley*, "Bring the boys home from the Kuriles, too", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 7 1988, p.28

Like his predecessors, Gorbachev also faces a serious dilemma in Soviet policy towards Japan. Gorbachev's unwillingness to make a major concession on the territorial issue suggests that the Soviets may have the following concerns.

In view of Japan's geographic location and the US military presence on Japan's territory, the Soviets clearly appreciate the potential role Japan could play in the event of a US-Soviet conflict as "a springboard from which the United States can launch attacks against the Soviet homeland [and]...a shield behind which the United States navy can fight Pacific battles".<sup>24</sup> Vladivostok is a major port for the deployment of surface ships and nuclear-armed submarines, yet is only a 30-minute flight from American and Japanese air bases.

As long as the Soviets believe that Japan might itself use or allow the United States to use the northern islands for military purposes, it is very unlikely that they would return them to Japan. This much was stated by Khrushchev as long ago as 1964:

...we would give these islands to Japan only after we had signed a peace treaty with you. Besides, the U.S.A. has its military bases in Japan,...it regards Japan itself as a strategic

24. *W.M. Arkin and D. Chappell, "Forward Offensive Strategy: Raising the Stakes in the Pacific", World Policy Journal, Vol.11, No.3, Summer 1985, p.482*

base in its struggle against the Soviet Union...If we gave you Habomai and Shikotan in such a situation, your fishermen would be pleased...But the American imperialists...have the opportunity to build on your islands military bases aimed against the Soviet Union. We do not want to strengthen American imperialism through our concessions to Japan".<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, the Soviets do not see Japan as a direct military threat at present, but they are concerned about the future. According to one Soviet argument, Japan has "a powerful military-industrial potential, which makes it possible for Japanese ruling circles to build up a multimillion-man army and equip it with advanced military technology".<sup>26</sup> Taking into account Japan's economic capabilities, Soviet officials alleged in private discussion that as an immediate neighbour of the Soviet Union, Japan could be a threat "in the long term".<sup>27</sup> Japan's adoption of a more active and forward defence posture, seen from Moscow, is also one of the most worrying trends, although it is the US-Japan security relationship, rather than Japan's military buildup, that is of most current concern.

25. Quoted in *Young C. Kim*, "Japanese-Soviet Relations: Interaction of Politics, Economics and National Security", *The Washington Papers*, Vol.2, No.21, Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1974, p.35
26. *I.I. Ivkov*, "Japanese Militarism Rears Its Head", *Far Eastern Affairs*, No.3, 1978, p.46
27. This point is argued by *Paul Dibb*, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p.119



Thirdly and the most importantly in the short term, the disputed islands are also part of the Kurile island chain, separating the Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific. Geographically, the Kuriles constitute a protective shield for the Soviet Far East. The islands, while of small economic value, are of great strategic and defence importance to the Soviet Union. They command important straits connecting the Soviet SSBN "bastion" in the Sea of Okhotsk with the Pacific Ocean. The Soviets are not unmindful that in the event of war, the northwestern Pacific, particularly the Sea of Okhotsk, the Sea of Japan and the western Bering Sea, would be the scene of strategic importance. The Soviet naval forces have to keep the US Seventh Fleet and its allied naval forces from approaching Soviet territory, and protect Soviet ballistic-missile submarine forces in the Sea of Okhotsk primarily targeted on the United States. Increases in US naval forces under the Reagan Administration, the adoption of a forward naval policy which includes attacks on the "mutually assured destruction" force represented by the Soviet SSBNs in the Sea of Okhotsk, and deployment of US Trident SSBNs in the Pacific all increased the Soviet perception of a US-Japan threat from the Pacific. Continued Soviet control of these straits, according to Ross Babbage, provides important protection for the bastion and, in particular, inhibits Western naval and

air access.<sup>28</sup> The Soviet Navy's sensitivity to these strategic passages can be readily understood.

Finally, a genuine breakthrough in bilateral Japanese-Soviet relations depends on a mutually acceptable solution to the territorial issue. Even if the Japanese might be prepared to compromise in a relaxed international climate for the Soviets to return some or all of the disputed islands to Japan this move could open a Pandora's box of claims to be laid for the return of other Soviet-occupied territories. Until Gorbachev, the Soviets stuck rigidly to the "principle of frontier unchangeability" as stated in a 1983 article by the editor of Pravda:

Since the end of the war, our country has held to the *principle of frontier unchangeability*...if this principle of unchangeability collapses, there will be disputes all over the world and those disputes may even escalate into a world war. [emphasis added] <sup>29</sup>

This rigidity was undoubtedly prompted in part by Chinese government statements during the 1960s which made it clear that Beijing considered the seizure of hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of Chinese territory by Czarist Russia, including the region encompassing Vladivostok, as imposed on China by "unequal treaties".

28. Ross Babbage, "Soviet Strategic Dilemmas in the North Pacific in the 1990s", (A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988), p.8

29. Quoted in Paul Dibb, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1986, p.119. For more details see *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo, May 11, 1983, p.4.

It was probably motivated even more by the possibility that a concession to Japan could lead to claims by Germany, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania to territories which they too had been forced to cede to the Soviet Union in 1940-45, and which, unlike the Chinese territories, could not be settled by a mere formal acknowledgment that they were regrettable acquisitions by a preceding, "imperialist", regime of the Tsars which passage of time had made irreversible.

By early 1990, this principle of unchangeability was under strong challenge in Eastern Europe, with moves towards German reunification, and in the Soviet Union itself, where nationalist movements were pressing in the Baltic States for independence, and in Moldavia for reunification with Romania, while legislation to provide a procedure for secession was being considered by the Supreme Soviet. The Japanese Northern Territories issue had therefore already begun to lose its significance as a "Pandora's Box", and, dependent on how the situation developed in Europe, a solution was becoming politically more feasible, probably on a basis of Soviet agreement to return the most southerly islands in exchange for Japanese agreement neither to place nor to allow other nations (i.e. the US) to locate military or intelligence installations of any kind on them.

### Japanese Perceptions of Soviet Threat

There is, nevertheless, a strong perception of a Soviet threat among the Japanese, derived mainly from the Soviet Union's increasing military presence in its environment. In 1978, when Moscow accused Tokyo of having joined a "Washington-Tokyo-Beijing axis" against the Soviet Union through signing the Peace and Friendship Treaty with China, the Soviets began to deploy troops to the islands of Kunashiri, Etorofu and Shikotan off Hokkaido.<sup>30</sup> Soviet military presence in the vicinity of Japan no doubt fuelled traditional Japanese concern over the Soviet threat, which goes back to the last century, when the Japanese and the Russians competed for control of Manchuria and Korea. The current Soviet military presence in the Japanese-claimed northern territories, according to Japan's Defence Agency, is the equivalent of a ground force division with air support of 40 Mig-23 fighters.<sup>31</sup>

Soviet military deployment there, its military flights and warship passages close to and through Japan's air and sea space hundreds of times each year and the 1983 Korean Airlines incident, in conjunction with its invasion of Afghanistan and support for Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea had an adverse effect on Japan's security perceptions. Since 1978 Japan's Defence Agency White

30. See *Hiroshi Kimura*, "The Soviet Military Buildup: Its Impact on Japan and Its Aims", in *Solomon and Kosaka* (ed.), *The Soviet Far East Military Buildup*, Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, p.108

31. *Defence of Japan*, Japan's Defence Agency, Tokyo, 1989, p.45

Papers on defence have become increasingly specific about the Soviet Union as posing a main threat to Japan's security. Despite Gorbachev's unilateral reduction programme, in the Japanese view, the Soviet Union still keeps a large military presence in the Far East. 60 per cent of Soviet Far Eastern ground force divisions and air force fighters, 80 per cent of its bombers and the Pacific Fleet are now deployed in areas close to Japan, including the Far Eastern coastal area, the Kuriles, the Sea of Okhotsk and the Kamchatka Peninsula.<sup>32</sup> This is not only a potential threat to Japan, but an important factor in raising tensions in the region. Moreover, Soviet military activities in the region also encouraged domestic pressure for increasing defence spending to a level greater than one per cent of Japan's GNP. Between 1980 and 1988 Japan recorded a 65 percent increase in military spending, ranking Japan's defence outlay the sixth highest in the world.<sup>33</sup> Japan's 1986 White Paper indicated that Tokyo would upgrade weapons-procurement goals to cope with "limited and small-scale aggression".

Officially, Japan regards the Soviet military buildup in the Far East in general and on the northern islands in

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32. See *Defence of Japan*, Japan's Defence Agency, Tokyo, 1989, pp.44-57. See also *Defence of Japan 1982*, (Defence Agency, Tokyo, 1982). The Japan's White Paper on defence not only lists possible scenarios for a Soviet attack, but it states unequivocally that the Japanese Self-Defence Forces (SDF) are to have the capability of blockading the four strategically important straits in the seas around Japan for the purpose of denying the Soviet Pacific Fleet access to the Pacific in the event of hostilities.
33. See *Ron Matthews and Joanne Bartlett*, "The Stirring of Japan's Military Slumber", *The World Today*, London, Vol.44, No.5, May 1988

particular as a main but not an immediate threat to Japan. There is little doubt that Soviet forces across the Sea of Japan, including those in the Far East Military District and the Soviet Pacific Fleet, are powerful and capable of undertaking a major military operation against Japan. Against this contingency, Japan can, according to the Military Balance, muster 13 divisions (one of them armoured) and 10 brigades, 15 submarines, 6 destroyers, 57 frigates and about 510 combat aircraft.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the Soviet Union has any intention to risk a limited or localized attack on Japan which, according to Paul Keal, would at least in theory invite a counter attack, backed by the threat of nuclear weapons, from the United States under the treaty of alliance.<sup>35</sup> For as long as there is a US military commitment to defend Japan, such an event is therefore only likely to occur in a major international conflict, including an armed clash between the United States and the Soviet Union.

### Prospects

In recent years, there have been some changes in Soviet policy towards Japan. Gorbachev appears to have abandoned the position of his predecessors that there was no

34. *The Military Balance 1989-1990*, IISS, London, 1989, pp.162-164

35. *Paul Keal, "Japan's Security Policy"*, (A paper for the Conference on Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific, Canberra, August 1987), p.8



territorial issue between the Soviet Union and Japan. Moscow has showed willingness to discuss the northern territory issue with Tokyo. Given the current drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe already mentioned, it seems unwise that the Japanese still refuse to consider Gorbachev's initiatives for improved Soviet-Japanese relations. Japan may propose that the two countries hold talks on such issues as the reduction of Soviet forces in the Far East, including a withdrawal of Soviet forces from the four northern islands. The prospects for a breakthrough in Japanese-Soviet relations depend largely on developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A more flexible and open Soviet diplomacy towards Tokyo, however, is unlikely to dissolve the deep suspicions and distrust held by the Japanese.

Clearly, joint development of Siberia and the Soviet Far East will be one of the important dimensions in expanding Japanese-Soviet economic cooperation. Gorbachev's call for accelerated economic development of Siberia and the Soviet Far East will conceivably create a massive demand for Japanese machinery, technology and investment, thereby raising the expectation in Japan that the Soviet Union will become a large long-term export market, and at the same time, a significant source of raw materials essential to Japan's economy. However, since the early 1980s, when Japan opted for stable economic growth, its interest in Siberia's natural resources has decreased

compared with the period of Japan's high economic growth in the 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>36</sup>

Until Moscow makes a major concession on the territorial issue, Tokyo is not likely to change its basic policy towards the Soviet Union. It is almost certain that for the Soviets, as Hiroshi Kimura argued, Japan is currently much harder to deal with than China.<sup>37</sup> The fact that Japan's ultimate security depends on the United States also sets a limit to the extent of improved Soviet-Japanese relations. As a US ally, Japan could not avoid being involved in a US-Soviet conflict. Japan's policy towards the Soviet Union therefore depends to a large extent on the trends in US-Soviet relations, and improved US-Soviet relations are one of the keys to expansion of Soviet-Japanese economic cooperation. Japan is likely to remain cautious about Gorbachev's economic diplomacy and, where possible, invest jointly with strong American interests.

#### 4.3 The United States

The essence of the post-World War II rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former US Assistant to the President for

36. For a discussion, see *Kazuo Ogawa*, "[Soviet] Economic Relations with Japan", in *Rodger Swearingen, Siberia and the Soviet Far East*, Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1987

37. *Hiroshi Kimura*, "Soviet Focus on the Pacific", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXXVI, May-June 1987, p.10

National Security Affairs, revolved around the issue as to whether the Soviet Union would have a free hand to dominate Eurasia or whether that opportunity would be denied to it.<sup>38</sup> It may be argued that Northeast Asia and the adjacent areas of the Pacific are now a region as important to the United States geopolitically and economically as Western Europe. This geopolitical "co-importance", as Brzezinski put it, was because in his view Soviet domination over Eurasia could be prevented only if the Far West and the Far East of the Eurasian continent did not fall under Soviet sway.<sup>39</sup> In the light of subsequent events it is arguable that Brzezinski's picture of Soviet capabilities was considerably overdrawn, but it is not necessary to accept it in order to acknowledge the importance of Asia to the United States. Economically, Asia is where the United States has its largest and fastest-growing overseas commerce. Broadly speaking, the region today is more important in terms of trade than Western Europe. As the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said in 1975, that is why the United States will not turn away from Asia or focus its attention on Europe to the detriment of Asia.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, the Pacific region represents one of the greatest concerns to the United States, and it is at

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38. *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, A presentation at the Seminar on Soviet Military Presence in East Asia and the Pacific: Implication for Western Policy, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., March 21, 1985, p.4
39. *Ibid.*, p.4
40. Quoted in "Rival in the Pacific", *Time*, November 24, 1986, p.12

least on a par with the Atlantic region. The United States certainly wants to see that "no single power can dominate the area and exclude or threaten the United States".<sup>41</sup>

#### Impact of Soviet-American Detente on Regional Stability

It is clear that the continuing growth of Soviet military power after the mid-1970s, particularly its increase and upgrading of the Pacific Fleet and its access to bases in Vietnam, represented a considerable challenge to the United States. The Soviet Pacific Fleet's active area of blue-water operations extended throughout the northwestern Pacific, as far north as the Bering Sea and as far south as the South China Sea. From the American view, this was a political, economic and security risk in the Pacific because of the geographic proximity of the Soviet threat to the United States and its allies.

In response, the United States qualitatively improved its force capabilities without measurably increasing its size since 1981. (See Table 4.1) The US Pacific Fleet's strength was augmented by the USS *Varl Vinson* (CVN-70), Los Angeles (SSN-688)-class SSNs, Spruance (DD-963)-class destroyers, Oliver Hazard Perry (FFG-7)-class frigates, and by four new Ohio (SSBN-726)-class SSBNs. It is

41. *Richard L. Sneider, "United States Security Interests", in James W. Morley, The Pacific Basin: New Challenges for the United States, Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, Vol.36, No.1, 1986, p.76*

possible that with the implementation of the Reagan Administration's US naval building plan more ships will be deployed to the US Pacific Fleet. In addition, more modern aircraft, including F-15s and F-16s, have been deployed to the Pacific region. Now nearly 70 per cent of US Pacific forces' aircraft are considered advanced, whereas, in 1980, the figure was only 20 per cent.<sup>42</sup> In Northeast Asia, while pressing Japan and South Korea to modernize their defence forces, the United States also strengthened its force presence there. In Japan, the US Air Force (USAF) replaced F-4s with F-15s, and some 48 F-16s were deployed at Misawa Air Base in northern Japan from 1985. In South Korea, the USAF replaced F-4Ds with 36 F-4Es, and deployed 48 F-16s and 18 A-10As.<sup>43</sup>

The expansion of Soviet military power resulted in intensified competition between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Pacific. Although it had begun to become another arena of increasing strategic importance for superpower rivalry, the region as a whole, as Gorbachev acknowledged in his Vladivostok speech, has not as yet been militarised to the extent Europe has.

However, this process has been slowed by Soviet cuts and by President Bush's reductions in US defence allocations. Unlike Europe, the groundwork for major shifts in

42. *David M. Fitzgerald, "The Soviets in Southeast Asia", Proceedings, February 1986, p.56*

43. For a discussion, see *Young-Sun Ha, "The Soviet Military Buildup in the Far East: Implications for the Security of South Korea", in Solomon and Kosaka (ed.), The Soviet Far East Military Buildup, Sydney: Croom Helm Ltd., 1986, p.149*

military balance in Northeast Asia is less developed. States there do not have such key European experiences as the Helsinki peace process to build upon. Nevertheless, there are important, if gradual, developments in the military equation that may open the way for more dramatic breakthroughs in Northeast Asia. The most significant of these are the Soviet force reductions and withdrawal in the region mentioned earlier, and the gradual reduction of the US forces in South Korea. According to the recent agreement reached in principle between the US and South Korea, the US would reduce its forces in South Korea in three stages. The first stage, covering 1991-1993, would see the withdrawal of 7000 troops, including 5000 non-combatant ground force personnel and 2000 airmen. The reduction in the second (1994-95) and third stages (after 1996) would be decided upon the completion of the first stage and on the evaluation of the military situation then prevailing on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>44</sup>

The process of dialogues between US and Soviet leaders has already led to a shift from sharp confrontation, as seen in the 1980s, to a certain degree of detente. Improved US-Soviet relations will contribute to global and regional detente. Such an improvement will not

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44. *Korea Daily*, April 5, 1989. According to the same source, under the US-South Korean agreement, the combined US-South Korean field army now stationed at Uijongbu would be dissolved by 1993. The Combined Forces Command in Seoul now headed by top US army general and which controls the frontline US and South Korean troops would be commanded in the future by a four-star South Korean army general. The hand over of supreme operational control would take place during the second stage.



necessarily change the basic pattern of rivalry in the US-Soviet relations, but it will reduce its intensity. Security and stability in Northeast Asia will continue to depend to a great extent on the global balance between the United States and the Soviet Union, even at lower levels of armaments. Constrained by their own economic difficulties and political pressures from regional states, the United States and the Soviet Union appear likely to soften their hard-line policies towards each other, and respond to detente by compromises designed to reduce the tensions in their relationship and maintain the global and regional balance between them.

#### Prospects for US Regional Position

The Soviet military buildup over the past two decades failed to reduce the US influence and decouple the United States from its regional allies. Rather, it led to closer ties between the United States and its regional allies and friends. The balance of forces is heavily weighed in favour of the US. General Yazov also admitted that "although we have a two to one superiority in tanks, the US and Japan have a two to one superiority in warships (although not in submarines), and a two to one advantage in tactical and naval aviation".<sup>45</sup> Clearly, the Soviets do not possess regional superiority, but they do possess

45. Quoted in "Asia: a shift in balance?", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 3 1990, p.391

a formidable military force that will most likely continue to be modernized even though reduced in size.

The overall balance in Northeast Asia favours the United States, perhaps more than at any time since the end of World War II, largely as a result of the American initiative in 1972 to improve relations with China. Prior to the "Beijing Event" in 1989, the US and China shared a common interest in preserving a balanced strategic and economic environment in the Asian-Pacific region, vis-a-vis both Soviet power expansion and regional conflicts in the Korean peninsula, Afghanistan, and Kampuchea in particular. The US perception of China was as "an increasingly important factor in efforts to maintain or improve the US military position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union",<sup>46</sup> and the Chinese perception of the United States was as an effective counterweight to Soviet power expansion in both global and regional terms. As a result, they managed to change the global strategic balance vis-a-vis their common adversary, the Soviet Union. When viewed in broad perspective, Sino-US relations, including military ties, developed steadily. Each found ways to promote its own interests through cooperative ties, while neither was ready to compromise on key issues without conditions. The US has since 1985 moved to sell to China a package of avionics to upgrade the Chinese air force's

46. *Banning N. Garrett*, "The United States and the Great Power Triangle", in *Gerald Segal* (ed.), *The China Factor*, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982, p.85

J-8 fighter for air defence, a large-calibre ammunition facility programme, anti-submarine torpedoes and artillery locating radars. In addition to transfers of hardware technology, US warships visited China's ports of Qingdao in 1986 and Shanghai in 1989, and a Chinese naval ship sailed to Hawaii in 1989. US sources also revealed intelligence-sharing arrangements with China, consisting of US listening posts in Xinjing in northwest China (replacing those lost in Iran in 1980), and Chinese seismographic stations to monitor Soviet nuclear tests.<sup>47</sup> These are, as Shao Wenguang said, typical cases of *realpolitik* prevailing over bitter memories and inflammable ideology.<sup>48</sup> As for the US, a defence relationship with the PRC would primarily increase the latter's credibility as a strategic counterweight to Soviet power, just as economic and technological links would fit in with a global American strategy to build an enduring relationship between China and the West.<sup>49</sup>

In stern reaction to the military intervention in Tiananmen Square on June 4 1989, the US government took a series of steps designed to impose sanctions on China, including the suspension of all US military exchanges and arms deals with China, and of US participation in high-

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47. *George Lardner, Jr and R. Jeffrey Smith, "US Maintains Covert China Partnership", International Herald Tribune, June 26, 1989*
  48. *Shao Wenguang, "China's Relations with the Superpowers", Survival, Volume XXXII, No.2, IISS, March/April 1990, p.158*
  49. *Gordon Jacobs, "US Aid Focus on Asia and the Pacific", Jane's Defence Weekly, September 30, 1989, p.657*

level exchanges of government officials with Beijing, thereby causing a serious political rupture in China's relations with the US. Although a hostile US would not be expected to have much impact on the leadership debate in China, a complete reversal of Beijing's policy of cooperation with the US would negate the achievements in Sino-US relations since Nixon's visit in 1972, and would represent the single most dramatic shift in China's grand strategy of the past two decades, which has been to minimize ideological rectitude for the sake of global geopolitical balance and economic modernisation. In spite of public criticism of Western attempts to pressure China for its internal policies, Beijing has kept open the major channels of contact with Washington. China does not intend to close the doors to the outside world, for fear of reducing its economically important access to the much larger flows of Western investment and the West's more advanced technology. China, as General Secretary Jiang Zemin noted, will go ahead with its reform and open-door policy and will not turn back to its old track.<sup>50</sup> In this respect, at least, the official tone is very much a conciliatory one.

Despite the current rupture in Sino-US relations, Beijing appreciated the remark made by US President Bush that there were "enormous geopolitical reasons for the US to maintain relations with China", and hoped that its ties

50. *People's Daily*, April 6, 1990

with the US would "return to a normal track".<sup>51</sup> In this regard, long-term trends in the regional balance will probably continue to favour the United States, unless Gorbachev's proposals on arms reduction and mutual security are accepted. If they are, a situation of approximate parity in security will prevail. Strategically, the primary mission of Soviet military deployments in the Far East are to deter attack and facilitate the opening of a second front from forward-deployed US, Japanese and Chinese forces in the event of a European War. US defence strategy in Asia in this global war scenario is, the Pentagon says, "to conduct offensive actions against Soviet Forces in order to neutralise Soviet military capability and inhibit Soviet transfer of Far Eastern forces to the European theatre."<sup>52</sup> It remains to be seen how bilateral Sino-US relations will continue to develop under a reduced perception of a Soviet threat. It is extremely unlikely that an interdependent triple security alliance--what Zbigniew Brzezinski called an "iron triangle" involving formal relationship in the security area between the United States, Japan and China--will emerge,<sup>53</sup> though all three can be expected to collaborate where they judge it necessary to contain Soviet influence.

51. These remarks were made by Chinese Foreign Minister at a press conference in Beijing. *People's Daily*, March 29, 1990
52. See *Jane's Defence Weekly*, March 3 1990, p.391
53. *Zbigniew Brzezinski*, A presentation at the *Seminar on Soviet Military Presence in East Asia and the Pacific: Implication for Western Policy*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., March 21, 1985, p.9

US-Japan and US-South Korea security relations will remain strong. For example, Japan will most likely increase its contribution to the implementation of a US-Japan defence strategy for the region because of the current trade frictions in the US-Japanese relations. According to Japan's 1987 White Paper on defence, the so-called "sympathetic budget" which provides stationing costs of US troops in Japan has been increased by 9.3 per cent for the financial year 1988 from 119.83 billion Yen in 1987.<sup>54</sup> But it seems very unlikely that an "Eastern NATO",<sup>55</sup> made up of the United States, Japan and South Korea, will emerge. There will continue to be two bilateral treaties; one between the United States and Japan and the second between the United States and South Korea.

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54. See *Ron Matthews and Joanne Bartlett*, "The Stirring of Japan's Military Slumber", *The World Today*, London, Vol.44, No.5, May 1988
55. Quoted in *Hiroshi Kimura*, "Soviet Focus on the Pacific", *Problems of Communism*, Vol.XXXVI, May-June 1987, p.13. This remark was made by Gorbachev during a dinner for Kim Il-song in October 1986.



## **Conclusion**

Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech showed his recognition and determination to tackle the "many tangled knots" of external tensions and economic "pre-crisis" situations left behind by his predecessors due to their over-emphasis on military power. His proposals for "building together new, fair relations in Asia and the Pacific" signalled his intention to gain for the Soviet Union recognition as an Asian-Pacific power, and were followed by a number of steps designed to improve relations with Pacific rim countries.

The series of initiatives and diplomatic gestures made by Gorbachev in his Vladivostok speech clearly reflected his awareness that the Soviet military buildup and accompanying developments in Afghanistan and Kampuchea had severely undermined Soviet political and economic interests in the Asian-Pacific region at a time when this region was acquiring a new level of global significance.

Essentially, Gorbachev's strategic objectives are to cultivate relations with all neighbouring states, so as to create a favourable environment for pursuing economic modernisation at home while retaining superpower status abroad. In the long run, only improved economic conditions at home can halt the decline of the USSR as a world power. Gorbachev does not wish to see the Soviet Union as "the odd man out" in the Asian-Pacific region

when his country's economy urgently needs reinvigoration; a reinvigoration which would be more easily affected by integrating into the most dynamic region of the world economy.

This pragmatic adjustment is most evident in Gorbachev's search for an easier relationship with China and Japan, the principal targets of his initiatives. The former, through its long contiguous border, poses the greatest security problem to the USSR and the latter is now a valuable potential source of technological know-how and investment funds, even though Japan's security treaty with the United States adds an additional element to Soviet security concerns. Since Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in 1986, there have been positive developments in Soviet relations with countries in the region, largely because of the changes in Soviet political thinking and foreign policy (although not exclusively). The most significant of these is the normalisation of relations with China, which has ended 30 years of estrangement in Sino-Soviet relations. Moreover, better relations have already enabled the Soviet Union to reduce military forces and defence costs in the Soviet eastern frontiers and should help to secure inward investment in the economic development of the Soviet Far East and Siberia.

However, mutual distrust and suspicion still remain deep-seated and strong in China, notwithstanding the

normalization of relations. In the short and longer terms, both sides will continue to expand their bilateral relations, but progress will be slow especially in light of their divergence in the policies and attitudes towards internal political order and developments in the East European situation. Further, ties with the United States are clearly an important factor for China in its bilateral relations with the Soviet Union, a situation the United States is in a position to capitalize on.

In the coming decade, the Soviet Union's most serious difficulties in the region seem likely to lie more in its relations with Japan than with China. Moscow clearly needs to secure Japanese assistance for economic revitalization, especially in Siberia and the Soviet Far East. Gorbachev's motive for seeking more conciliatory relations with Japan is largely economic and technical. Yet unless Moscow can make concessions over the territorial issue, Tokyo is not likely to change its policy. Consequently, the prospects for a breakthrough in Japanese-Soviet relations depends on developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, which may lessen the rigidity of Soviet insistence on the "frontier unchangeability".

The Soviet force buildup in past years led to closer ties between the United States, China and Japan. US-China relations will continue to develop in spite of the

current chill after the "Beijing Event" in 1989. Both Beijing and Washington evidently share a desire to end the political rupture in their bilateral relations although the pace of progress may well be constrained by internal politics in each country. The US-Japan and US-South Korea security relationships will remain strong. A significant shift in the regional balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union seems less likely to occur than a continuation of the present status quo relationships, at lower levels of armaments on both sides.

## Appendix:

## Soviet Forces in the Far East Theatre

## Strategic Forces (under central command):

**SLBM:** 385: Pacific Fleet: 32 subs: 9 *D-I* (108), 7 *D-III* (112), 9 *Y-I* (144), 7 *G-II* (21).  
**ICBM:** (?387): SS-11 (4 fields, ?260 msls, could have theatre role), SS-18 (4 fields, ?120 msls).  
**IRBM:** 171: SS-20 (4 fields, 19 sites).  
**Bbrs:** 1 Air Army (HQ Irkutsk): perhaps 170: 40 Tu-26 *Backfire*, (?30) Tu-22 *Blinder*, 100 Tu-16 *Badger*.  
**Spt:** perhaps 64 *recec*/ECM: ?4 Tu-95 *Bear E*, 15 Tu-16 *Badger F*; 45 Tu-16 *Badger H/I/K*.  
**Tkrs:** some 9 Tu-16 *Badger A*.

## Air Defence Forces:

**EWng systems:** 40 in areas: Kamchatka, Nikolayev-na-Amur, Mishchelevka, Abalakova, Sary-shagan.  
**AD areas:** 3: 1 in Transbaykal, 2 in Far East MDs (see MD Air Forces, below).  
**Interceptors:** 550.  
**SAM:** 215 SA-2/-3/-5, 10 SA-10 complexes and sites.

## Ground Forces: 4 MDs, 1 Unified Army Corps HQ:

56 divs (7 tk, 48 motor rifle, 1 coastal defence) plus 5 arty divs: 2 air assault bdes.

## Central Asian MD (HQ Alma Ata):

1 tk, 7 motor rifle, plus 1 arty divs, 1 air assault bde; 145 hel incl 70 Mi-8, Mi-24.

## Siberian MD (HQ Novosibirsk):

6 motor rifle plus 1 arty divs.

## Transbaykal MD (HQ Chita):

2 tk, 11 motor rifle, plus 1 arty divs; 225 hel incl Mi-8 *Hip*, Mi-24 *Hind*.

## Far Eastern MD (HQ Khabarovsk):

2 tk, 22 motor rifle, 1 coastal defence, plus 2 arty divs, 1 air assault bde; some 670 hel.

## Mongolia (HQ Ulan Bator):

1 Army HQ, 2 tk, 2 motor rifle divs. All are at Cat 1. (See also Forces Abroad, below.)

Mobilization could put 4 Fronts, perhaps 12 Armies (4 tk), into the field.

**Equipment:** perhaps 14,900 MBT; 13,200 arty, MRL, mor larger than 120mm; 225 *FROG*, 80+ *Scud*, 40 SS-12 (mod) SSM; 1,200 SAM, some 1,100 hel.

Tactical Aviation (HQ Irkutsk): (150,000): some 1,390 combat ac.

Central Asian MD Air Force (HQ Novosibirsk, incl Siberian MD): 410 combat ac.

**FGA:** 225: 90 MiG-27 *Flogger D/J*, 135 Su-24 *Fencer*.

**Ftrs:** 135: 90 MiG-21 *Fishbed*, 45 MiG-23 *Flogger*.

**Recc:** 50 MiG-25 *Foxbat B/D*.

**Tpt:** 100 ac.

Transbaykal MD Air Force (HQ Chita, incl Mongolia): 390 combat ac.

**FGA:** 270: 2 divs, MiG-27 *Flogger D/J*.

**Ftrs:** 90: 2 regts: MiG-25 *Foxbat A/E*, MiG-23 *Flogger*.

**Recc:** 30: Su-17 *Fitter H*, Yak-28 *Brewer D*, MiG-25 *Foxbat*.

Far-Eastern MD Air Force (HQ Khabarovsk): control centres: Petropavlovsk.

Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk; some 590 combat ac.

**FGA:** 360: 8 regts: MiG-21 *Fishbed L*, MiG-27 *Flogger D/J*, Su-25 *Frogfoot*, Su-7 *Fitter A*, Su-17 *Fitter D/H/K*.

**Ftrs:** 180: MiG-23 *Flogger*, MiG-25 *Foxbat A*, Mig-29 *Fulcrum*, MiG-31 *Foxhound*.

**Recc:** 40: Yak-28 *Brewer D*, MiG-21 *Fishbed H*, MiG-25 *Foxbat B/D*.

**ECM:** 10 Yak-28 *Brewer E*.

Navy (Pacific Fleet) (HQ Vladivostok): (159,000).

Bases: Vladivostok, Petropavlovsk, Sovyetskaya Gavan.

**Subs:** 76: 26 SSGN/SSG, 50 SSN/SS.

**Principal surface combatants:** 82: 2 carriers, 14 cruisers incl 1 *Kirov*, 13 destroyers incl 1 *Sovremennyy*, 1 *Udaloy*, 22 frigates, 31 corvettes.

**Minor surface combatants:** 140.

**MCMV:** 96.

**Amph:** 21 ships (incl 2 *Rogov* LPD).

**Auxiliaries:** 135 principal.

## Regular deployments:

To the Indian Ocean and South Yemen (Aden, Socotra) and Ethiopia (Dahlak Is. Asmara): average 0-1 subs, 1-2 principal, 1-2 minor surface combatants, 1 amph, 6-8 spt ships.

To Vietnam (Cam Ranh Bay) and the South China Sea: average 2-4 subs, 3-4 principal surface combatants, 3-4 minor surface combatants, 0-1 amph, 9-12 spt vessels.

Naval Air (Pacific Fleet Air Force) (HQ Sovetskaya Gavan): combat: some 320 ac, some 110 hel.

**Bbrs:** 110: 1 regt Tu-26 *Backfire*, 3 regts Tu-16 *Badger A/C/G*.

**FGA:** 70: (alloat): 4 bns Yak-38 *Forger A/B*; (ashore): Su-17 *Fitter C*.

**ASW:** 170: ac: 80: Tu-142 *Bear*, Il-38 *May*, Be-12 *Mail*.

**hel:** 90 (alloat): 2 bns Ka-25 *Hormone A*; (ashore): 1 bn Ka-27 *Helix*, 2 bns Mi-14 *Ilaze*.

MR/recce/EW: ac: 60: Tu-16 *Badger*, Tu-95  
*Bear*, An-12 *Cub* B;  
 hel: 10: Ka-25 *Hormone* B.  
 Tkr: 15 Tu-16 *Badger*.  
 MCM hel: 5 Mi-14 *Haze* B.  
 Attack hel: 5 Ka-27 *Helix* B.  
 Tpt/trg: 65 ac, 20 hel.  
 Naval Infantry: 1 Div HQ, 3 inf, 1 tk and 1 arty  
 regts: 7,000.

**FORCES ABROAD:**

**Afghanistan** (Southern GTVD): 116,000 (some  
 10,000 MVD, KGB).

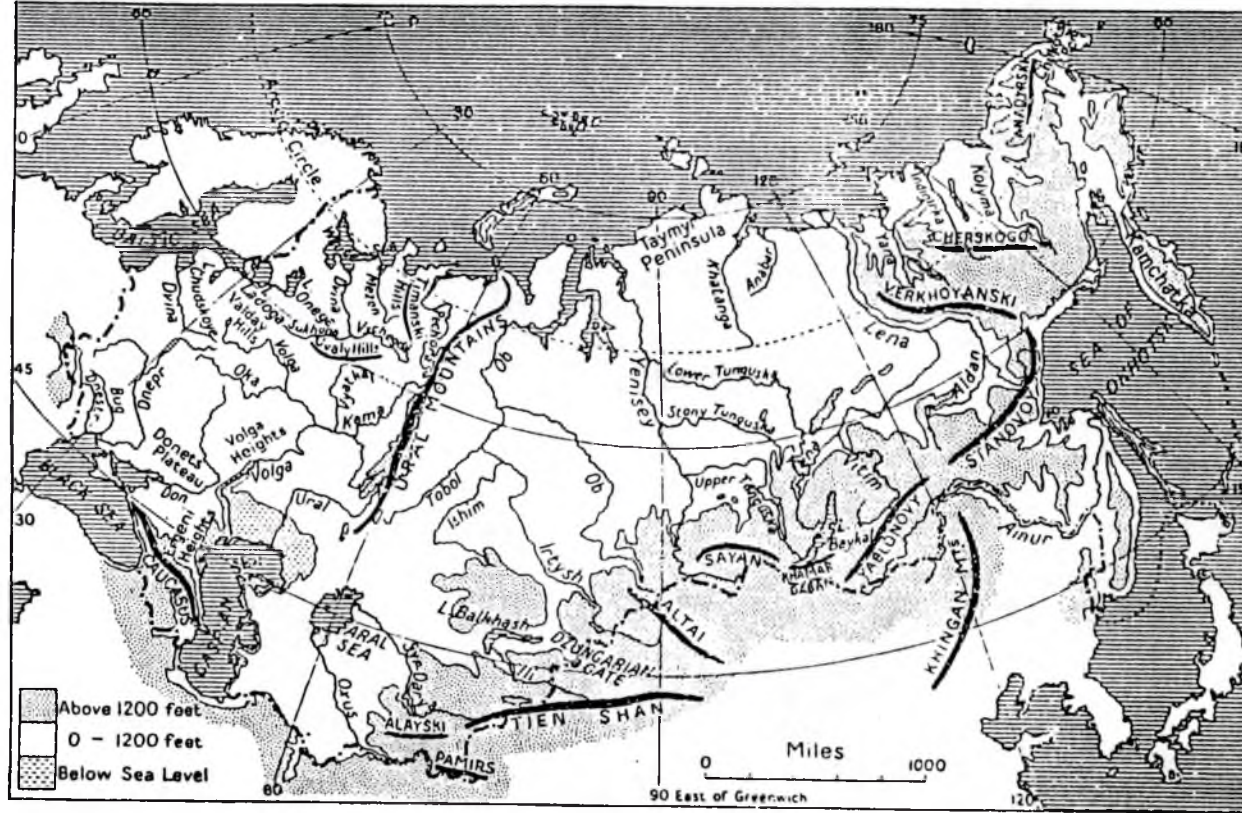
**Mongolia** (Far Eastern GTVD): ε 55,000  
 (reducing).

**Vietnam**: (2,500): naval base (as above);  
 composite air unit: 6 Tu-95/-142 *Bear*, 16  
 Tu-16 *Badger* D/K MR or ASW, 1 sqn of  
 MiG-23 *Flogger* ftr ac, AA, SAM, electronic  
 monitoring station.

(Source: IISS, **The Military Balance 1987-88**)

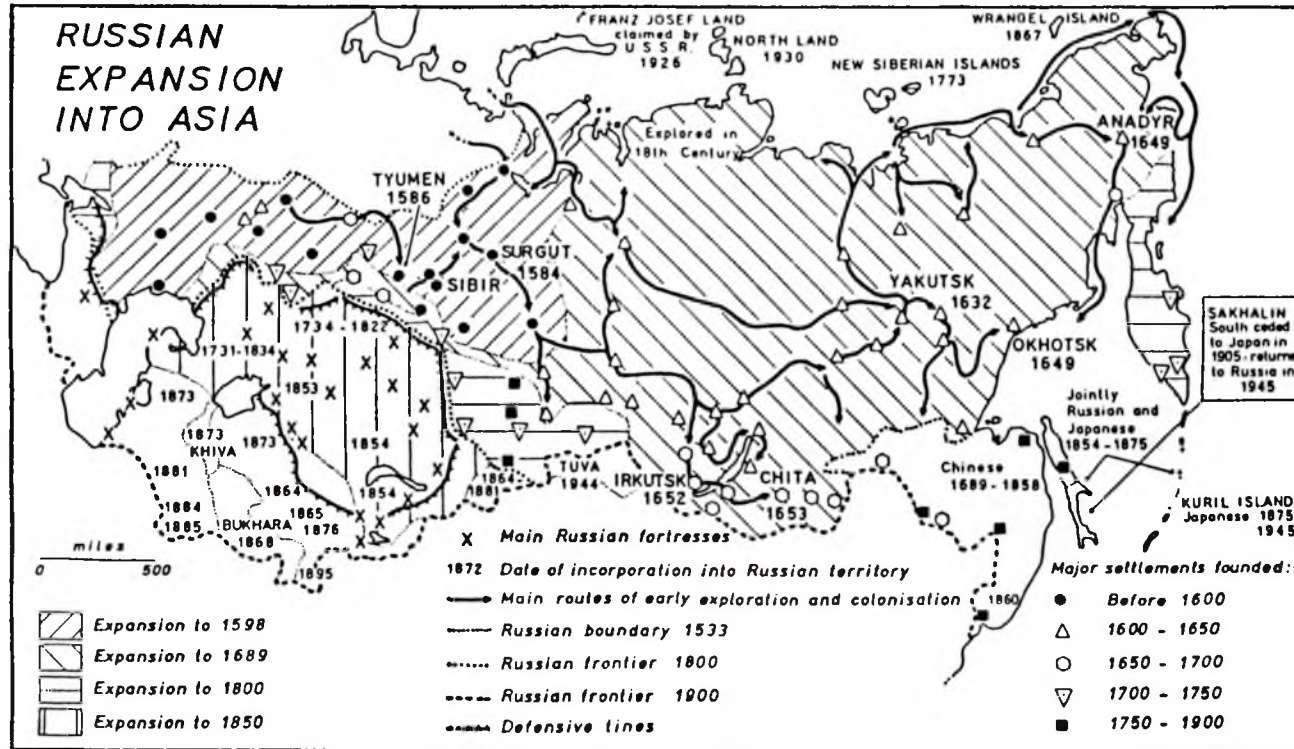


Figure 1.1 The Relief of the Soviet Union



(Source: Georges Jorre, (Translated by E.D. Laborde), *The Soviet Union: The Land and Its People*, Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, 1961, p.3)

Figure 1.2 Russian Expansion in Asia



(Source: R.E.H. Mellor, Geography of the U.S.S.R., Macmillan and Company Limited, London, 1964, p.87)

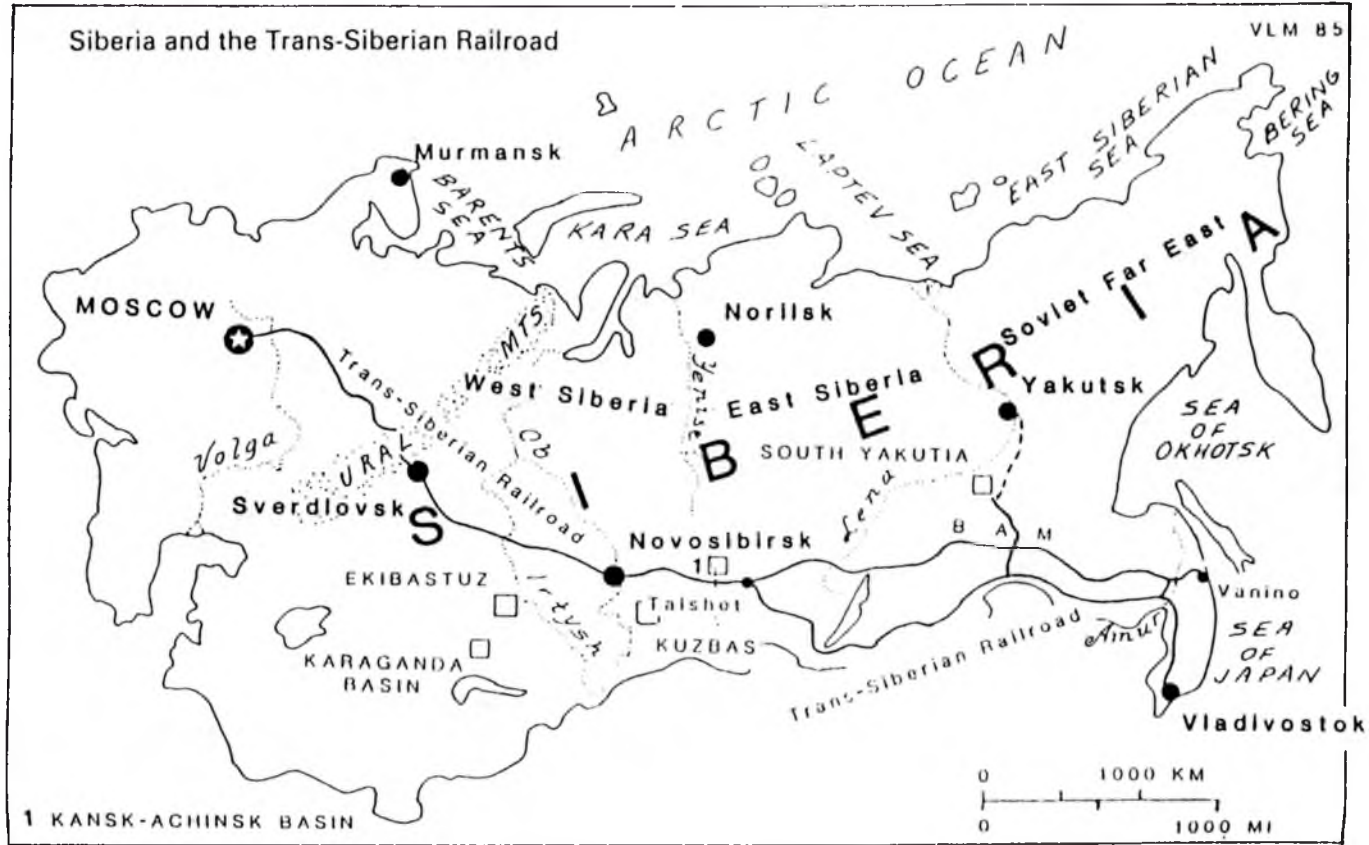
Figure 2.1 Soviet Regional Theatres and Military Districts



(Source: IISS, The Military Balance 1987-88, p.40)

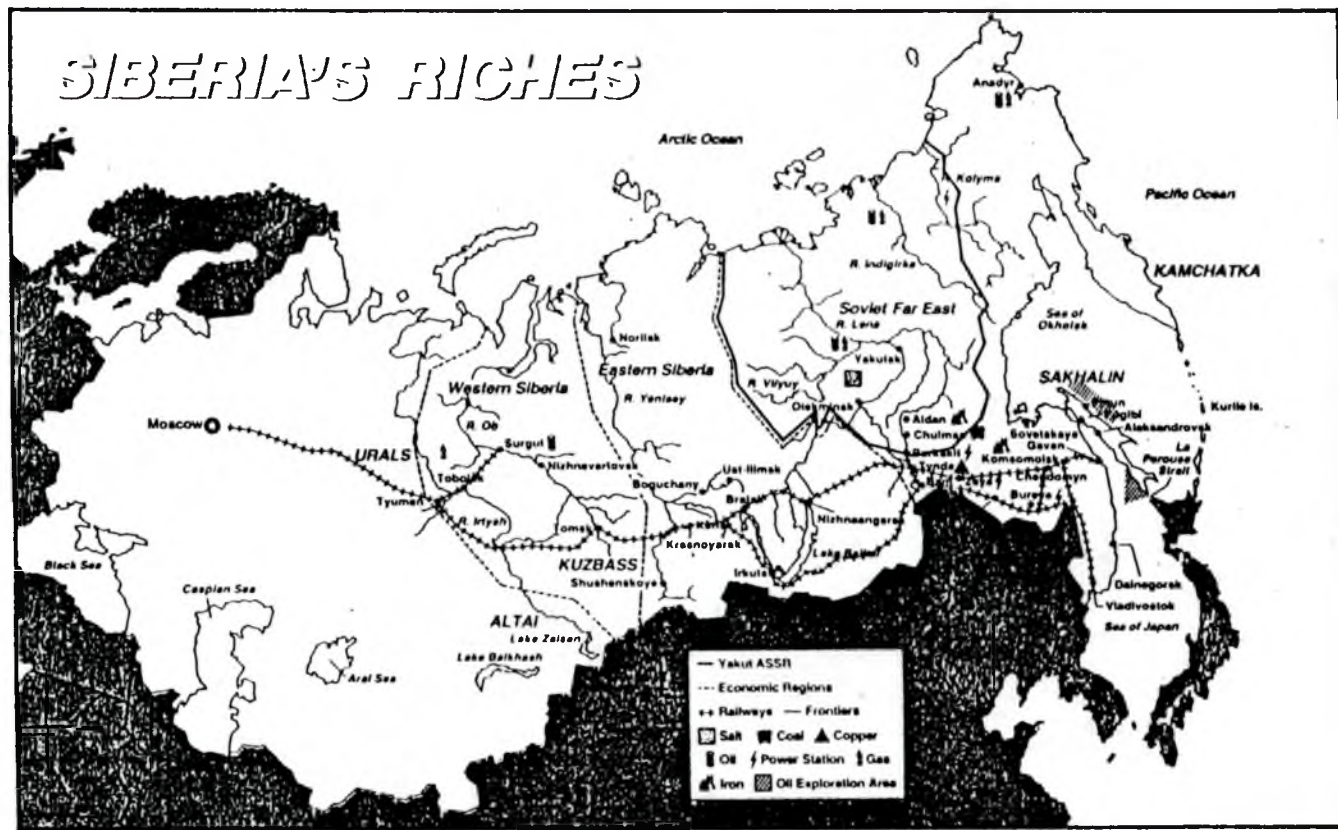


Figure 2.2 Soviet Trans-Siberian Railroad



(Source: Rodger Swearingen (ed.), *Siberia and the Soviet Far East*, Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1987, p.43)

Figure 2.3 Soviet Siberian Riches



(Source: Asia Yearbook 1986, Far East Economic Review)

Figure 4. 1 The Japanese—Soviet Disputed Islands



(Source: Jane's Defence Weekly, August 20 1988)



Table 1.1 Soviet Territory in Asia

	Land Area ( '000 sq km)	Population (Million, '86)
Central Asia	3,994.4	46.5
Kazakhstan	2,717.3	16.0
Kirghizia	198.5	4.1
Tajikstan	143.1	4.6
Turkmenia	488.1	3.3
Uzbekistan	447.4	18.5
Siberia	6,400	17.5
Western Siberia	2,300	10
Eastern Siberia	4,100	7.5
Far East	6,200	6

(Source: Asia Yearbook 1987, Far East Economic Review, pp 239-243)

Table 2.1 Soviet Ground Force Divisions in the Far East Theatre

	(1965-87)					
Military Districts	<u>1965</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1987</u>
Far East	7	15	16	18	24*	26*
Transbaikal	5	8	10	8	10	11
(Mongolia)	-	2	2	5	5	5
Siberia	3	4	5	5	6	7
Central Asia	2	5	7	6	7	8
<u>TOTAL</u>	17	34	40	42	52	57**

Source: US Department of Defence and The International Institute for Strategic Studies

\* Includes divisions on Kamchatka and Sakhalin

\*\* Seven of these divisions are tank divisions (2 each in the Far East and Transbaikal Military Districts, and in Mongolia, 1 in Central Asia Military District). In addition, there are 4 artillery divisions (1 each in the Far East, Transbaikal, Siberia and Central Asia Military Districts).

Table 2.2 Soviet Nuclear Force Buildup in the Far East Theatre (1965-85)

	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985
<b>MR/IRBM Launchers</b>					
SS-4/SS-5	100	100	100	100	0
SS-20 <sup>b</sup>	0	0	0	40	135-171
Total	100	100	100	140	135-171
<b>Medium-Range Bombers</b>					
Strategic Air Armies					
<i>Badger/Blinder</i>	c	175	160	145	80
<i>Backfire</i>	0	0	0	15	40
Total	c	175	160	160	120
<b>Soviet Naval Aviation</b>					
<i>Badger/Blinder</i>	55	70	85	95	90
<i>Backfire</i>	0	0	0	5	40
Total	55	70	85	100	130
<b>Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs)<sup>d</sup></b>					
Submarines (SSBN/SSB)	c	c	c	c	31
SLBM Launchers	c	c	c	c	405

Sources: Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*; The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance*.

<sup>a</sup>Forces deployed in the Siberian, Transbaykal, and Far East military districts, and at sea.

<sup>b</sup>Each SS-20 missile is MIRVed with three warheads. Each launcher is assessed to have one missile on launcher, plus one refire missile. The upper range of numbers for 1985 includes launchers that can target both Europe and Asia.

<sup>c</sup>Data not available.

<sup>d</sup>SS-11 ICBMs deployed north of China could also be used to attack U.S., allied, and Chinese targets in the Asia-Pacific region.

(Source: Solomon and Kosaka (eds.), *The Soviet Far East Military Buildup*, Sydney: Croom Helm Limited, 1986, p.272)

Table 2.3 Average Annual Growth of Soviet Real GNP (1961-85)  
(percent)

	<u>1961-65</u>	<u>1966-70</u>	<u>1971-75</u>	<u>1976-80</u>	<u>1981-85</u>
USSR	5.0	5.3	3.4	2.3	1.9
USA	4.7	3.0	2.5	3.4	2.4
Japan	10.0	11.0	4.3	4.0	3.9

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Growth rates are measured in national currencies. Data are actually for Gross Domestic Product, but differences between GDP and GNP are considered small.

Sources: 'Gorbachev's Modernization Program: A Status Report'. Submission of the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency to the Subcommittee on National Security Economics of the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, 19 March 1987, p. 2.

(Source: R. F. Miller, and T. H. Rigby, "Domestic Determinants of Soviet Foreign Policy: Prospects for Change in the 1990s", A paper for the Conference on the Soviets in the Pacific in the 1990s, Canberra, May 1988, p.15)

Table 4.1 Major US Pacific Forces (1958-85)

	1958	1963	1968	1973	1978	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984-85
Ground division total	5	5	12	4	4	4	4	4	4*	4*
Army	3	3	9	2	2	2 (-)	2 (-)	2 (-)	2 (-)	2 (-)
Marine	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ships total	347	432	427	277	220	221	217	223	212 <sup>b</sup>	206 <sup>b</sup>
Carriers	12	13	11	8	6	7	7	6	6	6
Surface combatants	107	142	140	104	85	89	90	92	92	87
Submarines (General Purpose)	43	55	59	47	33	42	48	51	40	41
Submarines (SSBN)	0	0	7	9	10	8	3	1	2	2
Amphibious	82	72	97	41	31	33	31	31	32	32
Mine War	39	42	42	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	64	108	78	72	55	42	38	42	40	36
Fighter/attack total	2001	1210	1828	1994	836	838	932	982	990 <sup>b,c</sup>	1157 <sup>b,c</sup>
Air Force	443	426	846	1386	192	180	192	242	279 <sup>d</sup>	285 <sup>d</sup>
Navy/Marine	1558	784	982	608	644	658	740	740	711 <sup>e</sup>	872 <sup>e</sup>
Bombers (SAC-TAC)	132	92	114	56	14	14	18	14	12 <sup>f</sup>	16 <sup>f</sup>
ASW patrol	253	144	144	108	168	188	190	190	250 <sup>g</sup>	237 <sup>g</sup>
Personnel total (thousands)	385	445	1042	438	299	315	316	321	351 <sup>h</sup>	331 <sup>h</sup>
Army	72	101	459	79	51	50	48	47	47	52
Navy	184	203	284	205	148	151	158	159	180	158
Air Force	67	66	171	88	30	42	41	43	45	46
Marine	62	75	128	66	70	72	69	72	79	75

SOURCE: Compiled from sources cleared by OASD/PA. Security Review for use in Public Domain, February 25, 1985.

\*25th Infantry Division has two active brigades

<sup>b</sup>Data obtained from UNITREP DATABASE/ALOC.

<sup>c</sup>Includes NON OPCON aircraft.

<sup>d</sup>Includes 44 NON-OPCON aircraft

<sup>e</sup>Includes 158 NON OPCON aircraft.

<sup>f</sup>NON OPCON aircraft

<sup>g</sup>Includes 50 NON OPCON aircraft.

<sup>h</sup>Data obtained from J13.

(Source: *Rodger Swearingen* (ed.), *Siberia and the Soviet Far East*, Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1987, p.262)

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