

October 6, 1982

WHAT PRICE DEFENSE?

INTRODUCTION

In 1980, the American people demonstrated in the voting booth their growing concern with the Kremlin's ruthless invasion of Afghanistan, the massive Soviet arms buildup, and the subsequent shift in military balance toward the USSR. They elected a President and Congress to restore U.S. military power to a level that would once again provide their country with a "margin of safety" in dealing with its enemies.

In March 1981 the Administration submitted to Congress a defense spending plan for FY 1982-FY 1986 requesting obligational authority of \$1.36 trillion (FY 1983 dollars), with \$490 billion for FY 1982 and FY 1983. Actual 1982-1983 funding, however, will amount to at least \$20 billion less than originally requested in the Administration's March 1981 defense plan and \$25 billion less when measured against the Administration's revised defense budget submitted in February 1982. If Congress adheres to the budget ceiling for FY 1984 and FY 1985 approved in the FY 1983 Concurrent Budget Resolution, the Administration's defense spending requests for these out-years will be reduced by at least another \$24 billion. After these \$44 billion worth of cuts, Reagan defense spending for FY 1982-FY 1986 will be only \$116 billion higher than that requested in the widely criticized Carter budgets for the same period.

The effects of these defense budget cuts will be two: they will undermine the efforts of the Pentagon to lower its weapons costs through recently enacted procurement reforms; and they will aid and abet Soviet military superiority throughout the 1980s by delaying long overdue force modernization and force readiness improvements.

Threats to American security are as severe today as they were 12 to 24 months ago during the height of congressional support for higher defense spending. Soviet military superiority continues to grow, as the Soviet defense establishment soaks up 15 percent of the USSR's Gross National Product while America's defense gets but 6 percent of the GNP. The Soviet arms industry continues to operate at a semi-war mobilized pace, grinding out weapons at a rate two and three times that of the United States. Why, then, the congressional reluctance to support the Administration's entire defense budget?

Public pressure to lower the huge federal deficit in the hope of sparking economic recovery is obviously behind much of the budget cutting sentiment. Liberals are also taking advantage of the sluggish economy to deflect the budget knife away from cherished social programs and toward defense. Many in Congress are convinced that the defense budget is riddled with billions of dollars of what they call "waste, fraud, and abuse," which can be cut without sacrificing military capability. It is also argued that cuts in the defense budget are politically essential to sustain a long-term defense consensus in a nation suffering from a deep recession and cynical about Pentagon spending practices.

None of these arguments, however, justifies defense budget cuts. The Administration's defense program does not entail exceptional economic hardship for the nation. Polls show that the American people still support the Administration's defense buildup, however reluctantly, and they will continue to do so despite the economic costs if the Soviet threat is forthrightly explained to them. As such, the primary criteria for determining the size of the defense budget should be the magnitude of the military threats to American interests and the most cost-effective and timely means of dealing with them. This is the essence of the defense budget debate in Congress. As a general commitment to higher defense spending, the so-called pro-defense consensus is still strong. Nevertheless, Congress is trimming the Administration's defense budget increases, which average 8 percent a year over the next five years, to a level between 6 and 7 percent. And it is doing so because many in Congress simply disagree with the Administration on the severity of the threat posed by Soviet military power.

The Administration, the nation's top military leaders, and many nongovernmental defense experts have argued that the U.S. today "lacks the requisite military capability for adequate nuclear deterrence as well as conventional defense of America's vital objectives and commitments." It is feared that, as a result, the USSR may be more willing to accept the risks of military confrontation with the West during the 1980s. Its budget, argues the Administration, is the minimum needed to reverse the adverse trends in the military balance and deter Moscow from military adventurism. Indeed, as large as the defense budget is, many military professionals believe that the forces it funds would be insufficient to justify reasonable confidence in

America's capacity for successful defense against a variety of plausible threats.

Many members of Congress, on the other hand, while genuinely concerned that the Soviet military buildup aims at superiority, find it difficult to imagine the Kremlin risking nuclear devastation by directly challenging Western interests in the near future. The United States, it is felt, has halted its slide into military inferiority in the nick of time and can now afford to help balance the budget by cutting back somewhat on its rearmament programs. There is also a widespread feeling on Capitol Hill that the Pentagon is failing to meet the Soviet threat in the most cost-effective manner--that its modernization drive is being badly mismanaged with the Services "indiscriminately" buying "everything they want", including many expensive weapons that either serve unnecessary or low priority missions or employ unreliable and poorly tested technology.

The Administration's defense programs and budgets are not beyond criticism. The White House's endorsement of defense budget cuts in 1981 and 1982 unfortunately has undercut its urgent warnings about the Soviet threat. Given this threat, Reagan's defense programs are not quite what might be expected, in that they do not adequately support many aspects of the nation's military strategy. The Administration is making a serious mistake, moreover, in resisting a number of innovations in military strategy, tactics, and weapons hardware believed by many congressional and nongovernmental defense experts to be essential for fielding effective armed forces within realistic budgetary constraints. In short, the Administration is not addressing a number of glaring defects in the nation's force posture which, if not remedied soon, could erode popular support for its defense budgets and undermine U.S. military strength.

At the same time, however, defense critics in Congress are not listening attentively enough to what the Administration and its supporters are saying about the growing capability of the USSR to fight and win a war with the West. In response to detailed "threat" briefings by military and intelligence experts, defense budget cutters offer flimsy one- or two-line rebuttals couched in outdated rhetoric and based on vague, unsubstantiated convictions. If the Administration is vulnerable to criticism on some grounds, Congress is more vulnerable for not taking a responsible approach to the defense budget--for allowing narrow political and economic interests, rather than a thoughtful assessment of the Soviet threat, to dictate its attitude toward defense spending. Congressional criticism of the Pentagon for waste in operations and weapons procurement is hypocritical since Congress itself bears much blame for the problem. While some congressional criticisms of the Reagan defense budget are valid, none warrants reducing its overall size.

THE DEFENSE BUILDUP AND THE ECONOMY

The U.S. is undertaking a massive force buildup at the very time that the nation is suffering from a deep recession, viewed by many members of Congress as a greater threat to national security than Soviet military power. Conventional wisdom has it that economic recovery will not take place until interest rates fall further and that a formidable obstacle to lower rates is the federal budget deficit projected over the next three years. The President's 1982 Tax Bill will still leave a whopping deficit, which the White House hopes will be reduced through a combination of tax revenues flowing from a "supply side" induced economic recovery and massive cuts in federal spending.

Economic liberals have been clamoring all year that the defense budget must take its "fair share" of these deficit-reducing cuts. Gary Hart (D-Colo.), member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, complains that Congress "cannot this year provide everything the Defense Department wants....The defense budget must carry its share of the reduction."¹ His committee colleague, Senator Carl Levin (D-Mich.) agrees:

National defense is one place where we can make some modest reductions in the deficit. We can cut back on some huge increases in national defense without jeopardizing in any way, the security of this country.²

Conservatives find the loud moanings about budget deficits emanating from liberals rather puzzling and suspect other motives. Freshman Republican Senator Steven Symms of Idaho, for example, suggests that

what really is at issue with the liberals is not the deficits but the changing priorities contained in the Reagan budget. Specifically, they oppose the defense increases and the cuts in social welfare programs, along with the incentive tax cut to encourage saving and investment. Liberals have never been sensitive to budget deficits in the past--in fact, they promoted them. What is feared most is that the Reagan economic program might actually be successful. For if the tax cuts and the budget cuts prove beneficial to the economy, then the American people would have final proof that the Federal tax and spending machine has indeed been the cause of economic decline; that it has been the vehicle for locking a generation of Americans into an endless cycle of dependence on Government income redistribution in exchange for political support.³

¹ Congressional Record, May 13, 1982; p. S 5097.

² Congressional Record, May 19, 1982; p. S 5529.

³ Congressional Record, May 19, 1982; p. S 5528.

To the dismay of the Administration, however, it has not been only liberals who have invoked the high deficits as a reason for defense cuts. With much encouragement from the business community, fiscal conservatives, who support the Administration's domestic economic programs, have broken ranks on the defense budget. The ink was hardly dry on the defense budget before Republican Senators Robert Dole (Kan.), Howard Baker (Tenn.), Dan Quayle (Ind.), Gordon Humphrey (N.H.), and Pete Domenici (N.M.) were talking about "accommodating these increases in national defense" to the "hard core reality" of the deficits.

In addition to an alleged adverse impact on interest rates, defense budget cutters have also frequently expressed concern that the defense buildup will rekindle inflation, exacerbate regional imbalances in the economy, and shift resources from the consumer sector, thereby worsening American competitiveness in the world economy. These arguments have been echoed by economist Lester C. Thurow and a staff study of the Joint Economic Committee entitled The Defense Buildup and the Economy.⁴

The Cost of Rearmament

Defense budget cutters frequently proclaim, as Senator Arlen Specter (R.-Pa.) has done, that "No matter how strong our Defense Establishment, in the final analysis, it can be no stronger than the economic foundation upon which it rests." And indeed in the long run a stable and growing economy is essential for a popularly supported foreign and military policy. But defense critics have overstated the economic arguments against the Administration's defense budgets. The economic security of the nation is not at stake.

The cost of Reagan's defense buildup over the six-year period FY 1982-FY 1987 is about \$510 billion--the amount to be spent on defense over FY 1981 spending levels. Because Congress has refused to cut domestic federal spending to the level desired by the White House, the Administration must finance the defense buildup by borrowing. This means that there will be less money, at least in the short term, for consumer businesses to borrow for new plant machinery, plant expansion, and the like. The result could well be a lower rate of economic growth in the consumer sector of the economy, although it is not at all clear how severe the slowdown will be. No reliable estimate of the effect of the defense buildup on economic growth is available, and no respected economist is predicting a depression or other such calamity because of the Administration's rearmament plans.

⁴ Lester C. Thurow, "Beware of Reagan's Military Spending," New York Times, May 31, 1982, p. F3; and Joint Economic Committee Staff Study, The Defense Buildup and the Economy, February 17, 1982.

The additional protection of national interests provided by the defense buildup will not be free. But defense critics using economic arguments to justify defense budget cuts typically ignore two important facts. The first is that the additional \$510 billion going to defense over the next six years is buying a vital service: protection of American families, homes, jobs, and institutions. Many defense critics using economic arguments simply assume tacitly that the money spent on tanks, ships, and combat aircraft would be better spent on social programs or consumer goods. This is a judgment of value that must be made with a proper understanding of the military threat to American security. Given the nature of this threat, a slower rate of economic recovery over the next five years would seem a small price to pay for a strong national defense.

Some defense critics also ignore the stimulating effect of the defense buildup on the economy. The additional \$510 billion going for defense is not lost to the economy. Money used to buy weapons and other defense equipment will be returned to the consumer sector in the form of payment for labor and materials. Salaries and wages will either be saved, providing additional capital for consumer businesses to use for plant modernization, or spend on consumer goods, providing stimulus for economic recovery. Jobs may be lost in the consumer sector of the economy because of the defense buildup, but new jobs will be created in the defense sector. Indeed, Pentagon economists estimate that as many as 50,000 to 60,000 jobs may be created directly and indirectly for every additional \$1 billion spent on defense.⁵ This compares quite favorably with employment figures for other industries: fabricated metals (16,000), apparel manufacturing (28,000), and hospitals (48,000).⁶

Defense critics are worried that the defense buildup will aggravate inflation and worsen cost overruns. But a recent General Accounting Office report concludes that "industry has the overall ability to absorb, the increased spending proposed for defense, without adverse inflationary impact on the creation of bottlenecks in major industrial sectors."⁷ Moreover, weapons costs can be held in check through greater use of competition in production (only eight percent of all the Pentagon's contracts are awarded on the basis of competition), higher production runs, greater use of productivity-enhancing/manufacturing technology, and stricter labor contracts. (Despite the high unemployment in the economy and the pay freezes on government workers of between

⁵ Leonard Silk, "Military Surge to Spur Jobs," New York Times, September 17, 1982, p. D2.

⁶ Figures from Employment Research Associates, cited in Brad Knickerbocker, "Who Profits, Who Loses From Fatter Defense Budgets," Christian Science Monitor, September 1, 1982, p. 3.

⁷ General Accounting Office, "Defense Budget Increases: How Well Are They Spent?" (PLRD-82-62), April 13, 1982, p. 15.

5 and 8 percent, workers on some defense projects have been receiving wage boosts of 16 to 18 percent through softly negotiated contracts.)⁸ But even if there were higher inflation in the defense sector of the economy, the result might not be higher inflation for the economy as a whole. If the money supply is held constant, the higher prices for defense related labor and materials caused by increased demand for such items will be offset by reduced prices for consumer goods.

Will the defense buildup forestall economic recovery by keeping interest rates high? Interest rates have fallen in the last two years at the very time of near record high deficits, reflecting not only soft demand but the decision of the Federal Reserve Board that inflation has been brought under control. The defense buildup could in the future raise somewhat the cost of borrowing money for consumer businesses. It could also stimulate economic recovery. In any case, cutting only \$40 billion from the defense budget over the next three years will lower the national debt by less than one percent and probably have only a minimal impact on interest rates. To have a truly significant impact on interest rates, the defense budget probably would have to be cut by over \$40 billion a year, and very few in Congress seem willing to seriously entertain this option.

The Defense Budget and Social Services

For the last twenty years liberals have cried that social spending is losing the battle for federal funds to defense spending. The same old arguments are being heard today. James R. Jones (D.-Okla.), chairman of the House Budget Committee and co-architect of this year's \$14 billion cut in the defense budget, objects that "the military budget grows unattended, while proper, healthy defense needs [are] choked out by the weeds of mindless spending on useless weapon systems. And as this happens, we are told the elderly, the handicapped, children and the working poor must sacrifice. That is why we question this budget's fairness."⁹

The facts, however, refute Jones and those who echo him. Admittedly, as a percentage of GNP, defense spending will increase from 5.9 percent in FY 1982 to 7.4 percent in FY 1987; federally funded social service spending will decline from 15 percent of GNP to 10.4 percent of GNP during the same period. The proportion of the federal budget devoted to defense over the next five years will rise from 25.9 percent to 37.2 percent, a level last recorded in 1971, while spending for social services will decline from 63 percent to 53.3 percent.

⁸ Greg Rushford, "Defense Firms' Pay Rates Stir New Pentagon Furor," Federal Times, September 6, 1982, p. 1.

⁹ Frank Greve, "Defense Cuts May Prove Too Daunting," Philadelphia Inquirer, February 21, 1982, p. F1

This increase in the share of GNP and the federal budget for defense spending, however, comes after a three-decade spending shift toward social services. During the period 1953 to 1960, for example, defense averaged 9.5 percent of GNP. From 1960 to 1972 it averaged 8 percent. From 1972 to 1981 it averaged only 5.4 percent of GNP. Yet, during the same 1953 to 1981 period, social service spending as a percentage of GNP rose from 5.9 percent to 15 percent. In 1960, defense consumed 50 percent of the federal budget, compared to 23 percent on human resources. In 1980, these percentages were roughly reversed: 26 percent for defense, 53 percent for human resources. During the past decade, while defense spending suffered negative real growth, social service spending soared at an annual rate of almost 5 percent a year in real terms.

From an historical perspective, the level of defense spending contemplated by the Reagan Administration is not high and is consistent with economic recovery. It will not jeopardize federal spending for the truly needy and underprivileged. The Reagan Administration was elected with a mandate to increase defense spending and slow the growth of domestic spending. That is what it is doing.

THE SOVIET MILITARY THREAT

Joseph Pechman, economist at the Brookings Institution, has put the debate over the economic consequences of the defense budget into proper perspective. Even if the Administration's defense buildup were to entail grave economic hardships, he says, in a Brookings study of the Administration's FY 1983 budget, these "would be accepted [by the American people] if national security were considered in jeopardy. Thus the central issue is whether external threats justify as large an increase in defense spending as President Reagan has requested."¹⁰ This rudimentary point is all too frequently overlooked by congressional, media, and business defense budget cutters.

In defending his defense budget, the President has bluntly informed the nation that the Soviets now have "a definite margin of [nuclear] superiority" over the United States. Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger repeatedly has warned that the U.S. today "lacks the requisite military capability for adequate deterrence as well as conventional defense of our vital objectives and commitments." Cuts in the defense budget, he argues, would lead to "added risk of war", make it impossible to "ever convince the Soviet leaders to agree to real arms reductions", and "would signal to the world that the U.S. was still following

¹⁰ Setting National Priorities, The FY 1983 Budget (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 7.

the same old uncertain, unreliable policy of the past and courting grave danger as we face ever increasing Soviet strength."¹¹

In their FY 1983 Posture Statement, the Joint Chiefs of Staff point out that

growing Soviet military capabilities have altered both the perceptions and reality of the military balance and greatly increased Soviet influence in world affairs. The powerful Soviet military establishment is the principal basis of the Soviet belief that the so-called 'correlation of forces'--a mix of military, economic, political and social forces--has shifted irreversibly in their favor....[Moscow] may [now] be more willing to accept risks of confrontation [with the West], particularly where they have significant military and geostrategic advantages.¹²

Although American military leaders are generally reluctant to issue public net assessments of U.S.-Soviet warfighting capabilities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have testified before Congress that the Administration's defense budgets for FY 1983-FY 1987 would have to be increased by at least \$350 billion to ensure the U.S. of a high confidence capability to defend its interests against Soviet aggression.¹³

Conventional Force Imbalances

The facts of the U.S.-Soviet military balance substantiate the Administration's rather bleak assessment of U.S. deterrence and warfighting capabilities.

The Soviet Union, for example, holds an overwhelming edge in forces rapidly deployable to the Persian Gulf. The U.S. Rapid Deployment Force is formidable on paper. Its effectiveness is hampered, however, by the fact that it was created out of existing units, all of which play major roles in meeting a Soviet threat to Europe or the Far East. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has sufficient reserves to fight major wars on at least two fronts. The United States is also woefully short of air and sea lift assets to get ground forces to Southwest Asia quickly and in sufficient strength to thwart a Soviet invasion. Not surprisingly, Pentagon war games simulating a U.S.-Soviet conflict in the Persian Gulf typically end in crushing defeat for the West.¹⁴

¹¹ Stephen E. Nordlinger, "Military Spending Attacked, Defended," Baltimore Sun, February 10, 1982, p. 1

¹² The Joint Chiefs of Staff, United States Military Posture For FY 1983 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 2.

¹³ George C. Wilson, "Planners Say Defense Budget is Insufficient," Washington Post, March 8, 1982, p.1.

¹⁴ "A-Weapons Scenarios Reportedly Studied," Los Angeles Times, February 3, 1980, p. 7.

As for Europe, the prospects are decidedly low that NATO could prevent the Warsaw Pact from quickly seizing huge tracts of West European territory in a blitzkrieg campaign. The Warsaw Pact would greatly outnumber NATO overall in forces assembled after two weeks mobilization--3.3 to 1 in tanks, 2.6 to 1 in infantry fighting vehicles, 2.9 to 1 in artillery, and 3.0 to 1 in anti-tank weapons. Soviet ground force weapons are also of excellent combat quality--in many cases, better in overall performance than their U.S. counterparts.

In addition to being outnumbered in weaponry, NATO suffers another critical disadvantage--this one self-inflicted. It is committed to a strategy of Forward Defense, which greatly reduces the odds of a successful defense. Under Forward Defense, NATO will deploy the bulk of its 28 readily deployable divisions in a linear defense close to the West Germany-East Germany border. Against NATO forces stretched thin over 350 miles, the Warsaw Pact will be able to mass its 59 divisions at select points to achieve force ratios of up to 6 to 1 and to break through the NATO defense line, envelop NATO forces, and drive deep into NATO's relatively undefended rear areas. It is highly unlikely that NATO will be able to shift its forwardly deployed forces from sector to sector along a vulnerable north-south axis quickly enough to seal off breaks in the line.

The balance of tactical air forces in Europe is also alarming. In the past, NATO ground troops have counted on NATO airmen to sweep the skies clear of Warsaw Pact intruders and to help disrupt the Warsaw Pact ground advance. Today, NATO air forces no longer have their once comfortable edge. They are outnumbered by the Warsaw Pact 2.5 to 1 in combat aircraft. NATO pilots and planes are superior in performance to their Soviet built counterparts, but late model Soviet aircraft, such as the MiG-23, MiG-27, and Su-24, are only a few steps behind in quality. A new generation of Soviet tactical aircraft is now narrowing the quality gap even further. According to Air Force Chief of Staff Charles A. Gabriel, NATO is relying on stand-off tactics and long-range or beyond-visual range (BVR) radar-guided missiles to counter the Warsaw Pact tactical air threat.¹⁵ Unfortunately, radar-guided missiles have proved quite poor in actual combat. As a result, NATO aircraft will likely be forced to engage the enemy with infrared missiles and guns at closer range and at much greater risk. NATO aircraft also lack an effective identification-friend-foe (IFF) device that would allow them to pick out enemy aircraft at beyond visual range (although research and development on IFFs is ongoing and may decrease this deficiency soon). Out of NATO's total 3,000 tactical aircraft, those which are not destroyed on the ground by Soviet strike aircraft or escape Soviet interception in the air, will face some 12,000 Soviet anti-aircraft guns and 6,000 mobile SAM launchers in Europe, not counting man-portable infantry weapons.

¹⁵ "Burgeoning Warsaw Pact Threat Spurs Dual Challenge," Aviation Week and Space Technology, June 2, 1982, p. 44.

No Help From Nuclear Weapons

The U.S., of course, has a vast arsenal of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. And consistent with the "first use" provision of NATO's strategy of Flexible Response, these weapons are to be used in case of the imminent defeat of NATO's conventional forces in Europe or in support of an allied defense of the Persian Gulf. Would it be wise, however, for a U.S. President to order the use of the nuclear arsenal? Probably not.

NATO has "won" a war in Europe if it can force the Warsaw Pact to relinquish conquered territory at an acceptable cost in civilian casualties and property damage. The chances of NATO's being able to do this using nuclear weapons are very slim. By the time NATO's political leadership approves the use of nuclear weapons, the Warsaw Pact will likely have penetrated deep into West German territory, leaving NATO with two nuclear options: (1) to fire nuclear weapons at Pact invasion forces on West German soil; (2) to try to terminate the invasion by attacking rear area targets--communication centers, airfields, transportation networks, marshalling yards, and the like--in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Given Soviet advantages in tactical nuclear weaponry, including a 13 to 1 edge in tactical missiles, NATO would likely lose a nuclear war of attrition. Moreover, the collateral damage resulting both from a NATO tactical nuclear offensive extensive enough to destroy the Pact's invasion forces and from Soviet retaliatory nuclear strikes might mean the destruction of much of West Germany occupied by NATO and Warsaw Pact military forces, a prospect Germany's political leadership would almost certainly find unacceptable.

The U.S. has sufficient warheads on submarine launched ballistic missiles, strategic bombers, and intercontinental ballistic missiles to devastate Soviet military targets in the USSR and rear areas of the European theater and to bring the Pact's advance into Western Europe to a crashing halt. But a successful strategic nuclear offensive of this kind would involve many hundreds of high yield nuclear weapons and would almost certainly be followed by Soviet retaliatory strikes on European targets, once again causing levels of civilian casualties and property damage unacceptable to European political leaders.

In short, the U.S. does not have the nuclear force capability to escalate a losing conventional conflict to the nuclear level and to prevent defeat at acceptable levels of collateral damage. If the USSR were to invade Western Europe or drive for the Persian Gulf oilfields, the likely result would be a defeat for America's conventional forces, leaving the Western alliance with only two choices: suicide or surrender.

CONGRESS AND THE THREAT

During the 1970s, Congress, by and large, shared with the foreign policy establishment a belief that little was to be

gained by military superiority and that Moscow was willing to construct a new world order based on detente. The shocking Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet inspired crackdown on political freedom in Poland, and the relentless Soviet military buildup unaffected by Western military restraint have changed many minds on Capitol Hill. Most members of Congress are worried about the state of U.S. force readiness and are willing to substantially increase defense spending for training, maintenance, ammunition, and weapons. The FY 1983 Defense Authorization Bill of \$177.9 billion for operations and maintenance, procurement, and research and development passed the Senate by a vote of 77-21 and was approved by the House, 251-148.

Nevertheless, the Bill authorizes \$5.6 billion less than the Administration requested with \$3 billion in additional cuts likely to be made in the appropriations process. These cuts illustrate that Congress, for the most part, is unconvinced that the U.S. faces a dangerous military threat from the USSR. Few budget cutters inside or outside of Congress have analyzed publicly the Soviet threat in detail. They merely state without supporting arguments that the defense budget can be cut without jeopardizing U.S. national security. Lurking behind demands for budget reductions is the unsupported premise that Soviet military advantages do not translate into a meaningful war-winning capability. Most on Capitol Hill seem to feel that the U.S. slide into military inferiority has been reversed in time. To them, maintaining a steady defense budget growth of around 6 or 7 percent a year appears sufficient to solve existing force structure defects and to sustain a credible deterrent force. Indeed, the general view in Congress seems to be that, in the interest of economic recovery, the nation can safely cut back somewhat on defense spending without inordinate risk. Says Senator John Chaffee, a moderate Republican from Rhode Island, "Who knows what the threat is, who can say? It makes far more sense to build up our defense in a gradual, steady, substantial manner rather than plunge ahead with very high increases."¹⁶

Meanwhile, Congressman Les Aspin a liberal Democrat from Wisconsin, argues that although "hostile," the Soviets right now have their hands tied "by problems in Afghanistan and Poland and by their own economic decline. While they may feel free to engage in mischief in several years, that doesn't necessitate a crash program to build up our forces."¹⁷

As further evidence that the Administration has overstated the threat and that the defense buildup can be trimmed or slowed down, defense critics have pointed to the Administration's own defense programs. Walter Kaufmann, defense analyst at the Brook-

¹⁶ Congressional Record, May 19, 1982, p. S 5522.

¹⁷ Les Aspin, "Too Much Defense In One Big Bundle," Los Angeles Times, January 26, 1982, p. 5-B

ings Institution and architect of Defense Department reports to Congress during the Johnson and Carter Administrations, argues that the Administration is not pursuing those "draconian and costly" measures that it should if it believed that the nation faced a near future security crisis. The Administration's defense programs, he points out, will not appreciably augment U.S. military power until the late 1980s. According to Kaufmann, "the consensus seems to be that there is no rush to repair any weaknesses that may exist in the U.S. defense posture." As such, "there is much to be said for slowing, deferring, or even canceling certain programs...in deference to the need to make the economy more competitive and preserve essential social programs."¹⁸

Fundamentally, however, the relative optimism in Congress about U.S. national security appears to be based on the conviction that the threat of nuclear destruction is sufficient to deter the Kremlin from directly challenging U.S. vital interests. There is widespread doubt on Capitol Hill about the Administration's claim that Moscow enjoys nuclear superiority. This attitude is clear in the narrow defeat in August of a nuclear freeze resolution in the House, the funding reductions for civil defense, and the continuing debate over the MX missile. Skeptics of Soviet strategic nuclear superiority base their judgment on two premises: (1) it is highly unlikely that nuclear war can be contained to limited attacks against military targets; (2) neither the Soviet Union nor the United States can survive an all-out nuclear war as a viable society. Exclaimed Representative Silvio Conte (R.-Mass.) during the "nuclear freeze" debate on the House floor:

The nuclear buildup buzzwords, such as "superiority," "warfighting," "nuclear blackmail," "preemptive strike," "zero option," "counterforce," and so on--and on--and on, no longer have meaning...Americans by the millions are coming to realize that nuclear weapons serve no useful national security purpose except as a deterrence, which if breached, either by accident or miscalculation, will ultimately lead to mutual suicide.¹⁹

Defense budget cutters find it extremely difficult to imagine circumstances in which Soviet leaders would risk the survival of the USSR by employing its superior conventional forces against the West. In this context of supposed stable deterrence, cutting back on the Administration's defense spending plans becomes a tempting option for a Congress under pressures to slash the federal deficit.

¹⁸ William W. Kaufmann, "The Defense Budget," Setting National Priorities, p. 59.

¹⁹ Congressional Record, August 5, 1982, p. H 5228.

Administration Inconsistencies

In some ways, congressional skepticism of the Administration's defense budget is understandable. The Administration's policies have not always been consistent with its assessment of the U.S.-Soviet military balance. What is a Congressman or Senator to think when the Administration cuts its own defense budget request in FY 1982 by over \$8 billion to show its willingness to bring the federal deficit under control? Such an unfortunate precedent for sacrificing national security interests to marginal domestic economic gains was set during this year's budget debates. The delay in solving the ICBM vulnerability problem has also done much to undermine the credibility of the Administration's threat assessment. The Administration's failure to provide a defense program that accurately reflects the immediate dangers of Soviet military power, however, does not justify defense budget cutting by Congress.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Soviet military buildup will proceed unabated throughout the decade. The Soviets have just begun to deploy or are testing for deployment in the next few years a number of new weapons, including: three new tactical fighters, a B-1 type strategic bomber, a new strategic anti-cruise missile interceptor with a look-down/shoot-down radar, a new airborne warning and control aircraft (AWACS), a new generation of ICBMs, a hard-target-killing submarine launched ballistic missile housed in a 30,000 ton nuclear submarine, a new generation of short-range nuclear ballistic missiles (the SS-21, SS-22, and SS-23), a new generation of surface-to-air missiles (the SA-10, SA-11, and SA-12), a new tank, the T-80, equal in performance to the U.S. Army's M-1, a new version of the revolutionary BMP infantry fighting vehicle, a new air defense gun, a 25,000 ton strike cruiser armed with long-range cruise missiles, and a nuclear powered large deck aircraft carrier. Without a substantial effort on the part of the United States in the next few years, Soviet military superiority will become overwhelming by the late 1980s or early 1990s.

It would be extremely shortsighted of Congress to slow down U.S. rearmament at this point. The United States cannot rely on the several years' warning of a major war with the USSR that would permit crash mobilization. Nor can it count on producing weapons in wartime, as it did during World War II. Prudent defense planning demands that the United States be ready to defend its interests with those forces deployed at the time hostilities break out. The United States must begin to rearm now so that it can defend itself against near-term threats and threats five to ten years hence as well.

The Dangerous Decade of the 1980s

The confidence of congressional budget cutters in the stability of deterrence is unwarranted. The probability that limited use of nuclear weapons would escalate to all-out nuclear war is

not insignificant and is surely taken into account by Soviet war planners. On the other hand, escalation is far from a certainty. Would American leaders reflexively trigger an all-out war if the Soviets were to make significant battlefield gains with conventional forces or employ tactical nuclear weapons? There is surely no advantage for the United States in escalating a war to the nuclear level, and American leaders will be doing everything possible during a conflict to control nuclear weapons.

Further undermining the stability of deterrence is the Soviet investment of about \$2 billion a year since the mid-1960s on civil defense measures, such as evacuation planning, stockpiling of food and medical supplies, shelter construction, and hardening of industrial facilities. The USSR has also been pursuing intensive research and development of anti-ballistic missile radars and missile interceptors and has almost certainly stockpiled key items for a rapidly deployable ABM network. A number of military experts now believe that under certain assumptions--that U.S. nuclear forces are depleted in a first strike and that the Soviets have time to take civil defense precautions--the USSR could survive strategic nuclear war with levels of damage not too much higher than the 20 million deaths suffered in World War II. This is far below what the U.S. would suffer from Soviet retaliatory strikes.²⁰

Fortunately, the Soviets do not share the Nazi view of war as spiritually ennobling. But there are reasons to fear that the risk of war throughout the rest of the decade will be dangerously high. Defense budget cutters have pointed out a number of seemingly intractable problems facing the Soviet leadership, including a stagnating economy, permanently restless East European satellites, and a citizenry grown cynical about communist ideology. These are, it is argued, brakes on Soviet adventurism and hence a justification for a slower U.S. rearmament program. But these same problems could as easily provide Soviet leaders with the rationale that time is not on their side and that they should take advantage of their country's military superiority to administer a decisive defeat to the West before the U.S. rearms.²¹

To base deterrence on the possibility of uncontrolled nuclear escalation is in any case a policy that the U.S. should find morally abhorrent and unacceptably risky--it offers no defense, should deterrence fail. Such deterrence should be based on an assured capability to counter any level of Soviet attack in a controlled manner that minimizes damage to Western interests. It

²⁰ See, for example, Daniel Goure and Gordon H. McCormick, "Soviet Strategic Defense: The Neglected Dimension of the U.S.-Soviet Balance," Comparative Strategy, Spring 1980, pp. 103-127.

²¹ For a statement of this argument, see Colin Gray, "The Most Dangerous Decade: Historic Mission, Legitimacy, and Dynamics of the Soviet Empire in the 1980s," ORBIS, Spring 1981, pp. 13-28.

will require at least the full level of spending contemplated in the Reagan defense budgets to buy this capability.

IS THE REAGAN DEFENSE BUDGET COST-EFFECTIVE?

In addition to their reservations about the magnitude of the threat, many in Congress are not convinced that the Pentagon is responding to Soviet military advances in the most cost-effective manner. It is widely suspected that the Defense Department is embarking on its \$1.6 trillion (current figure for 1982-1987) rearmament effort without the guidance of carefully set priorities and with scant regard for limited resources. Echoing the sentiments of many on Capitol Hill, Representative S. William Green of New York, member of the so-called Gypsy Moth coalition of Republican congressmen from the Northeast and Midwest, has lambasted the Administration's defense program as "an indiscriminate list of weapon systems, a scattered shot approach to defense in which the inefficient concept of 'more is better' seems to underlie the whole package."²²

As it is forced to cut funding in many federal domestic programs, Congress is concerned about the huge cost overruns afflicting many of the Defense Department's weapons systems and what is seen as the Pentagon's inability to design moderately priced, effective combat systems. Many liberals who are philosophically opposed to the Administration's military buildup have masked their desires to halt rearmament behind the rhetoric of "cost-effectiveness." One of these is the chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Joseph Addabbo (D-N.Y.), whose personal goal is to cut \$20 billion to \$25 billion from the defense budget. Addabbo has complained that a "continuing problem in defense budget decision making has been the failure to terminate programs that are not working out. The practice in defense--when cost overruns exert strong budgetary pressure--is not to terminate major weapon systems, but to keep all such systems going at economically low production rates."²³ According to Addabbo, Green, and others, billions of dollars can be saved in FY 1983 by cancelling cost-inefficient systems outright or by substituting proved, reliable less costly weapons for proposed systems that are plagued by cost overruns and unreliable testing history. Frequently suggested proposals include: cancelling or drastically reducing procurement of the Army's M-1 tank (at \$2.7 million each) and buying the cheaper, upgraded M-60 tank; cutting procurement of M-2 fighting vehicles (\$1.5 million each); cancelling procurement of the Army's new attack helicopter, the AH-64 (\$15 million each), in favor of the \$5 million AH-1; buying A-7 attack aircraft (\$11 million each) instead of the F/A-18 (\$38 million each); purchasing some diesel powered submarines (\$200

²² Congressional Record, May 26, 1982, p. H 2904.

²³ Congressional Record, March 3, 1982, p. S 5518.

million each) instead of all nuclear subs (\$570 million each) and cancelling the B-1 bomber in favor of the Stealth bomber, now only in research and development.

Similar arguments advocating savings through procurement of allegedly more cost-effective systems and greater efficiency in operations are frequently heard on the Senate side of the Hill as well. During the debate on the FY 1983 Budget Resolution, a number of moderate Republicans, led by Nancy Kassebaum (Kan.), Dan Durenberger (Minn.), and John Chaffee (R.I.), urged their colleagues to vote for a 7 percent ceiling on defense spending growth on the grounds that savings of over \$25 billion in FY 1983 could be achieved by practicing "the same vigilance in procurement, efficiency of operations, and fiscal discipline in program administration as we demand in non-defense spending."²⁴ Yet Senators Kassebaum, Chaffee, and Durenberger, failed to say where the savings in procurement and operational efficiencies would be made. And, in a fashion typical of congressional budget cutters, they said nothing substantive to refute the Administration's threat analysis.

An Indiscriminate Budget?

There are indeed problems of priorities in the Administration's defense budget. The Pentagon needs to focus more of its attention on improving U.S. warfighting capabilities for near-term contingencies. But this does not mean the Defense Department is wasting money on low priority programs. After a decade of skimping on defense, America's forces are suffering from severe deficiencies across the board. Indeed, because of budgetary constraints, a number of missions are being neglected, or grossly underfunded, such as tactical nuclear warfare, ground air defense, civil defense, sealift and mine warfare. Far from being indiscriminate, the Administration's defense budgets are not comprehensive enough.

Weapons Cost-Effectiveness and the Budget

This does not mean that there is no room for substantial savings in Pentagon spending. The costs of many of the Pentagon's major weapon systems are exorbitant--far higher than they should be. Weapons programs are also plagued by huge cost overruns and in some cases disappointing combat performance. Skyrocketing prices are characteristic of consumer products as well, of course, and a comparison of cost growth for military projects with non-government and other federal agency projects shows that cost overruns in the Defense Department are by no means exceptional.²⁵ Nevertheless, the high cost of weapons is a legitimate concern for Congress and threatens to undermine the pro-defense consensus.

²⁴ Congressional Record, May 19, 1982, p. S 5518.

²⁵ Deborah G. Meyer, "The High Cost of Defending America: Is the Price Out Of Line?" Armed Forces Journal International, August 1982, pp. 39-40.

Today's weapons are costly and prone to cost overruns for a number of reasons: a high technology design philosophy, lack of interservice standardization, failure to use commercially available components, budget instability, low production rates, cost and inflation misestimates, insufficient competition, subcontractor bottlenecks, low defense industry productivity, and labor shortages.²⁶

Acutely sensitive to congressional and public concern on this issue, the Reagan Administration has made controlling weapons costs a high priority. The Pentagon has initiated a number of measures designed to bring weapons costs in check, including: multiyear procurement contracts, higher production rates, more accurate inflation estimates, greater use of competition, reduction of government regulations, and modernization of defense plant equipment.

Not all of the causes of high weapons costs, however, originate in the Pentagon. Congress bears a major share of the blame. Fluctuating but generally shrinking defense budgets during the last decade, for example, have led to costly program stop-and-starts, program stretch-outs and inefficient procurement rates, and uncertainty in the defense industry. All this contributes to low investment in plant modernization and the "exit" of numerous subcontractors from defense manufacturing, with the result, in turn, of decreased competition and higher weapons prices.

Multiyear procurement contracts, multiyear appropriation bills, full program funding, and cancelling some programs with low procurement rates would do much to improve weapons production efficiency. Congress has approved some multiyear contracts, but remains reluctant to weaken its budgeting power through multiyear appropriation bills. As the General Accounting Office has pointed out, congressional failure to approve defense budgets promptly also hinders efficient weapons procurement.²⁷ "Pork-barrel" defense politics--funding marginal weapons programs at low production rates and unnecessary or inefficient support programs--to buy votes continues to be widespread.²⁸

²⁶ For an analysis of the causes of high weapons cost and recommendations for reform in the weapons procurement process, see Robert Foelber, "Cutting the High Cost of Weapons," Background No. 172 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1982).

²⁷ "Continuing resolutions, which are becoming more common, are extremely disruptive. When DOD proposes a budget, it assumes funding will be available at the outset of the fiscal year and generally at a higher spending level. But continuing resolutions compel the services to reschedule activities to correspond with the comparatively restrictive guidance for operating under resolutions." General Accounting Office, "Defense Budget Increases: How well Are They Planned and Spent?" (PRLD-82-62), April 13, 1982, p. 64.

²⁸ Congress, for example, typically cuts funding for vital overseas military construction projects and adds funds for less essential domestic construction projects, which entail jobs for Americans.

To preserve the pro-defense consensus, it is essential that Congress and the Defense Department cooperate to vigorously pursue cost-savings measures in weapons procurement. Congressional defense budget critics, however, seem unable to understand that higher production rates, more realistic cost-estimates, defense plant modernization, and the other needed measures that foster efficiency in the long run cost more in the short term.

BUYING THE RIGHT WEAPONS

To say that an effective military force requires defense budgets of the size proposed by the Reagan Administration does not mean that all of the Pentagon's weapons programs should be funded. Serious questions can be raised about the cost-effectiveness in a number of cases. America's design philosophy has been to offset the Soviet numerical advantage by equipping national forces with weapons that outperform their Soviet counterparts. Soviet efforts of the past decade have forced the U.S. to develop ever more technologically complex and expensive weapons to maintain performance superiority. Some of these weapons, however, have proved to be cost-effective disasters. For example, a recent General Accounting Office report concludes that five years of testing have failed to show the Air Force's infrared imaging fire-and-forget Maverick air-to-surface missile can be used effectively by U.S. military personnel in combat.²⁹

It is also questionable whether Congress should continue funding the Army's M-1 tank (\$2.7 million each) and DIVAD divisional air defense gun (\$6.1 million each).³⁰ These systems do not improve combat capability sufficiently in proportion to their high costs. The money programmed for procurement of these weapons could be more wisely spent either for weapons devoted to more pressing missions or for a more cost-effective force based on cheaper, more reliable systems.

For example, the Army should buy upgraded versions of the M-60 tank and a fully tested, cheaper, advanced, European built air defense gun, such as the German Gepard, for a "quick fix" air defense force. Savings should be invested in the development of a highly mobile tactical nuclear ballistic missile and in procurement of the capable Roland surface-to-air missile cancelled by the Administration.

²⁹ Morton Mintz, "GAO Urges Pentagon To Hold Off On Missile," Washington Post July 5, 1982, p. 10.

³⁰ The development of the DIVAD air defense gun was badly mismanaged. Ford Motor Company was awarded a sole source production contract for political reasons after it lost the "fire before buy" competition. Despite the expensive technology built into the system, the gun still cannot hit a maneuvering target, a primary design objective. For an account see Gregg Easterbrook, "DIVAD," The Atlantic Monthly, October 1982, pp. 29-39.

But the fact that there are examples of cost-ineffective programs in the Pentagon budget is not to say a lower defense budget would follow. There are four reasons for this. First, the Administration has almost certainly underestimated the true cost of its weapons programs by at least \$100 billion.³¹ Second, the Defense Department has failed to adequately budget for operation and maintenance of its modernized armed forces. Since the Korean War, funding for operations and maintenance has exceeded that for procurement in all but two years. Even so, O & M was drastically underfunded throughout the 1970s, as manifested by the generally poor state of U.S. armed forces readiness in 1980. Under the Reagan defense plan, procurement will consistently exceed O & M and will increase at a faster rate. The likely result: severe readiness problems in the mid and late 1980s. Third, as the economy recovers from recession, pay for military personnel will have to be increased substantially to preserve the recent improvements in enlistment and retention of the All Volunteer Force. Finally, as mentioned above, there are many missions not adequately funded in the Administration's defense budget. Any savings achieved through efficiency measures should be invested in these other areas.

In sum, there simply is no magical combination of cost-effective weapons that will solve America's pressing military problems at lower overall budget levels.

MILITARY REFORM AND THE BUDGET

A growing number of Congressmen and Senators including Representatives G. William Whitehurst (R-Va.), Norman Dicks (D-Wash.), Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), Senators Gary Hart (D-Colo.), Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), and William Cohen (R-Maine), all participants in the Congressional Military Reform Caucus, are "worried that our military can no longer win" and "have doubts as to whether the American people will continue to support high and increasing budgets for a non-winning military."³² They contend that the Services concentrate too much on overly sophisticated and unreliable high technology as the solution to force deficiencies. They argue that much of the ineffectiveness of the U.S. military establishment is due to officer training and a promotional system that prize bureaucratic management rather than combat skills, to an overly centralized command structure, and to tactics and strategy based on firepower, attrition, and linear defense.

³¹ See statement by Alice Rivlin, Director of the Congressional Budget Office, before the Senate Appropriations Committee, February 25, 1982, p. 13.

³² Congressman G. William Whitehurst (R-Va.), "Briefing on the Military Reform Caucus," March 15, 1982, p. 1.

To field an effective warfighting force within budgetary constraints, it is argued, the Services must improve unit cohesion, increase combat training, decentralize the command system to allow commanders to adjust flexibly to the rapid flux of events in a battle area, and adopt a maneuver style of warfare aimed at destroying the enemy's capability to fight through surprise and fast paced shifts in the application of force. As an illustration of the validity of their principles, congressional military reformers point to the German Army of World War II, which generally was outnumbered and had inferior weapons yet won astounding victories because of its superior training and strategic/tactical excellence.

These military reformers point to a number of frequently overlooked factors contributing to military power. Their general analysis of non-hardware issues is basically sound, although their concrete proposals are sometimes unconvincing.

Military reform, however, is no substitute for a large-scale modernization and expansion of the armed services funded by budgets at least of the size planned by the Reagan Administration. New naval tactics that are based on a wider dispersal of forces, minimal communications, and an alternative to continuously emitting high-powered radars serving as beacons for Soviet anti-radiation missiles will improve the survivability of U.S. carrier task forces, but losses from Soviet sea-launched and air-launched cruise missiles will still be heavy. If the Navy is to adopt the Administration's offensive naval strategy, it will have to greatly expand its capability to strike land targets and to defeat the Soviet submarine threat. The Air Force still will need to be expanded by at least four tactical fighter wings. And the Army will need to improve its air defense capability, its anti-tank capability, its artillery support, its battlefield communication capability, its tactical target acquisition capability, and its tactical nuclear warfare capability.

To deter the Soviet Union from nuclear war and to limit the damage in case deterrence should fail, Congress must appropriate funds for a survivable ICBM force, a greatly enhanced civil defense program, an improved strategic air defense force, and a vastly more survivable strategic command-control-communications system.

The recommendations of the military reform movement go to the heart of the American way of waging war and understandably are often resisted by the Services. They also, in some cases, face strong opposition beyond direct U.S. control. Take the case of the Army's new field manual and its new war plan "Airland Battle 2000."³³ Although both documents use the language of

³³ For a discussion of the Army's "new" strategy and tactics, see John Fialka, "Army Shifts Strategy to Give Smaller Units Room to Maneuver," Wall Street Journal, January 22, 1982, p. 1, and "NATO: Can The Alliance Be Saved?" Report of Senator Sam Nunn to the Senate Armed Services Committee, May 13, 1982.

maneuver warfare, the Army is still relying on sophisticated weapons of unproved technology in its "new strategy" to defeat the enemy through attrition. The new Army battle plan is essentially to attrit reinforcing troops (second and third echelon forces) of the Warsaw Pact with long-range, ground delivered smart weapons and stand-off, air-delivered precision guided munitions, and then to launch counterattacks against those isolated first echelon forces that have penetrated Western Europe. This strategy hardly departs from the past. Military reformers are skeptical of the combat effectiveness of the Air Force's and Army's new anti-second-echelon technology. They argue that NATO can be successfully defended within "realistic" budget limits only if it forsakes its strategy of Forward Defense and adopts a defense based on a heavily armored mobile strike force deployed behind more lightly armed, forwardly deployed anti-tank forces and tasked with destroying penetrating Soviet invasion forces with bold counterattacks embodying the principles of maneuver warfare. West German governments, however, have repeatedly refused to adopt such a strategy because they view it as conceding territory to the Soviets, an idea unacceptable to the many millions of West Germans living near the East-West border. However unreasonable this attitude may be, it is a political fact that drives the U.S. Army to think in traditional ways about strategy and the character of its force structures. Military reform of American strategy, tactics, command, and training is a process that will take years to effect. While it should be vigorously pursued, it cannot, in the short term, solve pressing U.S. military deficiencies.

THE PRO-DEFENSE CONSENSUS AND THE BUDGET

In 1981, polls showed that two-thirds of the public either approved the Administration's defense budget (55 percent) or wanted even larger increases (13 percent).³⁴ About half the public believed the United States should be stronger militarily than the Soviet Union in order to protect its national security. The public apparently had a clearer grasp of the role of military power in international affairs than many professional national security experts. Many defense budget cutters believe that the public, faced with high unemployment and media horror stories about huge Pentagon cost overruns, is losing its enthusiasm for the Administration's defense buildup and that cutting the budget is the only way to preserve the pro-defense consensus over the long haul. Senators Hart and Kassebaum, for instance, justify their budget reduction proposals in terms of the need to sustain a pro-defense consensus.^{35, 36}

³⁴ Alvin Richman, "Public Attitudes on Military Power, 1981, "Public Opinion December 1981/January 1982, pp. 44-46.

³⁵ Congressional Record, May 19, 1982, p. S 5521.

³⁶ Congressional Record, May 13, 1982, p. S 5097.

Congressional budget critics are right to worry about the prospects of long-term support for increased defense spending. To reverse the grave military imbalance and to sustain parity when it is once again achieved will require real defense spending growth of at least 8 percent or more a year for many years to come.

Congressmen worried about the pro-defense consensus, however, seem to misperceive public sentiment. According to the National Opinion Research Center, public support for the Administration's defense buildup in 1982 remains strong with 36 percent of the population holding to the opinion that the Administration's defense budgets are "about the right amount" and 29 percent believing that they are "too little."³⁷ Other polls admittedly show a decline in support for defense. A Los Angeles Times Poll-Cable News Network survey in March, for example, recorded that 66 percent of the population believed that Congress should allocate less funding for defense than requested by the Reagan Administration.

If there is indeed a drop in support for defense spending, Congress itself is largely responsible because of its penchant for linking the size of the defense budget to domestic economic conditions. The average American is not an expert on defense matters and looks to Washington for guidance in national security affairs. If there were a clear signal emanating from Congress and the White House that the U.S. faced a grave military threat from the Soviet Union and that \$1.6 trillion were required to counter the threat, the American people would make the necessary sacrifices. The wrong way to sustain the consensus for higher defense spending is to cut back on the President's defense budget, as Congress is doing now. For this simply vitiates public concern that U.S. military power is too weak to defend its interests against Soviet aggression.

Congressional budget cutters either lack the courage to bear the message of sacrifice to their constituents or they sincerely do not believe the Administration's defense budgets are necessary for national security. If the latter, they should show in detail why--and not hide disingenuously behind statistical screens of public opinion.

CONCLUSION

The debate over defense spending involves two distinct issues: How much should the United States spend on defense? How should defense dollars be spent? For the most part, the Pentagon is focusing on the most pressing military needs by funding programs

³⁷ "Military Spending: Enough Is (Now) Enough", Opinion Outlook, Vol. 2, No. 16 (August 15, 1982), pp. 1-2.

that will augment substantially U.S. capability to successfully defend national interests against Soviet conventional or nuclear attack. The Administration has initiated a number of reforms in the procurement process and the management of defense operations that will save billions of dollars over the next five years. In order to preserve the consensus for higher defense spending and to field an effective deterrent and warfighting force within the limits of the Reagan defense budgets, however, the Defense Department needs to pursue efficient weapons procurement even more vigorously and to give a favorable hearing to sound proposals for more cost-effective force structures.

Congress can play a constructive role in defense budgeting by carefully scrutinizing defense programs and by directing the Pentagon's attention to more cost-effective force planning. So far, however, it has done a poor job. Attacks on defense spending have been rhetorical, aimed not at solving military problems but at cutting the overall defense budget. Program reductions have been supported with little understanding of the Soviet military threat, general mission requirements used to justify weapons choices, or U.S. military objectives.

That the Pentagon is not spending all of its money wisely does not justify reductions in the overall defense budget. The nation's professional military establishment, which in fact tends to underestimate force requirements for fighting wars, has been briefing Congress on the dangerous military situation, but Congress persists on its budget-cutting course. Its arguments for doing so have been basically economic: reductions in defense spending are needed to spark economic recovery. The congressional debate, however, has been carried on in the almost total absence of careful consideration of Soviet military power.

After a decade of defense budgeting restraint, a congressional consensus has emerged for major increases in defense spending. The tragedy of this pro-defense consensus, however, is that Congress, thus far, has failed to grasp what it will cost to buy a "high confidence" defense force. If Congress continues down this road, the United States will have to rely increasingly on bluff to deter Soviet aggression.

Robert Foelber
Policy Analyst