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Executive Summary

**U.S. STRATEGY IN THE EVENT
OF A FAILURE OF DETENTE**

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ABSTRACT

This is a summary of a study which identifies and assesses the alternative integrated U.S. strategies for a future situation in which (1) detente collapses; (2) the Cold War resumes; and (3) the avoidance of conflict between the superpowers continues to be a mutually shared objective. The differing perceptions and objectives of detente from the U.S. and Soviet perspectives, and the factors which could cause detente to fail are analyzed as a framework for examination of the U.S. options and their military implications.

DISCLAIMER

The findings of this report are not to be construed as an official Department of the Army position unless so designated by other authorized documents.

CONTRACTUAL TASK

This Technical Note is in partial fulfillment of Task Order 74-2, under Contract DAAG39-74-C-0082.

FOREWORD

This is an Executive Summary of a study undertaken by the Strategic Studies Center of Stanford Research Institute of U.S. Strategy in the Event of a Failure of Detente (Task Order 74-2). It is one of four study tasks undertaken for the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations (ODCSOPS), Department of the Army, to complement ODCSOPS in-house planning activities. The other three tasks were: Great Power Interests and Conflicting Objectives in the Mediterranean-Middle East-Persian Gulf Region (Task Order 74-1); An Analytical Framework for Assessing Combat Service Support and Related Security Assistance Requirements (Task Order 74-3); and Quick Reaction Research Support (Task Order 74-4).

The study was prepared under the general supervision of Richard B. Foster, Director of the Strategic Studies Center, M. Mark Earle, Jr., Senior Economist and Assistant Director, SSC, and Harold Silverstein, Special Assistant to the Director, SSC. The initial project leader was Dr. Wynfred Joshua, then an Assistant Director, upon whose departure co-leadership of the project was undertaken by William M. Carpenter and Dr. Stephen P. Gibert. Other members of the project team were Dr. James E. Dornan, Jr., (Consultant), William F. Lackman, Paul P. Stassi, and Walter F. Hahn and Dr. Nils H. Wessell (Consultants).

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Executive Summary

I THE NATURE OF DETENTE

Detente in its present-day context is understood to apply primarily to an alleged new relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is regarded as having come formally into being on the occasion of the signing of an extensive series of agreements at the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in Moscow in May 1972. A key document was the "Basic Principles of Relations Between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." This document, a first attempt outside the framework of any specific issue or crisis to set down general rules for the conduct of U.S.-Soviet relations, is generally considered to be a guideline for detente. Each side, however, interprets these principles in its own way, because of basically different perceptions of detente and the dissimilar systems within which each side conceives and implements its national strategy.

Detente is not a new concept, at least not as perceived by the Soviets. For them it is but the current operative phase of their long-standing concept of peaceful coexistence. It is therefore a part of a strategy by which the Soviet Union seeks to attain its internal and international objectives--with at least American acquiescence, and if possible with American help. What is distinctive about detente as presently used is that both superpowers have declared it to be in being; both sides use the term to describe the present and hoped-for future superpower relationship--although the Soviets continue to refer to peaceful coexistence, particularly to domestic audiences. Further, the new detente exists in a changing global environment, less rigidly bipolar in nature, significantly affected by Soviet attainment of nuclear parity, and, importantly, one in which the Soviets perceive that the "correlation of forces" is changing in their favor. Thus detente embodies contradictions in perception, and consequently is subject to a different set of "ground rules" used by each side to integrate detente into its policy and strategy.

II U.S. PERCEPTIONS AND GROUND RULES

In the view of many American and Western policymakers, detente is both a policy and a process, seen in terms of the international balance of power, in which the two superpowers remain the principal actors in a continuing but limited adversaryship. This approach to detente is based upon a strategy of linkages, involving negotiations over a broad spectrum of U.S.-Soviet interactions. Implied is the expectation of a gradual amelioration of superpower rivalry and possibly even a waning of ideological aggression. However, for the Soviets to think and act under this concept would be to deny the dialectical view of history upon which their Marxist world view is based.

The linkage strategy of detente implies in the American view the necessity for certain ground rules, which would on the one hand establish a U.S.-Soviet relationship that embodies more mutual restraint than was the norm in the Cold War years, but would on the other hand stop well short of creating a superpower condominium, or anything which could be regarded as convergence of the two systems. The ground rules which may be inferred from the U.S. perception of detente include: (1) mutual noninterference in domestic affairs; (2) abstention from direct military confrontation; (3) abstention from direct use of force beyond each side's accepted "domain of power;" (4) mutual observance of the principle of approximate nuclear parity between the two superpowers; and (5) gradual movement toward mutual observance of alignments. These ground rules have not been formalized, but can be observed as operative, and are of sufficient salience for it to be predicted that if one or more of them is breached, detente, as it is now generally understood to describe the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, will suffer damaging effects.

III SOVIET PERCEPTIONS AND GROUND RULES

The Soviet perception of detente differs markedly from the prevalent American and Western understanding. In the Soviet view, detente

has been forced upon the West, as an inevitable response to permanent crisis in the West growing out of political and military weakness. The United States and its allies are seen as constrained from taking their former active roles in international affairs by the growing Soviet military capability and the political influence flowing from it. Nevertheless, Moscow continues to regard the United States as an "imperialist" threat to peace, perhaps more dangerous because of its perceived weakness. Thus detente does not dampen the Soviet felt need to be militarily strong. Nor does it in any way imply relaxing of the ideological struggle. Rather, a period of detente is seen as both a time of necessity for strengthening ideology at home and a time of opportunity for exploiting the "internal contradictions of capitalism" abroad. The use of force is not ruled out by detente; intervention continues to be justified in the Soviet concept, either within the "socialist commonwealth" or elsewhere in support of "progressive wars."

Soviet leaders regard detente as an opportune instrument to facilitate achievement of both short-term and long-term goals. In the short term, the Soviets will pursue such objectives as manipulating local conflicts to their advantage and, where possible, projecting Soviet influence to change local balances of power. In the longer term, detente is viewed as a valid instrument for pursuit of such objectives as fractionating the Western alliance by making it appear irrelevant, pressing for gradual reduction and eventual phase-out of the U.S. military presence in Europe, gaining eventual strategic superiority over the United States, reducing the threat from China, and acquiring development capital and industrial technology in order to modernize the Soviet economy.

Given the asymmetry of Soviet and American perceptions of detente, it would be expected that their ground rules for implementation of detente strategy would not be identical. The following Soviet ground rules have been inferred from Soviet statements and behavior, and it will be noted that there are some similarities with and some divergences from the American counterparts. They are judged to include: (1) no U.S. interference in Soviet affairs; (2) abstention from direct military

confrontation between the superpowers; (3) mutual exercise of caution in crisis situations that can lead to superpower confrontation; (4) no direct or indirect interference in the accepted sphere of Soviet influence; and (5) freedom to change these ground rules as seems opportune with respect to changes in the correlation of forces. The latter rule is significant in that uncertainty regarding the future Soviet attitude toward detente makes more difficult American perception of the state of detente and the policy choices for coping with its challenges.

IV PROCESSES THAT THREATEN DETENTE

Besides the hazards deriving from the asymmetries of perception held by the two sides, there are other processes that can threaten the state of detente in the future. Some of these processes are beyond the effective control of either superpower, but there are as well some that can be influenced by conscious policy choices of the United States or Soviet Union. There are many such processes or trends which can have a variety of effects, but illustrative of the problem are the following four: (1) shifts in the world balance of power; (2) destabilization within geographic areas; (3) leadership changes in the Soviet Union; and (4) Soviet-American trade.

The question regarding balance of power is whether the Soviets are willing to accept within a framework of mutual restraint and responsibility a condition of approximate "parity" with the United States, to embrace the strategic-nuclear confrontation, regional military balance, and the major alliance system. Regarding the question of interactions between the superpowers in specific geographical areas, those areas most likely to involve significant clashes of interests are the Sino-Soviet-American triangle in the Far East, the Middle East and Europe. A problem of increasing urgency in these areas is the prospect of nuclear proliferation.

There is a potential threat to detente in anticipated leadership changes in the Soviet Union; new leaders will be different in personality and perspective--the new men may be more oriented toward a

technical and managerial approach to the West, but not necessarily more moderate than their predecessors--and they will have to cope with such "threats" as a marked increase in the presence of U.S. businessmen within their society. The Soviet military may gain influence, very possibly to the detriment of detente. Finally, the relationship of Soviet-American trade to detente remains unclear. Increased economic contacts with the West are clearly important to the Soviets, and East-West trade may well continue to grow in spite of setbacks at the political level. Such trade, however, will almost certainly continue to be a small portion of the trade of both countries, no matter how actively fostered.

These and other processes will be key policy issues for both sides as each approaches detente. Asymmetry is again a factor here, because the United States takes a basically static approach to the concept of power balance and the exercise of restraint, while the Soviets see the interaction as dynamic, measured in terms of the willingness of the United States to adjust to shifts in the power balance in favor of the Soviet Union.

V U.S. POLICY OPTIONS

It is clear, then, that the present detente in Soviet-American relations by no means constitutes the beginning of a new era of harmony in world politics, as some Western analysts and policymakers have asserted. There is no evidence that the basic long-term foreign policy objectives of the USSR have undergone a fundamental alteration; on the contrary, detente from the perspective of the Soviet Union is a broad-ranging strategy for managing relations with the West in an era in which the "global correlation of forces" is perceived to be shifting decisively in favor of the communist world.

There are thus evident constraints upon the kinds of favorable changes which can be expected in the Soviet-American relationship over both the short and the long term. The United States must remain prepared for the indefinite future to defend its vital interests against

a variety of Soviet challenges, many of them quite subtle and therefore particularly dangerous. Since the adversarial nature of the Soviet-American relationship remains essentially unaltered, there are clear limits to the concessions which the United States can offer to the USSR in order to maintain the existing climate of relations. Moreover, the Western powers have already taken a lengthy series of steps designed to persuade the USSR that they genuinely desire a relaxation of tensions; in many areas further concessions would involve the sacrifice of significant interests and are therefore unacceptable. Finally, many factors crucial to the future evolution of Soviet-American relations, such as developments in the Soviet economy or changes in the ruling group, are largely beyond our control.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the United States has a distinct interest in maintaining the improved climate of relations with the USSR which has existed for the past several years. The Western world presently faces a concatenation of economic and political problems unparalleled since the 1930s. These problems have strained the social systems of more than one nation to the breaking point, and made it difficult for nearly all Western governments to maintain adequate levels of defense expenditures. In the United States, public and congressional support for a strong national defense and for an activist international policy continues to wane, making it difficult for the executive branch to deal with existing--let alone potential--challenges to American interests. And the United States shares with the USSR an interest in avoiding a military confrontation which might escalate to the nuclear level. The continuation of the existing detente, therefore, might be to the advantage of the United States, whatever the intentions of the USSR. At a minimum, continued detente may afford the United States time for public opinion to recover from the malaise induced by the collapse of American policy in Southeast Asia; over the longer term, a wise American response to detente might capitalize upon Soviet difficulties both domestic and international in ways that enhance the U.S. position in the continuing competition with its adversaries.

This analysis implies that detente is and will remain a fluid relationship, subject to continuing and considerable strain. If the maintenance of detente is a legitimate objective for American policy, it is necessary to consider both what measures might be taken toward that end should detente appear to be threatened by one or more of the processes discussed earlier, and whether there might exist possibilities to restore detente in the event that it partially breaks down. Finally, the analysis suggests the need to examine available options for the United States in the event of a total collapse of detente.

Obviously no rigid line can be drawn between these various "states" in the Soviet-American relationship; as detente is a process, so too would its breakdown be a process, and one which is not likely to proceed in straight-line fashion. In any case it is probably not helpful to speak of a possible return to the "Cold War," whatever happens to the Soviet-American relationship; that term, as commonly used by historians, refers to a particular period of international history, with patterns of relations and structural characteristics not likely to be repeated. Even if detente collapses completely, world politics will be quite different than during the period 1946-52.

A. Policies Aimed at Sustaining Detente

Developing strains in the Soviet-American relationship could take a variety of forms, from public expressions of dissatisfaction on the part of high Soviet officials with the pace of "progress" in the relationship--already occasionally heard--to substantially stepped-up arms flows to Soviet client states and a considerably expanded and highly visible Soviet military "presence" in tension areas such as the Middle East or the Persian Gulf. Any decision on the most appropriate policy for the United States in such circumstances will in considerable measure depend on whether it is believed that a conciliatory or a harder line will have the most positive impact on the USSR. Obviously no final distinction can be drawn between the two approaches: an infinite number of combinations and permutations are possible and likely, depending on

circumstances. Even if a conciliatory approach is selected, the United States must maintain a level of military strength adequate to deter unrestrained Soviet adventurism, and sustain--and indeed strengthen--those alliance systems essential to free-world security. Neither does a conciliatory approach preclude U.S. initiatives, even under existing circumstances, to improve its political and even its military position with traditional great power allies and selected critical nations in the Third World. Nonetheless, for purposes of analysis, broadly contrasting emphases may be identified.

In general, a policy of conciliation by the United States designed to sustain the existing detente will involve a deepening and extension of the broad approach to Soviet-American relations pursued since 1969. The United States might accept a greater role for the USSR than heretofore in structuring a Middle East settlement, extend to the Soviets long-discussed economic concessions such as long-term loans at favorable rates, and seek to engage the USSR in substantially broadened common projects in such relatively nonpoliticized areas as pollution control, increased food production for the Third World, and the like.

If it becomes clear that any developing malaise in the East-West relationship is due primarily to Soviet perceptions of declining American resolve, a harder U.S. line will be necessary. Any Soviet demands which do not include real concessions in exchange for those offered by the West will be rejected, whether in CSCE, SALT, MBFR, or in trade negotiations. Contacts with dissident communist states could be stepped up, with particular attention to the PRC. Measures would be taken to prepare for a substantial expansion of American strategic forces should that become necessary.

B. Policies to Cope with a Partial Breakdown of Detente

Should the policies selected by the United States to deal with deepening strains in the Soviet-American relationship largely fail, the West would face more aggressive and intransigent Soviet behavior on a broad

front. The USSR would attempt to exploit political and economic dislocations in the Third World in order to deny the United States and its allies access to raw materials and forward base areas. The Middle East and the Persian Gulf areas would be likely targets for these efforts. At the same time the Soviets would try to utilize their margin of military superiority for political purposes in Europe and elsewhere, perhaps applying direct pressure against selected countries. The unresolved dispute with Norway over the Spitzbergen Island region might be a target for such tactics. Encouragement might be given to a communist coup in Portugal, with subsequent termination of base rights in the Azores. Depending on circumstances and opportunities after Tito's death, military operations might be undertaken to establish a pro-Moscow regime in Yugoslavia.

Under these circumstances the United States would once again be faced with a choice between relatively conciliatory and relatively hard-line emphasis in structuring its response. Should a partial collapse of detente occur in the near term, political pressures for a conciliatory approach in the Congress and most likely within the public at large are likely to be intense. It will be argued by some advocates of this position that the United States should adopt a less provocative strategic policy, perhaps abandoning the "multiple options" strategy of Secretary Schlesinger in favor of a "finite deterrence" posture. Others will propose substantial concessions to the USSR in the economic realm; at a minimum, proposals for Western political concessions in the various East-West negotiations and for a generally lowered American profile in world politics will proliferate.

The effects of such an effort--should one be made--to restore detente by pursuing a policy of conciliation toward the USSR are difficult to calculate. By making aggressive behavior "rewarding" for the Soviet leadership, the United States may encourage the USSR to persist in its bellicose course, thus ensuring the total collapse of detente. The Soviets might accept the proffered American concessions, later returning to a hard-line

posture when the stream of concessions dried up. At the end of the process the West would be far worse off than now.

In any case, should the detente continue to deteriorate despite conciliatory policies by the United States, a harder line American response, perhaps including a more activist, offensive-minded approach to policy, will certainly be considered. At a very minimum, the United States will need to set in motion strategic force deployments sufficient to efface any impression that the USSR has attained strategic superiority. In order to restore the credibility of the Western deterrent, the United States might also take the lead in encouraging Anglo-French cooperation on strategic issues, offering to share nuclear information with the French on an equal basis with Great Britain as an inducement.

Such military measures would need to be accompanied by a toughened diplomatic and political stance as well. An aggressive bargaining posture on all East-West issues should be accompanied by a substantial change in strategy toward the communist world itself. It should be made clear to Albania, Yugoslavia, and Romania, for example, that there might be possibilities other than supine surrender in the event of Russian military pressure; concrete measures, such as offers of new-technology anti-tank weapons to Yugoslavia, might be taken to support such diplomatic overtures. Covert operations to deal with deteriorating situations in such nations as Portugal would be expanded; such operations might include appropriate measures to safeguard base rights in the Azores, such as cooperation with the incipient independence movement there. Above all, a more vigorous American policy would attempt to capitalize on the Sino-Soviet dispute. Efforts could be made to make the Chinese-American connection more visible, and a more thorough Sino-Japanese detente might be encouraged. Such efforts could be combined with new diplomatic overtures toward Eastern Europe; the United States might sponsor a four-region economic conference, with East and West European nations invited to join representatives from the United States, Japan, and the PRC in an examination of the possibilities for increased trade, resource development, etc. The United States would thus simultaneously capitalize on Soviet

fears of a Sino-Japanese entente, Soviet concern over the Sino-American relationship, and Soviet worries over the political future of Eastern Europe.

C. Policies to Cope with a Collapse of Detente

In the event of a total collapse of detente and the pursuit of an aggressive stance toward the West across the board by the USSR, the problems of American policymaking would in some respects be simplified. There would at this stage be few if any conciliatory options remaining. A militant posture by the USSR could be expected to arouse public opinion in the United States, and increase support for a substantially larger national security effort. A new U.S. grand strategy might be based on one of two broad emphases: a Great Power strategy, and a Third World strategy. Under the Great Power emphasis, the United States would direct its principal attention to the defense of Europe and Japan, and attempt to deal with Soviet bellicosity through coalition diplomacy based on renewed alliance systems. Increased military deployments, including both men and equipment, might be necessary in both Europe and Northeast Asia. Depending on the time frame envisioned, emergent middle-range powers such as Iran and Brazil might command considerable U.S. attention. Finally, the United States would vigorously pursue diplomatic overtures to the PRC, perhaps seeking a closer military relationship involving strategic guarantees.

A Third World emphasis by the United States, on the other hand, would involve an American defense effort concentrated in the world's "rimlands" and focused on emergent powers in the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. In the short term, regional defense systems could be established, both with and without direct U.S. guarantees. The OAS and ANZUS organizations would receive immediate priority. Over the longer term, emerging powers such as Iran, Brazil, Indonesia, and Mexico would become focal points of the strategy. Selected allies might be offered assistance in the development of a nuclear capability; in any case military and economic aid to Third World nations would be greatly increased.

The Third World strategy might be selected by the United States for a variety of reasons. It is conceivable that the United States would have no choice in the matter: the Soviet Union may succeed in its long-term objective of detaching Europe from the American orbit and "Finlandizing" the continent. Under these circumstances it is obvious that the United States would face grave danger, and the Third World option would be chosen in desperation. More likely in any case is a combined strategy, in which the United States deals with revived Soviet aggression by working with selected allies in both Europe and the Third World.

VI MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY OPTIONS

The analysis of the nature of detente set forth above suggests that, whatever the precise future course of the Soviet-American relationship, measures will need to be taken to augment the U.S. capability to deal with a variety of politico-military challenges under the emerging conditions of world politics. It seems likely, for example, that opportunities for permanent ground and air force deployments abroad will never again be as plentiful as during the 1950s. If this assumption is correct and more CONUS basing for American forces becomes necessary, a substantial expansion of U.S. air and sea-lift capability needs to be undertaken without delay. At the same time, further streamlining of at least a portion of U.S. ground forces is necessary, to facilitate their rapid deployment abroad as circumstances warrant. The same considerations suggest the need to extend and accelerate presently ongoing efforts to increase unit firepower of the general purpose forces through the rapid introduction of new-technology weapons, and to improve substantially the battlefield mobility of ground forces.

A. Military Dimensions of Policies Designed to Sustain Detente

Beyond the force improvements suggested, a U.S. policy designed to sustain detente during a period of stress in the Soviet-American relationship would have few specifically military implications. The principal tools for coping with Soviet policy would be diplomatic, political,

and economic; particularly would this be the case if the United States adopted a conciliatory posture. Even if the United States sought to sustain detente by pursuing a harder line policy vis-a-vis the communist world, the political climate in and outside Congress might not permit a significant increase in defense expenditures; under such circumstances, available resources would have to be expended with even greater care than presently, and weapons procurement related to specifically defined needs.

B. Military Measures in the Event of a Partial Breakdown of Detente

If an effort is made to restore detente by pursuing a conciliatory policy toward the USSR, the United States would assume a largely passive military posture. U.S. deterrence strategy would emphasize enhanced invulnerability for the second-strike force; programs designed to improve ICBM and SLBM yield/accuracy might be discontinued. The backbone of the deterrent would be the TRIDENT/POSEIDON force. A low-profile general purpose force posture would be maintained, without drastic changes in strategy or deployments. Force modernization and improvements would continue, albeit without great fanfare.

If a harder line option is pursued, on the other hand, military initiatives would be more significant: U.S. military capabilities would have to be capable of communicating to the Soviets a clear signal that continued aggressive behavior carries unacceptable risks. At the strategic level, an acceleration of B-1 and TRIDENT development and deployment programs could be undertaken, and funding for new warhead and M-X development increased. GPF force levels should stabilize at no less than 16 active divisions, 22 tactical fighter wings, and 13 carriers. The modernization of the GPF forces, both CONUS and Europe-based, should be substantially accelerated, and Nunn-amendment initiatives to improve D-Day capabilities and weapons standardization vigorously pursued. Base access in key areas such as the Middle East and Northeast Asia would be expanded where possible.

C. Military Measures in the Event of a Total Breakdown of Detente

A total collapse of detente would make apparent the threat posed by Soviet policy to the global balance of power, and almost certainly generate substantially increased support for a strong defense posture. A variety of military programs could thus be funded, depending on the global political situations and the preferred U.S. strategy for dealing with it. Strategic forces would receive initial attention, with stress placed on eliminating any emergent vulnerabilities of the second-strike force, on redressing any Soviet advantages in numbers of RVs, etc. and on procuring weapons systems adequate to implement the "multiple options" strategy if circumstances warrant.

If the Great Power emphasis is adopted, general purpose forces would be primarily Europe-oriented divisions and dual-capable fighter wings. Forces in Europe would be increased in strength, with improved artillery support, air defense capability, and the like; tactical nuclear capabilities would also be improved through the introduction of advanced-technology warheads designed for tailored effects. Outside Europe, continued reliance would be placed on the development of indigenous capabilities in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere as circumstances warranted and permitted. Full development of the Diego Garcia base would be pursued, and U.S. forces in Korea maintained and modernized; an additional Army division would be stationed in the Western Pacific.

Under a Third World emphasis, the U.S. strategy would employ economy-of-force approaches in Europe, and somewhat orient general purpose forces toward contingencies in the Third World. A premium would thus be placed on the development of highly mobile intervention forces with self-contained logistic support to be supplied by air. Naval forces would play a key role in projecting a U.S. presence in rimland areas. Sales of arms as well as U.S. technical assistance would be a vital tool of U.S. policy.

VII AMERICAN OPTIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

As this report has emphasized, detente is more than a tactic for the Soviets; it is a basic strategy, designed to take advantage of trends which the Soviets believe to be inherent in the contemporary international system. Nevertheless, as this study indicates, the United States is not without options to deal with Soviet initiatives in the era of detente. But none of the measures discussed will suffice by themselves, even those which would substantially improve American military preparedness. Unless the United States accepts the fact that it is engaged in a serious, long-term competition with the Soviet Union and fashions its policies accordingly, even a substantial improvement in the nation's military capability will have but a limited impact upon world events in the decade to come.

Moreover, there is no reason why the United States must continue to allow its international policy to be largely shaped by Soviet initiatives. Although for purposes of this study it has been assumed that any breakdown of detente will occur primarily as a consequence of Soviet policy, the United States ought to be engaged now in continuing study to determine how it can fashion a strategy to advance its interests and improve its global position under current conditions.