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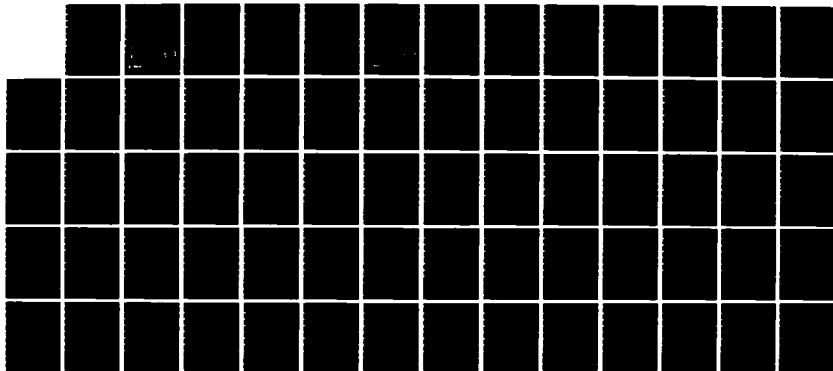
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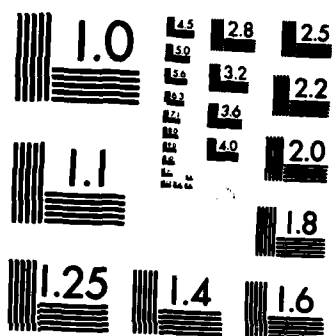
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A RAND NOTE

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**LE MONDE'S PERCEPTION OF THE U.S.-SOVIET
STRATEGIC BALANCE: AN UPDATE FOR 1979-1981**

Joan Goldhamer

December 1983

R-2101-NA

**Prepared for
The Director of Net Assessment,
Office of the Secretary of Defense**

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Compares the image of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance held by selecting Le Monde reporters, and specific characteristics of their reporting on the strategic balance, with the findings of a study covering the years 1948-1973. Le Monde's image of parity in the U.S. and Soviet strategic forces and a forecast of temporary vulnerability of U.S. land-based missiles in the 1980s are in marked contrast to the prevailing image of clear-cut U.S. superiority during 1948-1973. Shifts are noted in aspects of the strategic balance that Le Monde considers critical in evaluating the balance, with the proportion that land-based missiles represents in the arsenals of the two sides and the balance in conventional forces and euromissiles taking on importance, and defensive capabilities becoming less important. In 1981, there is a striking instance of a tendency, noted for the 1948-1973 period, to perceive an immediate shift in the strategic balance when a new weapon appears, well before it becomes operational.

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Prepared for

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Office of the Secretary of Defense

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PREFACE

This Note is part of a series of studies on perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet military balance undertaken by The Rand Corporation for the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

In 1975, as part of a broader project on perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet military balance conducted for the Technology Assessments Office of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, Herbert Goldhamer studied perceptions of the strategic military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union during the years 1948-1973 as reflected in two periodicals with influential international audiences: the British weekly *The Economist*, and the French daily *Le Monde*. His reports (unpublished), "*The Economist's Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance, 1948-1973*," The Rand Corporation, February 1975, and "*Le Monde's Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance, 1948-1973*," The Rand Corporation, November 1975, traced changes in perceptions of the balance over the 26-year period, and analyzed how each of the periodicals characteristically treated the subject. An article summarizing the findings of these studies was later published in the British journal *Survival*.¹

The present Note, by Joan Goldhamer, is a follow-on to the original study of *Le Monde*. It examines *Le Monde's* treatment of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance for the years 1979, 1980, and 1981 to ascertain whether changes have occurred in *Le Monde's* perception and reporting of the balance. It is a companion piece to *The Economist's Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance: An Update for 1979-1981*, by Joan Goldhamer, The Rand Corporation, N-2100-NA, November 1983.

This material should be of interest to those concerned with U.S. policies and programs regarding the Atlantic Alliance, and to those whose interest is in understanding and influencing public and elite perceptions of the military balance.

The author is a consultant to The Rand Corporation.

¹Herbert Goldhamer, "The US-Soviet Strategic Balance as seen from London and Paris," *Survival*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, September/October 1977, pp. 202-207.

SUMMARY

This study analyzed articles written by selected *Le Monde* reporters on the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance during 1979-1981 in order to permit comparison with an earlier study of the years 1948-1973. The purpose was to establish (1) whether any changes had occurred in *Le Monde's* image of the strategic balance; (2) whether the current image derived from consideration of the same dimensions as those *Le Monde* considered critical in the past; and (3) whether, in certain specified respects, *Le Monde* continued to exhibit the same characteristics in its reporting on the strategic balance that had been identified in the initial study. Any changes along these lines, it was thought, would be of interest for the light they might throw on the process of perception and the indications they might offer to those interested in shaping perceptions of the military balance.

Analysis revealed that some changes had occurred in each of the areas examined.

(1) **Image of the strategic balance:** *Le Monde's* image of the strategic balance for 1979-1981 differed markedly from that of the earlier period. The clear-cut nuclear superiority the United States held during most of the 1948-1973 period no longer existed. Instead, the current relationship was one of parity. It was further agreed that the Soviet Union's continuing buildup of intercontinental missiles would enable it in the early 1980s to attack all U.S. land-based missiles in their silos and still retain sufficient reserve for a second-strike capability. *Le Monde* predicted, however, that this threat would be relatively short-lived, erased in fact, in 1986 when the new American MX missile was deployed. The expected temporary Soviet advantage in numbers of missiles did not generate the conclusion that the Soviets had a definitive overall advantage. Indeed, during this period, *Le Monde* seemed to withhold judgment about which superpower held the advantage in the strategic balance. *Le Monde's* apparent reluctance to declare itself on the balance appeared to stem from an appreciation of the complexity of the situation. A count of the numbers of warheads, missiles, and

long-range bombers alone was deemed too one-dimensional. It was necessary, *Le Monde* indicated, to take into account such features as accuracy, explosive power, range, speed, as well as qualitative factors such as command, control and communications, morale, training, and so on, all of which modified the significance of the figures. Differences between the two systems were an additional obstacle to comparison.

(2) **Critical dimensions:** The number and quality of intercontinental weapons on each side were, of course, fundamental to the image of the strategic balance in both periods. However, during 1979-1981, the proportion that land-based missiles represented in the overall arsenal took on a new importance. Also during this period, relative strength in conventional forces, which had been a background presence in the early 1970s, and the euromissile balance intruded into discussions of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance. The weakness of the United States and its Western allies in conventional forces compared with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries constituted a danger because, it was feared, the Soviet Union might, under the umbrella of nuclear equality, take advantage of the situation to expand its empire.

While antiballistic missiles and civil defense received a fair amount of attention in *Le Monde's* discussions of the strategic balance in the earlier period, little mention was made of this aspect of the balance during 1979-1981.

(3) **Characteristics of reporting:** Examination of certain specific characteristics of *Le Monde's* reporting on the strategic balance indicated both continuities and differences between the two time periods studied.

- In 1981, there was a striking instance of a tendency noted in the earlier study to perceive an immediate shift in the strategic balance when a new weapon appeared, well before it became operational.
- Whereas the earlier study found that Soviet and U.S. military demonstrations and visits to U.S. military installations played a substantial role in shaping *Le Monde's* views of the strategic balance, this was not the case during 1979-1981. Moscow's parades in May and November did not occasion analytical

articles among the reporters on whom this study focused, and there was no evidence that any of them had visited U.S. military installations or witnessed demonstrations of U.S. weapons.

- Although data available for the 1948-1973 period do not permit comparison, it is clear that during 1979-1981 *Le Monde* consistently alerted its readers to Soviet attempts to manipulate West European opinion regarding the strategic balance. Soviet attempts to drive a wedge between the United States and its Western allies, and the techniques it was using to accomplish this end, were pointed out to the readers as they occurred.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As an "update," this Note clearly owes its existence to the original study by the late Herbert Goldhamer that inspired it and served as its model. The work of a gifted analyst can never, of course, be duplicated. The present author's effort to review more recent material in the light of the earlier work benefited greatly from access to several of Herbert Goldhamer's colleagues--Nathan Leites, Andrew W. Marshall, Hans Speier, and Charles Wolf, Jr. All were generous with their assistance and their keen perceptions and thoughtful comments proved invaluable. I am grateful to them for having steered me away from careless mistakes and questionable statements. Responsibility for any errors or misperceptions that remain, however, is entirely mine.

Were it not for Martha Cooper's persistent drive for perfection and persuasive ways with the word processor, this Note might never have become fit to print. Her familiarity with Rand's procedures was also a considerable boon throughout its production.

I would like to thank the Periodical and Interlibrary Loan Sections of Rand's Library, particularly Pamela Harrison, Barbara Neff, and Jon Whinnery, for their help in tracking down and obtaining copies of *Le Monde* for the 1979-1981 period. Sandra Stumbaugh, Press Officer at the French Consulate General in San Francisco, also came to the rescue with copies of issues that were not elsewhere obtainable. Without such help, this study quite simply could not have been done.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

An earlier study of *Le Monde* tracked perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance between 1948 and 1973 and identified certain characteristics of its reporting on the balance. The present research, though more limited in scope, sought to determine whether *Le Monde's* perception of the strategic balance had changed since 1973, and whether in certain specified respects, changes had occurred in its manner of reporting on the strategic balance.

The study of the 1948-1973 period was based on examination of items relating to the strategic balance that appeared in *Le Monde's* pages. One of *Le Monde's* major journalistic features is the breadth of material it offers its readers. In reporting on foreign affairs, *Monde* draws upon the press services (AFP, AP, Reuters, Tass, UPI); its own foreign correspondents and domestic staff; outside experts of opposing conflicting opinions; and, on major issues or events, presents samples from foreign and domestic newspapers and periodicals. The research results reflected all these varying views.

The present study focused exclusively on the writings of *Le Monde's* own reporters during 1979-1981. The first objective was to ascertain as nearly as possible how *Le Monde* itself perceived the strategic balance and what dimensions *Le Monde's* staff concentrated their attention on in discussions of the U.S.-Soviet balance. The findings for the more recent period could then be compared with the earlier period in order to identify differences in the overall assessment, and in the prominence given different aspects of the strategic balance. Given the differences in the data used in the two analyses, such comparison could not yield definitive conclusions about changes in the assessment. Nonetheless, the more recent opinions of *Le Monde's* reporters are of interest in their own right, and it was hoped that some light might also be thrown on the assessment process.

A second objective was to answer several specific questions, the first two of which stemmed from findings of the earlier study, about the writings of this group of reporters:

- (1) Did these writers exhibit the tendency noted in the earlier study to pre-date to the present changes that could at best only be effected over several years?
- (2) Did Soviet and U.S. military demonstrations and visits to U.S. military installations continue to play the substantial role they had earlier played in shaping *Le Monde's* view of the balance?
- (3) Did the writers alert the reader to Soviet attempts to manipulate West European perceptions of the U.S.-Soviet balance?

The reader should keep in mind that, because of the study's limited scope, no conclusions can be drawn from it about the image of the strategic balance that might emerge from examination of all the diverse materials carried in *Le Monde's* columns during 1979-1981. "*Le Monde* is not monolithic and its writers and news sources," as Goldhamer noted, "are sufficiently diverse to permit it at times more than one view."¹ Nor, of course, can any judgments be made from the data presented here about the image of the balance developed by *Le Monde's* readers.

BACKGROUND

The initial study of *Le Monde's* perception of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance was prompted by recognition of the importance of knowing how various groups--potential antagonists, allies, neutrals, one's own people--view the balance of military power. As Herbert Goldhamer wrote in connection with his studies of *Le Monde* and *The Economist*:

¹Herbert Goldhamer, "*Le Monde's* Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance, 1948-1973," The Rand Corporation, November 1975, p. 2 (unpublished).

Perceptions of the military forces and capabilities of other nations do not necessarily correspond with the actual status of these forces. As history demonstrates, secrecy, deception and self-deception frequently combine to produce disparities between reality and belief. These disparities often have important political and military consequences, affecting as they do opportunities for deterrence and intimidation, the probability of war and success or failure if war occurs.²

There was interest in knowing whether and how perceptions of the military balance had changed over time. For this purpose, periodicals have the advantage of providing a record that does not depend on recollection of past opinions. *Le Monde* and *The Economist*, specifically, were selected for study for several reasons:

First, the United States has an interest in the opinions and morale of her European allies, and the effect on them of their information and judgments on the US-Soviet strategic balance.

Second, *The Economist* and *Le Monde* are read by political, economic and administrative elites, not only in their own countries but throughout Europe and, indeed, the world.

Third, these journals are of interest not only for their influence on others but as an expression of opinion and information by a relatively sophisticated set of journalists whose perceptions of the balance have an interest independent of their influence. . . .

Finally, it seemed reasonable to suppose that a careful reading of their reporting and editorial writing on the US-Soviet balance would provide some insights into how perceptions of the strategic balance are shaped.³

THE DATA

Only two types of items from *Le Monde* were eligible for inclusion in this analysis: (1) Editorials (left-hand column, first page unsigned); and (2) articles signed by a selected group of its staff. These journalists, most of whom were writing during the period covered by the earlier study, were described there as "writers whose reputations and whose articles on U.S. and Soviet military and political affairs

²Herbert Goldhamer, "The US-Soviet Strategic Balance as seen . . .," p. 202.

³Ibid.

gave *Le Monde* a high level of credibility and acceptance both in France and abroad."⁴ This statement referred to André Fontaine, Michel Tatu, Henri Pierre, Jacques Isnard, and Jacques Amalric. Eight names were added to this group for the present study. In alphabetical order, the journalists whose articles were examined were: Jacques Amalric, Nicole Bernheim, Alain Clément, Dominique Dhombres, Thomas Ferenczi, André Fontaine, Jacques Isnard, Alain Jacob, Henri Pierre, Robert Solé, Michel Tatu, Daniel Vernet, and Jean Wetz. All other items--news agency dispatches, unsigned news items, press conferences, excerpts from other periodicals, pieces signed by other writers--were excluded from the analysis.

Of the editorials and the articles written by the correspondents and staff members listed above, only those relevant to the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance were included in the data for analysis. As noted in connection with the earlier studies of both *Le Monde* and *The Economist*, although one could find statements that conformed to what a military specialist might define as the strategic balance--i.e., a quantitative statement referring to intercontinental nuclear warfare--the periodicals' own conceptions of the strategic balance included additional elements. It was further noted in both cases that perceptions may well be modified by behavior, events, or statements that are not, strictly speaking, "strategic" in nature. Thus, the items initially selected for study covered a broad spectrum, ranging from judgments about qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of the nuclear balance between the superpowers, to statements about overall (i.e., nuclear plus conventional) military strength, more general evaluations of such factors as war-winning ability and national will, and interpretations of military and political goals.⁵

Because the objective of the study was to discern *Le Monde's* own assessment of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance, the criteria mentioned thus far netted a larger amount of material than actually proved usable. Only those statements which expressed or appeared to represent the

⁴Herbert Goldhamer, "*Le Monde's* Perception . . .," p. 3.

⁵See Herbert Goldhamer, "*The Economist's* Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance, 1948-1973," The Rand Corporation, February 1975, pp. 6-13 (unpublished).

writer's own opinions were relevant to the analysis. Since many of the articles, particularly those coming from abroad, were devoted to reporting the stories carried by the foreign media, speeches of leaders, statements by spokesmen, research findings, what transpired at meetings of governing bodies or international organizations, the bulk of their content was deemed irrelevant to the present study.⁶

The results reported here are thus based on a very small fraction of all the material on the strategic balance that a reader might find in turning the pages of *Le Monde*--that which remained after the screening process described above.

PROCEDURE

From the first issue of 1979 (dated December 31, 1978-January 1, 1979) to the last one of 1981 (dated December 31, 1981), every issue of *Le Monde* was examined either in hard copy or on microfilm from first page to last for items that qualified for inclusion in the analysis.⁷

The pages on which relevant items appeared were photocopied. Pertinent statements from each item were then typed in English translation on separate slips, and classified under headings corresponding to the points being investigated: quantitative statements about the strategic balance; qualitative statements about the strategic balance; references to specific dimensions (e.g., military expenditures, numbers of missiles, accuracy of warheads); and references to new weapon developments, weapon demonstrations, and warnings to the reader of Soviet attempts to manipulate West European attitudes regarding the strategic balance.

⁶It can be argued that the points journalists select to report are in themselves indicative of a point of view. However, in order to pursue this line of analysis it would in each instance be necessary to compare the journalist's report with a transcript of the original broadcast, meeting, report, etc. Such a procedure was not reasonable even to consider in this instance.

⁷Data collection for the original study was conducted at *Le Monde's* documentation center whose files provided clippings of all *Le Monde* stories, classified by date and subject, for the 26-year period. Clippings selected for analysis were photocopied. Since copies of the newspaper itself were available for most of 1979-1981, it was not necessary for the present research to rely on *Le Monde's* clipping file.

In addition, to test a hypothesis about increasing attention to military affairs during the 1979-1981 period, a sample of issues was selected and a tabulation made of the military and nonmilitary items about the United States and the Soviet Union that appeared in each of those issues.

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Part I of this Note discusses *Le Monde's* image of the nuclear balance for the 1979-1981 period and examines the factors that *Le Monde's* reporters took into account in arriving at their assessment.

Data pertaining to the second objective of the study (the answers to the three questions enumerated under the heading "Purpose") are presented in Part II.

The information published by *Le Monde* and *The Economist* on the number of warheads, long-range bombers and intercontinental missiles (ICBMs and SLBMs) held by the United States and the Soviet Union at a given time was summarized in ratio form on charts for the 1948-1973 period. These charts have been updated with figures from the 1979-1981 issues of the two periodicals and appear as Appendix A.

The results of the tabulation of military and nonmilitary items in a sample of issues of *Le Monde* are presented in Appendix B.

II. *LE MONDE*'S IMAGE OF THE NUCLEAR BALANCE 1979-1981

INTRODUCTION

As indicated earlier (p. 3), the columns written by a selected group of *Le Monde* reporters were culled for statements that reflected their own assessments of the strategic balance. Reports of what others said on the subject were disregarded.

This portion of the Note first describes the image of the strategic balance that emerges from analysis of those statements and then examines the factors that these reporters seemed to consider crucial or took into account in arriving at their assessments.

A. IMAGE OF THE STRATEGIC BALANCE

Statements about the U.S.-Soviet balance were of three different types. Some were quantitative, referring to the number of intercontinental nuclear weapons on each side. These were relatively infrequent. More often, reference was made to the relative standing on intercontinental nuclear weaponry in qualitative terms. In addition, the writers referred from time to time to the general balance of power between the East and the West or the two superpowers specifically. While not all of these statements correspond to what the military specialist would consider strictly speaking to be the "strategic balance," they nonetheless must be considered in any analysis of *Le Monde*'s image of the balance.

The contents of each of these three types of statements is described in the pages that follows.

1. Quantitative Statements

Le Monde's reporters rarely discussed the strategic balance strictly in numerical terms. In the three years covered by this study, *Le Monde* presented overall figures on the number of intercontinental nuclear weapons held by the United States and the Soviet Union only three times. At the conclusion of the Salt-2 talks in mid-1979, there were two items, one of which was an official statement released at the

end of the talks showing the number of warheads, missiles, and bombers in the arsenals of each side at the date of the signing of the agreement.¹ Another set of figures was compiled by Jacques Isnard and Michel Tatu in the fall of 1981 on the occasion of the Pentagon's release of its publication "Soviet Military Power."²

Viewed against the situation as presented by *Le Monde* in 1973, the 1979 position of the United States compared with the Soviet Union showed significant erosion of some U.S. advantages.³ *Le Monde* figures for 1979-1981, as can be seen from Table II.1, taken together indicate a current ratio and a continuation of the trend that generally favored the Soviet Union.

Nuclear Warheads. The U.S. clear-cut advantage in number of nuclear bombs and warheads was seen to have remained stable between 1973 and 1979. However, between 1979 and 1981, the Soviets made considerable inroads on this advantage. What had been an almost 2:1 ratio in favor of the United States in 1979 was moving in the direction of parity by the end of 1981.

Long-Range Bombers. In 1973, *Le Monde* believed the United States to have three strategic bombers for every one on the Soviet side. By 1979, the Soviets had improved their position: the ratio had declined to somewhat less than 1.5:1 in the American favor. This situation remained stable between 1979 and 1981.

ICBMs. According to *Le Monde*, in 1973 the Soviets held an almost 2:1 advantage over the United States in ICBMs. By 1979, the United States was seen to have improved its position somewhat but had not entirely closed the gap. The ratio of about 1.3:1 in favor of the Soviet Union was unchanged between 1979 and 1981.

SLBMs. As *Le Monde* presented it, there was a sharp reversal in this aspect of the strategic relationship between 1973 and 1979. Whereas in 1973, *Le Monde* credited the United States with a 2:1 advantage over the Soviet Union in SLBMs, by 1979, it was the Soviets who were seen to have an edge: almost 1.5:1 in 1979. While the number

¹*Le Monde*, June 16, 1979, p. 3, and June 20, 1979, p. 4.

²*Le Monde*, October 4-5, 1981, p. 2.

³See Figures, Appendix A.

Table II.1

LE MONDE'S PERCEPTION OF THE STRATEGIC BALANCE
COMPARED WITH OFFICIAL U.S. FIGURES

Weapons and Delivery Vehicles	1979		1980		1981	
	<i>Le Monde</i>	DOD[a]	<i>Le Monde</i>	DOD[a]	<i>Le Monde</i>	DOD[a]
Nuclear warheads						
United States	9,200	9,200	[b]	9,200	9,000	9,000
Soviet Union	5,000	5,000	[b]	6,000	7,000	7,000
Long-range bombers						
United States	348 (573)[c]	348	[b]	348	348	347
Soviet Union	150 (156)[c]	156	[b]	156	156	156
ICBMs						
United States	1,054	1,054	[b]	1,054	1,054	1,054
Soviet Union	1,400 (1,398)[d]	1,398	[b]	1,398	1,398	1,398
SLBMs						
United States	656	656	[b]	656	600	576
Soviet Union	950	950	[b]	950	950	950

[a]Figures taken from Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Years 1981 and 1982.

[b]*Le Monde* did not cite any figures on this item for this year.

[c]The lower figures appeared in a box accompanying an article on June 16, 1979, p. 3. The article presented all the provisions of the Salt-2 agreement and was initialed "M.T." It did not identify the source of the figures. A few days later (June 20, 1979, p. 4), at the end of an article in which Tatu reviewed the Salt agreement article by article, he presented figures from what he described as "an interpretive memorandum" that gave the number of weapons each side officially had on the day Salt-2 was signed. The latter figures are the ones shown in parentheses. The additional 225 bombers are no doubt the "B-52s used for miscellaneous purposes, those in reserve, mothballs or storage and 4 B-1 prototypes" (referred to in United States Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1981, Table 5-1, p. 77) that were not operational but which the United States consented to have counted in the total for Salt-2.

[d]The figure in parentheses comes from the June 20, 1979 item described in the preceding footnote.

of Soviet SLBMs remained unchanged from 1979 to 1981, the number in the U.S. armory declined slightly.

Le Monde's figures for the more recent period are almost identical to the official figures of the U.S. Department of Defense. As Table II.1 shows, *Le Monde's* published figures and those later revealed by the United States for the years 1979-1981 show only minor differences.⁴ As regards the numbers of weapons, at least, this appears to be an instance where "reality" and "perception" coincided.

The fact that *Le Monde* did not emphasize numbers in reporting on the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance seemed to reflect a certain mistrust of the figures available and, even more important, a belief that figures alone could not do justice to a complex situation.

In their 1981 article referred to above, Isnard and Tatu remarked on the fact that the United States has a "monopoly" on information about the Soviet Union since the Kremlin does not release any: "All the specialists in the world must therefore work with American figures, even when as in the case of SIPRI, they disagree with the interpretation."⁵ Nor did Isnard and Tatu accept U.S. figures uncritically. They described those presented by the Pentagon in its report on "Soviet Military Power," for example, as "less precise than those published annually by the two large, well-known Western centers of specialists: the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London and the Institute for Peace Research (SIPRI) in Stockholm."⁶

⁴This coincidence is not surprising. Department of Defense figures become available to military analysts and eventually find their way into published sources such as those of IISS and SIPRI, both of which Isnard and Tatu acknowledged in their October 4-5, 1981 article.

It is of interest to note that there were no great differences in the figures published by *Le Monde* and *The Economist* during 1979-1981. As will become clear, the way in which the two periodicals interpreted the figures did, however, differ.

⁵*Le Monde*, October 4-5, 1981, p. 2.

⁶*Ibid.* A contradiction that possibly reflects a certain anti-U.S. bias may be detected here. Since Isnard and Tatu acknowledged that IISS and SIPRI had to rely on U.S. figures, it is difficult to understand why they found IISS and SIPRI figures more reliable than those coming directly from a U.S. source.

Even had they considered the figures totally trustworthy, it is unlikely that *Le Monde* would have found them a satisfactory way of describing the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance. *Le Monde's* reporters clearly believed that qualitative factors played a significant role. This was implicit in the following statement written by Jacques Amalric in connection with Carter's desire to rally support for the Salt-2 agreement:

This text, which is going to be the object of lively attacks in the American Senate, establishes in principle quantitative (and not qualitative) parity between the intercontinental nuclear weapons of the Soviet Union and the United States. (January 7-8, 1979, p. 1)

Isnard and Tatu made this point explicit in their discussion of the Pentagon report on Soviet military power, accusing the Pentagon of taking the easy way out and oversimplifying the situation by providing primarily numbers and not paying sufficient attention to qualitative factors:

Above all, the Pentagon study, more quantitative than qualitative, errs by its absence of judgments or evaluations of the operational state and tactical capabilities--on the ground--of the Soviet armed forces. It is true that such an analysis is probably more difficult. The easy solution consists precisely of lining up figures, in the manner of a commercial catalogue that would neglect to indicate to its clients the quality of its products, their durability, their method of operation, the actual level of stocks immediately available and delays in delivery.

In this area, qualitative evaluation is important if not critical. (October 4-5, 1981, p. 2)⁷

This point of view was characteristic of all the journalists whose writings fell under the scrutiny of this study.

⁷Although an effort has been made to make the translations provided here readable, literalness has generally taken precedence over literary quality.

2. Qualitative Statements

If the amount of space a newspaper devotes to a subject can be taken as an index of concern, then it should be noted that during 1979-1981, *Le Monde* did not characteristically devote entire articles to the subject of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance.⁸ Apart from items that appeared in conjunction with the signing of the Salt-2 agreement, the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance was often merely mentioned in the context of a discussion focused on some other related matter--the balance of euromissiles, for example, a subject of more immediate concern to the French.

In the scattered references to the strategic balance and in the few longer articles on the topic, one did not encounter a single unequivocal judgment about the status of the strategic balance. Clearly, *Le Monde* believed that the United States no longer enjoyed its one-time strategic superiority. As André Fontaine stated in a 1979 column, "the United States has lost the indisputable strategic superiority it used to have . . ."⁹ But there was some ambivalence about whether the balance was currently in equilibrium or already weighted in favor of the Soviet Union. Thus, in a 1979 article dealing with the defense of Europe and possible Salt-3 negotiations, Tatu referred to the loss of American nuclear superiority and the nuclear equality that currently existed between the two superpowers:

. . . the present situation cannot be compared with that of twenty years ago when the United States had overwhelming nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. And one can state that with or without the Pershing, a certain "decoupling" has already taken place on the basis of the single fact of the establishment of nuclear parity between the two great powers . . . (June 17-18, 1979, p. 3)

On other occasions, however, Tatu and Fontaine both implied that the balance had already tipped in favor of the Soviet Union. In a 1979 column, for instance, Fontaine referred to the way the United States was

⁸This contrasts with *The Economist*, which devoted many of its editorials entirely to discussions of the strategic balance.

⁹*Le Monde*, September 12, 1979, p. 6.

reacting "to the strategic inferiority it must face up to . . ." ¹⁰ In 1980, he wrote:

In most of the comments one reads or hears today on the "passivity" of the Americans, whether in connection with Iran or Afghanistan, one thing is curiously absent: the shift in the balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union over the last decade. This omission is all the more surprising since, during the entire autumn and up until the meeting of the Atlantic Council in December which approved the implantation of theatre arms in Europe, these very people competed vigorously in denouncing the insufficiency of Western arms vis-à-vis the rapid development of Soviet strategic power. (January 10, 1980, p. 5)

And, writing in 1981 about the Reagan administration's rearmament plans, Tatu noted that Washington, though interested in negotiating with the Soviets on disarmament, wanted to do so "only after having reestablished the balance . . ." ¹¹

Whatever the balance was thought to be in 1979, 1980, and 1981 *Le Monde* acknowledged that during the early 1980s, U.S. land-based missiles would be vulnerable to a Soviet attack. In a long article, following a talk by Carter on the energy crisis, Fontaine wrote:

It is . . . agreed that, starting with the beginning of the 80s, the Soviet Union will have the ability to destroy by surprise, in one blow, most of the Minutemen--the American intercontinental missiles buried in their silos--as well as the strategic bombers on land and the nuclear submarines at anchor, while still retaining the ability to deter possible reprisals by the United States by the threat of a massive attack against their cities. (July 18, 1979, p. 24)

Tatu also made this point in several of his articles. In one on the MX, for instance, he said: "the American Minutemen are almost all bound to become vulnerable on the ground at the beginning of the 80s . . ." ¹²

¹⁰ *Le Monde*, September 5, 1979, p. 5.

¹¹ *Le Monde*, September 24, 1981, p. 5.

¹² *Le Monde*, June 10-11, 1979, p. 3.

As predicted by *Le Monde*, this period of U.S. vulnerability was to be of relatively short duration. With deployment of the MX in the late 1980s, it would be the Soviet strategic force that would be at risk. Noting that U.S. rearmament efforts occur in spurts, one in 1950 at the beginning of the Korean War and another in 1960 as a result of the presumed missile gap, Tatu wrote:

. . . each time . . . [the United States] made a quantitative and qualitative leap that surpassed the initial objective and assured America a lasting superiority over its adversary. Even though the level the Soviet Union has attained is very high, there is no reason not to think the same thing will happen this time. On the strategic level, for example, with the appearance of the MX beginning in 1986-1987, the entire Soviet land-based nuclear force, three-quarters of the Soviet arsenal, will be vulnerable to a first-strike. (November 4, 1980, p. 5)

Shortly thereafter, in a long article on the East-West balance, Tatu reiterated:

. . . the American Minutemen will be vulnerable until their replacement by the MX beginning in 1986 (according to Carter's calendar) . . . [The MX, along with other Western programs, will] place the Soviets in a position of weakness toward the end of the decade: the MX, for example, will make all Soviet land-based capability vulnerable . . . (November 21, 1980, p. 5)¹³

These nonquantitative descriptions of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance when taken together produce a picture of a balance in flux: a past in which the U.S. enjoyed clear-cut superiority; a present of parity, perhaps tilted somewhat in the Soviet favor; an immediate future in which part of the U.S. strategic force would be vulnerable to a Soviet first-strike; following which, in the latter part of the 1980s, it would be the Soviet Union whose strategic force would be threatened by that of the United States.

¹³Note that implicit in this statement is the assumption that the United States will have resolved MX basing vulnerability.

3. General Statements About the Power Balance

In addition to statements about the balance of intercontinental forces, *Le Monde* referred often to a more general balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union, the East and the West. These remarks generally paralleled those relating specifically to the strategic situation.

Thus, the United States was described as diminished in prestige, no longer the leader or even trying to retain its former position in the respect. Tatu noted that in the developed countries, particularly in Europe, people no longer look up to America and admire everything American.¹⁴ Fontaine too noted this change and attributed it to a variety of factors:

The economic crisis, the decrease in authority of the president, the diminution of military power combine to weaken the prestige and thereby the authority of American leaders in the world. . . .

The United States does not even give the impression any longer of trying to exercise that *leadership* [in English] in which, not so long ago, it took such pride. (July 18, 1979, p. 24)

[The United States was] the greatest power of all time that after the challenge of Nazism had checked that of the Soviet Union. In every respect, military, economic, scientific, it seemed bound to continue to surpass the Soviet Union. The American failure in Vietnam, Watergate, the monetary disorder for which the United States is primarily responsible, have created a general crisis at home, a moral crisis mostly, which reveals the United States to be helpless from Iran to Angola and Nicaragua, faced with the challenges of the Third World, and lacking confidence in its "leadership" [in English] in the developed world. (January 1, 1980, p. 2)

There were references to the need to "reestablish the balance of forces with the Soviet Union."¹⁵ Such statements did not refer simply to strategic forces, but rather to the combined intercontinental nuclear, theater nuclear, and conventional forces. An editorial, for

¹⁴*Le Monde*, November 4, 1980, p. 5.

¹⁵Editorial, *Le Monde*, July 23, 1981, p. 1.

example, noting that both Carter and Reagan had criticized the way the United States had "fallen behind the Soviet Union in arms and demanded a vigorous effort to catch up," went on to say:

Mr. Reagan is right to affirm that the Soviet Union had assured itself of a numerical advantage in strategic nuclear missiles, tactical planes, submarines, artillery and air defense. (February 20, 1981, p. 1)

The combined military forces of the United States and its Western allies were generally considered inferior to those of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. The following, written by Fontaine, exemplifies this view:

The economic and political crisis hitting the United States occurs at a time when they have lost their military superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The Salt 2 agreement, if ratified, will slow the arms race quantitatively, but leave a vast area for a qualitative race. In any event, well before the expiration of the treaty in 1985, the Soviets will have at their disposal more strategic nuclear warheads than the Americans. They already have in Europe a superiority in conventional forces that is still growing, and which, as opposed to the Atlantic patchwork, is further increased by the perfect integration of forces in the Warsaw Pact and total standardization of their armaments. (July 18, 1979, p. 24)

The upcoming vulnerability of U.S. land-based missiles and the fact that the United States "had fallen behind the Soviet Union in arms," did not generate dire forecasts of disaster just over the horizon,¹⁶ but

¹⁶This restraint is in marked contrast to *The Economist's* dramatic forecasts of impending catastrophe if the United States did not act promptly to restore the balance. See Joan Goldhamer, *The Economist's Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance: An Update for 1979-1981*, The Rand Corporation, N-2100-NA, January 1984, pp. 13 to 16. *Le Monde's* more sober treatment of issues was noted in the early study.

Close reading of both periodicals suggests another factor that may account for the difference in tone between the two periodicals on this point. At least for the period studied, *The Economist* seemed to identify with the United States and, as noted in the companion study of its reporting on the strategic balance for 1979-1981, served as a self-appointed interpreter and monitor of the United States. It also appeared interested in influencing its readers' opinions and public policy. *Le Monde*, on the other hand, appeared more objective. It

Le Monde regarded the situation as seriously affecting the deterrent value of the U.S. strategic force. This was indicated in an editorial prompted by Carter's announcement that the United States would go ahead with the development of the MX missile:

The land-based U.S. Minuteman missiles being more and more vulnerable due to the progress made by the Soviets, the experts, including those in Moscow, expected that Mr. Carter would make the decision announced Friday in order to retain the deterrent value of America's nuclear arsenal: to maintain the balance of terror, each protagonist must be convinced that an attack by him would not demolish all the defensive systems of the adversary, the latter still retaining sufficient forces to inflict intolerable reprisals. (June 10-11, 1979, p. 1)

The possibility that the Soviet Union might take advantage of the U.S. vulnerability to make some political gains was noted. In an article on the East-West balance, for example, Tatu wrote:

Won't the Soviets . . . be . . . tempted to use the "window of vulnerability" which they now have to unleash, if not overt aggression, at least an offensive of intimidation which would permit them to harvest some political benefits before the balance changes, toward the end of the decade, to their disadvantage? (November 21, 1980, p. 5)

Fontaine, too, wrote along these lines, pointing out that the Soviets might possibly be tempted to make aggressive moves which the United States would be unable to deter:

From this point on, the superiority of the Soviet Union is sufficient to prevent the United States from exercising the least pressure on the Soviet Union to dislodge it from this or that position, which it might be tempted to occupy in Africa, the Near East or elsewhere, even to prevent it from attacking China. (September 5, 1979, p. 5)

observed and reported on the United States, but did not identify with it. Although its sympathies were with the West, its viewpoint was French and European. While U.S. problems might affect France, they were not French problems.

. . . its [the Soviet Union's] armaments . . . permit it to intervene from now on here and there without worrying about Uncle Sam's reaction . . . (September 12, 1979, p. 6)

Even if the Soviets do not use this reenforcement of power in an attempt to impose their views on one country or another, it is obvious that it will make them less and less vulnerable to any American attempts at intimidation. (July 18, 1979, p. 24)

It is not certain that the Soviet regime will forever resist the temptation to take advantage of the current military inferiority, at least in conventional arms, of the United States . . . (February 27, 1980, p. 5)

In spite of such expressed trepidations, *Le Monde* did not consider the military status of the United States "catastrophic." Countering the image of U.S. military impotence that emerged from candidates' statements during the American presidential campaign in 1980, Tatu wrote:

Specifically as regards the military, the catastrophic accusations thrown out by the Republicans must be qualified. . . . [Noting that it was under Nixon that the Navy went from 1055 ships in 1968 to 555 in 1976, Tatu continued as follows:] Even with regard to capability for foreign intervention, the image of a powerless America faced with a Soviet army capable of striking no matter where in the world does not correspond at all to reality. In fact, even before the establishment of the rapid deployment force now in preparation, it is the United States and not the Soviet Union that is superior in number of aircraft carriers (14 against 5), air transport capacity (double that of the Soviet Union), naval manpower (184,000 sailors against 12,000 in the Soviet Union), even if the number of Soviet parachutists is slightly superior (56,000 against 39,000). (November 4, 1980, p. 5)

To sum up, by whatever definition one wishes to use--whether numbers alone, more general evaluations of intercontinental forces, or overall military-political clout--the United States was perceived by *Le Monde* during 1979-1981 as no longer enjoying the position of superiority it held in the past. The Soviet buildup of strategic strength which was to put the U.S. land-based missile force at risk during the early 1980s,

together with its superiority in conventional forces were seen as temporarily at least seriously hampering America's ability to deter Soviet aggression. It was presumed that this situation would be turned around when the United States deployed its new MX missiles in the late 1980s.

B. CRITICAL DIMENSIONS

The absence in *Le Monde* of unequivocal statements about the strategic balance can be readily understood when one examines the factors *Le Monde*'s experts took into account in making their assessments. These factors were varied and many. And, aware as they were of the complexity of the situation, *Le Monde*'s reporters were not wont to make unqualified judgments to the effect that one side was superior to the other.

In fact, *Le Monde* took the position editorially that because the U.S. and Soviet arms systems were different, it was difficult, if not impossible, to make a definitive judgment regarding superiority. This point was made in an editorial on the Salt-2 talks where it was stated that the object was "to arrive at approximate parity in the strategic arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union: a result difficult to achieve in that the negotiators must search for equivalences between different arms systems."¹⁷ The point was made again, even more concretely, in a 1981 editorial:

The disparity of the programs in the two camps makes any definitive judgment on the relation of the forces and the advantage of one over the other even more problematic. American superiority in precision, miniaturization and electronics is unquestioned, as is the Soviet advantage of "large battalions" and superrockets. But one must take into account the "dynamics" of the efforts under way, as well as the necessarily delicate balance which the two camps can reach in this or that domaine. (February 20, 1981)

The factors that *Le Monde* appeared to consider most significant in assessing the strategic balance are discussed in the pages that follow. Most of these are military, but some nonmilitary elements also enter the picture.

¹⁷Editorial, *Le Monde*, May 10, 1979, p. 1.

1. Military Factors

There was little relating to the strategic balance that escaped attention in *Le Monde*. Some elements, of course, received more attention than others.

Number of Intercontinental Weapons. The number of warheads, missiles, and bombers on each side was, of course, fundamental in evaluating relative strategic strength. Coverage of the Salt-2 talks brought these figures into the spotlight. *Le Monde* published all the provisions of the Salt-2 agreement, providing thereby the numbers of weapons to be permitted in each category.¹⁸ A *Le Monde* criticism of the Salt-2 agreement was based on an examination of numbers:

. . . like the treaty of 1972, it [the Salt 2 Agreement] gives the Soviet Union a unilateral advantage in heavy missiles: the United States agreed not to construct such devices, while Moscow keeps its 308 SS 18 missiles that carry 3,000 warheads for a total of one megaton. Even the American MX, of which construction was just approved, will carry only 2,000 warheads three times less powerful, and that in 10 years. (Tatu, June 20, 1979, p. 3)

In noting the upcoming vulnerability of U.S. land-base missiles, *Le Monde* was also obviously considering the number of weapons each side would have at its disposal.

Nonetheless, as already indicated, *Le Monde* considered numbers alone an inadequate measure of how the strategic balance stood. Neglect of qualitative factors, indeed, was another criticism *Le Monde* voiced in connection with the Salt-2 agreement.¹⁹ Fontaine, for example, thought it was a mistake to have put no limits on qualitative improvements.

Relationship Between the Parts. *Le Monde* examined not only the gross figures, but also the proportionate relationships within and between the components of the two strategic forces. In one case, for example, Isnard noted that land-based American missiles represented 53

¹⁸See *Le Monde*, May 11, 1979, p. 3.

¹⁹See, for example, Amalric, January 7-8, 1979, p. 1, and Fontaine, November 28, 1979, p. 5. It would appear from this that *Le Monde* considered it desirable to make controls on qualitative improvements an integral part of an arms control agreement.

percent of all U.S. delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons [vecteurs nucléaires], 25 percent of its warhead yield [charges opérationnelles], and 35 percent of U.S. destructive power [puissance de destruction].²⁰ Tatu, in another instance, compared the proportions that land-based missiles represented in the arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union. The figures he presented showed that for the Soviet Union, ICBMs in silos comprised 56 percent of their launchers [lanceurs], 75 percent of their warheads [ogives], and 70 percent of their throw-weight. For the United States, he said, land-based missiles represented 51 percent of their delivery vehicles [vecteurs], 24 percent of their warheads [ogives], and only 33 percent of their throw-weight.²¹

These proportionate differences proved critical in *Le Monde's* discussion of the forthcoming vulnerability of U.S. land-based missiles. The fact that land-based missiles represented only about one-third of the U.S. strategic force while they comprised three-quarters of the Soviet force, in *Le Monde's* judgment, made a significant difference in the threat the opponents held over each other. As *Le Monde* saw it, a strike against U.S. land-based missiles would leave two-thirds of U.S. strategic forces intact; a strike against Soviet land-based missiles would knock out the bulk of its strategic force. Tatu referred to this in a 1979 discussion of the MX which, he said, would make Soviet missile silos vulnerable:

Actually, the threat is more serious for the Soviet Union than for the United States because the former has concentrated two-thirds of its destructive capacity in its land-based ICBM, the most vulnerable to the MX. The Minutemen represent a much less important part of U.S. megatonnage. (June 10-11, 1979, p. 3)

At the end of the following year, he wrote:

. . . the MX . . . will make all Soviet land-based capability vulnerable and this now represents three-quarters of Moscow's nuclear arsenal, a much greater proportion than that represented by the Minutemen in the U.S. arsenal. (November 21, 1980, p. 5)

²⁰*Le Monde*, January 4 1979, p. 6.

²¹*Le Monde*, August 8, 1980, p. 24.

This difference in force design seemed to temper *Le Monde's* reaction to the danger U.S. land-based missiles were to face throughout the early 1980s.

Qualitative Factors. As noted earlier, Isnard and Tatu referred to qualitative factors as "critical" in an evaluation of military strength.²² Although not confined strictly to strategic forces, Isnard and Tatu's enumeration of factors neglected by the Pentagon in its report on "Soviet Military Power" conveys an idea of the wide range of qualities and characteristics they considered necessary to take into account in evaluating military capability. After citing the level of troop training, knowledge and skill of the military staff, logistics of supplying the front lines, maneuvering capability of combat units, organization of a communications network, they added:

. . . the number of accidents at sea of Soviet warships, the logistical difficulties of the Red Army in its interventions in Czechoslovakia (1968), or in Afghanistan (1979), the mechanical failures evidenced in Soviet materials delivered or exhibited abroad, the technical deficiencies revealed on the launching of certain experimental missiles, invite one to weigh the Pentagon's estimates and to qualify their conclusions. (October 4-5, 1981, p. 2)

In a strictly strategic connection, a long article by Tatu on the MX touched on all the following: accuracy, time to launch, command, control, and communications (C³), retargeting capability, and speed.²³

Taken together, articles on strategic matters yield a list of qualitative factors that fall into two categories: those relating to weapon characteristics, and those having to do with development, production, and employment of the weapons. The first group includes: accuracy, explosive power, range, retargeting capability, speed, throw-weight, and time to launch. The second group covered: quality of research and development personnel, technological know-how, production capacity, cost, time to deployment, number of carriers operational at a given time, command, control, and communications, and ability to replace equipment.

²²See above, p. 11.

²³*Le Monde*, September 23, 1981, p. 5.

Of all these qualitative factors the one that was referred to most frequently was "accuracy." This feature came to the fore in connection with both U.S. and Soviet weapons. During the 1979-1981 period, it was agreed that missiles launched from U.S. submarines and bombers were not accurate enough to serve as a counter to the threat of attack on U.S. land-based missiles by the growing stock of accurate Soviet missiles. During this time, it was presumed that the much greater accuracy (within about 150 meters²⁴) of the forthcoming American MX missile would after 1986 pose an even greater threat to the Soviet land-based missiles.

Conventional and Theater Nuclear Forces. For purposes of analysis among military expert, a distinction is made between "strategic" forces and other military capabilities. This distinction is not always maintained in discussions among nonspecialists. In *Le Monde*, articles about the balance between the two superpowers, strategic forces, theater nuclear forces, and conventional forces were frequently referred to, on occasion even in the same sentence, as components of a single entity. This blurring of the distinction between strategic and other capabilities can be seen in the statement quoted earlier²⁵ from Tatu's article in which he attempted to counter the image of a powerless America. It was U.S. strength in conventional forces that he marshaled for his argument. Elsewhere in that article, he linked U.S. vulnerability to theater nuclear forces when he said: "in the years immediately ahead, it is the United States that must face a 'window of vulnerability,' as much at home because of the weak protection of its Minutemen as in Europe against the SS 20."²⁶

According to *Le Monde*, the Soviet Union with its Warsaw Pact allies during 1979-1981 commanded strength that was superior both quantitatively and qualitatively to that available to the countries of the Western alliance. The following passage from an article by André Fontaine exemplifies this view:

²⁴Tatu, *Le Monde*, June 10-11, 1979, p. 3.

²⁵See above, p. 18.

²⁶*Le Monde*, November 4, 1980, p. 5.

The Soviet fleet that Krushchev proposed be sold for scrap because it was, according to him, useless, is now deployed on all the oceans of the world and what is more in the very Mediterranean and Indian Ocean that the United States . . . was in the habit of considering its own preserve. The invasion of Afghanistan has highlighted the extent and efficiency of Soviet forces of intervention . . .

As for troops and conventional forces, those on the Soviet side have for a long time been superior to those of the West. The Warsaw Pact armies also have the considerable advantage of being tightly controlled under Soviet command, and their weapons and logistics are absolutely standardized. (January 10, 1980)²⁷

The imbalance in "euromissiles" between East and West also received a good deal of attention in *Le Monde's* pages.²⁸

As already indicated, it was because the Soviets had achieved nuclear parity with the United States that conventional forces took on a new significance.²⁹ A perceived weakness in the conventional forces available to the United States and its allies was cause for concern because, it was feared, the Soviets would use their superiority in this respect to aggressive ends. The imbalance also raised questions about how reliable an ally the United States would be in these circumstances. As Tatu put it in an article entitled "The Defense of Europe Will Be at Stake in the Coming Salt 3 Negotiations":

. . . the present situation cannot be compared to that of twenty years ago when the United States had overwhelming nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. And one can state that, with or without the Pershing, a certain "decoupling" has already taken place on the basis of the single fact of the establishment of nuclear parity between the two great powers: the United States is quite ready to risk something for the

²⁷In an earlier article, Jacques Isnard had summarized a recently released French study about the ability of the Warsaw Pact countries to organize an attack on Western Europe within 48 hours. He included a good deal of quantitative information comparing the Warsaw Pact and NATO forces. (January 14-15, 1979, pp. 1, 4)

²⁸The subject of NATO and the European theater did not fall within the scope of this study. The material discussed in this section may be said, in a manner of speaking, to have forced itself in.

²⁹ See above, pp. 17-18.

defense of Europe, but not everything, and probably not as much as fifteen years ago. (June 17-18, 1979, p. 3)

New Weapons. *Le Monde* kept a sharp eye on new developments in weaponry and offered its readers up-to-the-minute reports on weapon characteristics and probable capabilities.³⁰ Following Reagan's announcement that the United States would manufacture the neutron bomb, for example, Isnard wrote a technical "box" on the neutron bomb: its history, how it works, how it might be used, etc.³¹ There were detailed articles on the American MX missile, the Soviet Backfire bomber, and new missiles being tested to be used with it. Such new developments were discussed in terms of their implications for the strategic balance. As Isnard stated in a long piece he wrote about the Backfire and the cruise missile, technological innovations could have a destabilizing effect on East-West relations. Of the Backfire, he noted:

Refueled in flight, the Tupolev-26 [Backfire] is, therefore, in reality the first supersonic strategic bomber of the Soviet Union whose zone of action extends well beyond Europe, as far as the American continent, to the Pacific and into the Indian Ocean. (February 3, 1979, p. 12)

Explaining that negotiators at the Salt talks were having difficulty over the Backfire and the cruise missile, Isnard wrote:

If . . . modern bombers--like the Soviet Backfire--or bombers that have been remodeled for the purpose--like the American B-52--are capable of carrying a large number of non-ballistic missiles to the point of having the same destructive capacity as several intercontinental ballistic missiles, then obviously it must be admitted that despite Salt talks or talks in Vienna these technical innovations have destabilizing effects on relations between East and West. (February 3, 1979, p. 12)

³⁰Among the articles that were examined for the 1979-1981 period, there were none that touched on possible new developments in the important area of antisubmarine warfare.

³¹*Le Monde*, August 11, 1981, p. 3.

A decision to build the new MX missiles was evaluated, too, in terms of its implications for the strategic balance. In an editorial following Reagan's announcement of his decision to build 100 MX missiles that would be deployed in fixed silos, *Le Monde* wrote:

. . . one can . . . wonder why . . . a new missile was necessary, since the Navy is already developing, with the Trident, a similar missile, and the land component of the strategic arsenal seems more and more threatened. . . .

By pronouncing himself for the moment in favor of the installation of the MX in fixed silos, Mr. Reagan opens the way to protection of these missiles by anti-missile arms, and in this manner reenforces the strong temptation of the military to abrogate the 1972 [ABM] treaty. (October 4-5, 1981, p. 1)

Military Expenditures. The relative rate of spending on military forces was also attended to by *Le Monde*. Tangible evidence of Soviet expenditures over the past 15 years were noted by Tatu:

. . . the American figures on the constant increase in Soviet military expenditures (about 5 percent per year in real terms for the last 15 years), are confirmed by the appearance of several generations of missiles, the SS 20s and the Backfire in the arsenal of the Red Army, by the addition in the last 12 years of a million men, 5,000 tanks and the same number of armored vehicles at the disposal of the Warsaw Pact, which indeed was already superior to NATO in all these categories. (November 21, 1980, p. 5)³²

³²Although dependent on U.S. sources for information on Soviet defense spending, *Le Monde* did not accept the figures unquestioningly. An editorial commented as follows in connection with Reagan's program designed to close the gaps between U.S. and Soviet military strength:

Mr. Reagan's affirmation according to which the Soviet Union "since 1970 invested 300 billion dollars more than we did in its armed forces" is completely unverifiable considering how little one knows about the Soviet military budget and the difficulty of making comparisons. Mr. Carter claimed that the Soviet Union had increased its war effort 4 to 5 percent annually in real terms for about 15 years, which is calculated to be between 11 percent and 15 percent of its gross national product. These last two estimates seem more plausible and even rather below the mark in view of the results of this effort in various types of "military hardware." (February 20, 1981, p. 1)

Close track was kept on the U.S. military budget. In the November 1980 article cited above concerning the balance of forces between East and West, Tatu stated that, faced with the results of having been outspent by the Soviet Union for 15 years, the United States was preparing to spend more on defense.³³ Increases in the defense budget were viewed as evidence of America's determination to catch up with the Soviets. Fontaine said as much when, at the beginning of 1981, in an overview of the situation Reagan faced, he wrote that Reagan wanted to negotiate with the Russians from a position of strength:

This accounts for the increase in the defense budget aimed at reestablishing the balance with the Soviet Union as quickly as possible. (January 11-12, 1981, p. 1)

Doctrine. From time to time, as events dictated, *Le Monde* turned its attention to strategic doctrine, highlighting in this connection the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union both with regard to the way questions of doctrine are handled by the two countries and the doctrines themselves.

In 1979, Carter's announcement that the United States would be developing the MX missile elicited from Tatu the comment that the United States was turning to a "counter-force" strategy:

America is turning openly now toward a "counter-force" capability, that is to say towards a strategy of attack against the military forces of the enemy and no longer against its economic and demographic resources as required in the traditional game of deterrence. (June 10-11, 1979, p. 3)

With Carter's release of Presidential Directive 59 the following year, Tatu's observation was officially confirmed and he then noted how doctrine in the United States changes slowly--and openly. He stated that the move in this direction had started before Carter came to the White House and was prompted by the growth in Soviet military strength:³⁴

³³*Le Monde*, November 21, 1980, p. 5.

³⁴It is of some interest to note that *The Economist's* editorial on Presidential Directive 59 treated it as a sudden switch on the part of the United States.

It has been clear for a number of years that the United States, seeing the growth of Soviet capability, turned toward a doctrine that was more and more selective, less and less "anti-city" and more and more "counter-force." (August 8, 1980, p. 24)

Directive 59 also occasioned comments on doctrinal differences between the United States and the Soviet Union. Soviet doctrine, it was noted, had to be deduced, primarily from a source written in the 1960s, because the Soviets do not openly talk about their strategic policy. Daniel Vernet, in his dispatch from Moscow reporting the Soviet press's predictions of dire consequences following upon Directive 59, stated:

For their part, the Soviets say practically nothing about their own strategic policy. . . .

The basic work on Soviet strategy remains the book by Marshal Sokolovski, former chief of staff of the armed forces, that appeared in 1962 and has been reissued a number of times since. The basis of Soviet strategy is victory not deterrence. If war is possible, it must be won, and won completely, employing immediately every potential military device. (August 15, 1980, p. 5)

Tatu also took note of Soviet press reaction to Directive 59, and pointed out differences in the policies of the two superpowers regarding first use, preventive strikes, immediate all-out use of nuclear weapons vs. selective and moderated use. He also pointed out that the Soviets leave a certain ambiguity about what they will consider an "aggression" against their country, whereas the United States has defined what it means by "aggression."

One . . . notes that the definition of an "aggression" remains ambiguous in Soviet terminology: while Westerners clearly mean by aggression the start of active military operations involving invasion of allied territories, Moscow theoreticians suggest that they reserve the right to declare the USSR "aggrieved against," for example, as the result of preparations or actions they judge to be hostile on the part of the other camp. This "nuance" conceals in fact the entire difference between a preventive war and a defensive war. (August 9, 1980, p. 4)

Uncertainties about Soviet doctrine carry implications of unpredictable behavior. And, indeed, the danger of a surprise attack was made explicit in the following passage from Isnard's report on a French study of the possibility of a Warsaw Pact attack on Western Europe:

At the French ministry of defense it is believed that "the element of surprise regarding the place, the moment, the scope, the type of attack and the weapons to be used is a basic principle of Soviet military doctrine." (January 14-15, 1979, p. 1)

Military Applications of Space. While *Le Monde* kept its readers informed about activities in space, reporting, it would seem, every one of the numerous Cosmos satellites launched by the Soviets, to judge from the columns of the writers under consideration here, space did not play a major role in assessment of the strategic balance.

In an article written after the launch of the U.S. space shuttle Tatu gave the Soviet Union a marginal lead over the United States in military use of space. After reporting that, according to information provided at a meeting on Science and Disarmament held by the French Institute of International Relations, three-quarters of all satellites launched have a military application, Tatu wrote:

The Soviet Union has a considerable lead in this area, since it conducted 89 launchings in 1980 against only 13 by the United States. The difference is due, among other things, to the fact that the life of Soviet satellites is much shorter than that of American satellites: two weeks to a month for the Cosmos series, for example, against nearly two years for Big Bird, the principal American reconnaissance satellite. (April 19-20, 1981, p. 3)

Defense. References to defense were so incidental during 1979-1981 that this aspect of the strategic balance can by no means be considered significant in the assessment process for this period. Th

was only occasional mention of the possibility that the United States might develop an ABM system, permitted under the 1972 agreement, to protect its Minuteman missiles.

Civil defense also received little coverage. Only two items appeared on this subject during the three years covered by the present study. In 1979, Tatu summarized the results of an American study by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) of the effects of nuclear war on the United States and the Soviet Union under different scenarios.³⁵ Among other things, Tatu noted that national character (the discipline of the Soviet population, for example) and civil defense preparations (greater on the Soviet side) would make for significant differences in survival rates on the two sides.

In 1980, in *Le Monde's* Sunday "magazine" section, "Dimanche," Isnard wrote a long article on French civil defense, or rather, the lack of any serious planning for it. This was followed by a box outlining the civil defense plans in 10 other countries, the United States and the Soviet Union included. The Soviets appeared to somewhat better advantage in the description:

United States: a program of 990 million dollars, adopted last year in Congress, aimed at studying the removal of the most exposed populations to rural areas. Stocks for survival were placed in shelters constructed at the beginning of the 60s against radioactive fallout.

Soviet Union: Excluding shelters to safeguard command structures, in-place protection of one part of the population (about 20 million inhabitants) is anticipated, and the movement of the rest to less exposed sectors. Evacuation exercises take place regularly. Depending on atmospheric conditions, 1 to 4 days would be necessary to effect the evacuation by collective transport of residents of large cities. (September 7, 1980, p. V)

2. Nonmilitary Factors

Assessment of the U.S.-Soviet military balance is, of course, subject to the influence of many nonmilitary factors in the environment. A few of these may be singled out for mention as having been significant in the writings of *Le Monde's* experts during 1979-1981.

³⁵*Le Monde*, June 15, 1979, p. 3.

Economic Factors. Economic factors play a role in the assessment process because they are capable of braking military expenditures. *Le Monde's* reporters seemed to agree during 1979-1981 that the Soviet economy was under a strain and that the Soviets considered it in their own interest to limit the arms race. After Reagan's election in November 1980, Vernet wrote from Moscow:

For the Soviets, continuation of conversations on the limitation of strategic arms is essential at a time when their economy is going through a difficult period . . . (November 6, 1980, p. 10)

In mid-1981, he continued in a similar vein:

The Soviet leaders have affirmed many times that they will not permit themselves to be surpassed in the arms race, that they will find if necessary the large resources [moyens considérables], to use Mr. Brezhnev's expression, to respond to American initiatives, but they would prefer to avoid such competition, which would have negative effects on an economy in latent crisis. (June 25, 1981, p. 3)³⁶

Fontaine, too, referred to the fact that the Soviets had an economic interest in slowing the arms race because of:

. . . the heavy burden it places on the Soviet economy at a time when the war in Afghanistan and in Ethiopia, the necessity of aiding Vietnam, Cambodia, Poland, Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, and because the rise in energy prices, grain and major imported goods already hit hard at the Warsaw Pact countries. (December 4, 1980, p. 1)

³⁶Earlier, however, Vernet had cautioned that one cannot rely on economic factors to hold the Soviet Union back if it feels the need to increase its military spending. By adopting the tactic of blaming the need for the increase on the West: "It will thus be easier to explain to the Soviet population the consequences for their standard of living of an eventual increase in military expenditures. (It would be an illusion to believe that the Soviet leaders would be led to make concessions because the economy of their country would not be able to follow an arms race more easily supported by the American economy; history has shown the vanity of such hypotheses.)" (December 12, 1979, p. 5)

Toward the end of 1981, Tatu appeared to feel that the Soviets could not increase their spending on arms, even faced with the challenge of increased U.S. appropriations. According to Tatu, Soviet expenditures "are already at the limit of what the Soviet economy can support in times of peace."³⁷ Afghanistan, mobilization around Poland, and aid to Cuba, Vietnam, and other client countries already weighed heavily on their military apparatus.

Technology. *Le Monde's* experts also agreed that another factor that exercised a restraining influence on Soviet military achievement was its backwardness in new technologies. In 1979, Vernet stated that the Soviets might find the American cruise missile troubling because of this:

Considered by certain experts as the weapons of the future, they [cruise missiles] may particularly upset the Soviets who are, perhaps, not capable of building them because of their backwardness in computer technology [informatique]. (December 12, 1979, p. 5)

It was felt, however, that the Soviet Union was attempting to overcome this handicap and had already made up some ground. Isnard and Tatu, in 1981, commenting on the Pentagon's "Soviet Military Power," wrote in this connection:

True the Pentagon study admits major inferiorities in its Soviet partner: the backwardness of Moscow in microelectronic equipment, computers and jet engines [moteurs à réaction] is estimated to be between two and seven years, but in the middle of the 60s it was between ten and 12 years. The Soviets are catching up by modifying their equipment more quickly, and above all they are benefiting from a "transfusion" of Western technology and equipment thanks to exchange programs toward which the authors [of the Pentagon report] do not hide their hostility. (October 4-5, 1981, p. 2)

Political Factors. Differences in the political systems of the United States and the Soviet Union can also be seen to have an influence

³⁷*Le Monde*, September 24, 1981, p. 5.

on perception of the weaknesses and strengths of the two superpowers as they confront each other as leaders of East and West. These differences seem to favor the Soviet Union.

The monolithic and secretive nature of Soviet society, as compared with the U.S. process of public discussion and decisions openly arrived at was seen to redound to the benefit of the Soviet Union when it comes to negotiations. As Daniel Vernet described it:

There is a definite tactical advantage for the Soviet leaders who come to the negotiating table with decisions ready, made without discussion, at least in public, often even without being announced, although already applied, while they can intervene throughout in the--public--decisionmaking process within the Atlantic alliance. (December 12, 1979, p. 5)

It was also feared that a certain lack of political sophistication on the part of the Reagan administration might lend itself to manipulation by the Soviet Union. Tatu voiced this trepidation in an article about Reagan's rearmament program:

The simpleminded toughness of the American leaders with regard to the Soviet Union can lead to two uncontrollable developments: one . . . consists of reducing all problems to their military and strategic dimension, neglecting the local factors in the conflicts, especially the problems of development. The other could be over-assurance, leading to aggressive gestures toward the Soviet Union or its allies. (September 24, 1981, p. 5)

3. Summary and Comparison with 1948-1973

As Tatu pointed out in one of his articles on the Salt 2 talks, there is a tendency in discussions of the strategic balance to focus on particular dimensions and in consequence overlook others:

One could very well realize one day that the "fixation" on the SS 20 turned attention away from other equally serious problems. (July 19, 1980, p. 4)

The preceding examination of the dimensions covered in articles on the strategic balance indicates what *Le Monde's* reporters "fixed" on during 1979-1981.

Military factors were of course of primary importance in the assessment process. During the three years studied here, evaluation depended primarily on examination of the number of strategic weapons of different types in each arsenal, the differences in the two strategic arms systems, qualitative factors which modified the quantitative differences, and strengths and weaknesses in conventional forces and euromissiles; to a lesser extent, on new weapon developments, military expenditures, doctrinal differences, and military applications of space; and practically not at all on consideration of defense measures. In addition to the preceding military considerations, economic factors, technology, and differences in the decisionmaking process and political nature of the two superpowers were shown to have some influence on the assessment process.

One of the findings of the earlier study was that as new developments occur, attention shifts from one aspect of the strategic balance to another. The Tabular Summary of that study traces these shifts.³⁸ It reveals that during the 1950s, attention was directed at nuclear weapons and doctrine about their use. Then, beginning in the late 1950s, the missiles and bombers intended to deliver the nuclear warheads took center stage. In the early 1970s, the nuclear submarine and its missile delivery system received a greater portion of attention.

Although differences in the nature of the data between this study and the earlier one make quantitative comparisons of any kind impossible, some qualitative impressions may be hazarded. The focus on missiles and the systems intended to deliver them was the central preoccupation in the early 1970s and remained so during 1979-1981. Conventional forces and theater nuclear weapons, however, seem to have emerged from the background in the early 70s to a more prominent position during the recent period. Defense, which received a fair amount of attention from the 1960s into the early 1970s, was all but ignored during 1979-1981.

³⁸Herbert Goldhamer, "*Le Monde's* Perception . . . ," Appendix II.

III. ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT *LE MONDE*'S REPORTING ON THE STRATEGIC BALANCE

As noted in the Introduction, one of the objectives of the present research was to answer several questions, two of which harked back to the earlier study, about the way in which the present group of reporters wrote about the strategic balance during 1979-1981.

A. "PREDATING" THE SHIFT

The earlier study noted a tendency on the part of *Le Monde* to predate or assign to the present changes that could at best only be effected over several years:

The study of *The Economist* had noted that individual events sometimes exercised a drastic influence on the journal's current estimate of the balance even though these events could, at best, only forecast developments that might affect the balance in the future. This tendency to predate consequences was--with some differences--also observable in *Le Monde*. Striking events sometimes overwhelmed longer term perspectives and the considerations on which they were based. . . . Given the long lead time generally required for weapons systems to become operational, the propensity to see in a single event (for example, a test or a prototype model) a sharp turn in the military balance is curious and suggests how powerfully the dramatic and sensational can overwhelm more sober considerations that argue for a relatively slow rate of change in the strategic balance.¹

By and large during 1979-1981, *Le Monde* showed itself to be well aware of the time required to design, test, and deploy new weapons. References were repeatedly made to the fact that U.S. land-based missiles would be vulnerable until the new MX missiles were deployed in 1986 at the earliest. The U.S. decision to go into production with the MX did not elicit any pronouncements about an immediate shift in the strategic balance. Rather, following Carter's decision to speed production, one encountered a sober statement like the following:

¹Herbert Goldhamer, "*Le Monde*'s Perception . . . ," p. 26.

The deployment of these new arms [the MX] requiring a number of years, western experts are in general agreement that the years 1982-1985 represent the period of maximum risk. (Fontaine, January 10, 1980, p. 5)

Nor did the August 1981 announcement by Reagan that the United States would proceed with development of the neutron bomb provoke any revisions in *Le Monde's* assessment of the overall balance.

It is all the more curious, therefore, to encounter a statement from Michel Tatu that can only be interpreted as evidence that the tendency to "predate" persists. In 1981, when the cruise missile was still being tested, certainly not yet operational, Tatu wrote as though it already blocked the Soviet threat to U.S. land-based missiles:

Let us not forget that . . . [the U.S.] triad, since the appearance of the cruise missile, is no longer a triad: this new device that can be based on land, in a fixed or mobile fashion, on board surface ships or submarines, or on long-range bombers, is already invulnerable. Its only shortcoming is that it requires several hours to reach its target. But it constitutes par excellence a "second-strike" force, the one thing necessary, *stricto sensu* for deterrence. Thanks to it, in any case, all hypotheses of a "disarming Soviet first-strike" annihilating the entire American nuclear force in a single blow is even more unlikely than it was in the past. (September 23, 1981, p. 5)

B. IMPACT OF MILITARY DEMONSTRATIONS AND VISITS TO U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

The earlier study found that Soviet and U.S. military demonstrations and visits to U.S. military installations played a substantial role in shaping *Le Monde's* views of the balance.

It cannot be said that first-hand observations of this type played a similar role during 1979-1981. Moscow's May Day and November parades were reported as news items in *Le Monde*, of course, but they did not provide grist for the articles analyzed in the present study.

There was, furthermore, no evidence that any of these reporters had visited any U.S. military installations or witnessed demonstrations of U.S. weapons.

There was indication, however, that *Le Monde* kept an eye out for information on weapons tests. One column by Isnard, for example, was prompted by an announcement in Washington that the Soviets had conducted a test launch of a cruise missile from a Backfire bomber. Isnard passed on to the readers what was known about the AS-4 Kitchen and AS-6 Kingfish missiles and then continued:

Today American intelligence services claim that the Backfire's new missile attained, during tests, about 1200 kms and that it is propelled by a turbo-reactor. At the beginning of last year, these same sources of information had announced deployment--before the middle of the next decade--of a new aerodynamic Soviet missile, baptized AS-X, and capable, according to their extrapolations, of going more than 1100 kms at high altitude. (February 3, 1979, p. 12)

Other references, incidental and scattered,² taken together, show that *Le Monde* stayed on the alert for this type of information in its coverage of the strategic situation.

C. ALERTING THE READER TO SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO MANIPULATE WEST EUROPEAN OPINION

Although it was not presented as a major "finding," the study covering 1948-1973 noted that *Le Monde* correspondents and staff "were often cautious and critical of Soviet claims," and in various ways conveyed this skepticism to the reader.³ This practice was, if anything, even more noticeable during 1979-1981.

Daniel Vernet, *Le Monde*'s Moscow correspondent during these years, almost invariably incorporated in his columns warnings, explanations, or alerts to the reader regarding the material carried in the Soviet media and statements of Soviet leaders whose content he was reporting. References to Soviet attempts to manipulate West European opinion also

²Note Tatu's reference to a Ford administration test firing of ballistic missiles from planes capable of taking off very rapidly in case of an alert (*Le Monde*, April 27, 1979, p. 3), and a parenthetical reference to Soviet test of a "killer satellite" in a column following the successful flight of the U.S. shuttle (*Le Monde*, April 19-20, 1981, p. 3).

³Herbert Goldhamer, "*Le Monde*'s Perception . . . ," pp. 7-8.

appeared in *Le Monde* editorials⁴ and in the columns of André Fontaine⁵ and Michel Tatu.⁶

In addition to pointing out the themes or arguments the Soviets tended to emphasize,⁷ Vernet cautioned *Le Monde*'s readers about an objective that lay behind many Soviet statements during 1979-1981, i.e., the desire to drive a wedge between the United States and its allies and to insert itself as a partner of the Europeans. Whenever the Soviets presented him with the occasion, Vernet pointed out their attempt to sow distrust between the members of the Western alliance and the United States. An article in 1980 with the headline "The Soviets are trying to persuade the Europeans that it is in their interest to come to an understanding directly with the Soviet Union" can serve as an example.⁸ Vernet reported a Tass commentary on a joint French and German statement calling for a continuation of the policy of detente and an appeal for consolidation of Western solidarity. After summarizing the commentator's criticisms of U.S. policy, Vernet wrote:

⁴See for example, September 24, 1981, p. 1.

⁵See for example, January 11-12, 1981, pp. 1, 3.

⁶See for example, July 19, 1980, p. 4, and September 24, 1981, p. 5.

⁷These included: the importance to the Soviets of being treated as "a real world power, equal to the United States" (July 6, 1979, p. 34); "their isolation complex and fear of encirclement in a hostile world" (January 21, 1981, p. 3); the argument that "there is approximate parity between the two blocs, a global equivalence that the Salt 2 agreement is precisely intended to consecrate," and that it is arbitrary for the West to state that certain small arms (Vernet explains that this is an allusion to theater arms) put the balance in favor of the Socialist camp and use this as justification for introducing new weapons (September 14, 1979, p. 6); and that "detente, East-West cooperation, strategic balance between the two blocs does not imply maintaining the social *status quo* in the world and does not oblige the Soviet Union to renounce support of movements of liberation" (February 1-2, 1981, p. 6).

⁸See also Vernet's columns of May 12, 1979, p. 3; September 21, 1979, p. 10; December 12, 1979, p. 5; March 4, 1980, p. 4; April 15, 1980, p. 4; April 27-28, 1980, p. 3; August 9, 1980, p. 1; February 4, 1981, p. 4.

The Soviet arguments recall very much those used at the time of the debate over nuclear theatre arms in Europe: far from reenforcing the security of Europe the arms increase the risk of conflict, they said in Moscow, and Europe will find itself in the front rows as the principal victim of a confrontation. Similarly, Europe would be the first to bear the cost of an interruption in the delivery of oil after a confrontation in the Persian Gulf provoked by the American presence. The conclusion that the Soviets suggest to Western Europeans is that one way or the other it would be in their interest to come to an understanding directly with the Soviet Union. (February 12, 1980, p. 3)

Sometimes, Vernet simply classified a Soviet argument as "largely propaganda"⁹ or stated that it was "strongly contested by Western experts."¹⁰ In addition, he continually brought to the reader's attention, various techniques the Soviets used to produce the desired effect.

In his analysis of what he described as the Soviet propaganda offensive against the modernization of NATO forces and the deployment of cruise missiles and the Pershing II, Vernet noted the Soviet intention to play upon the emotions of the Europeans. Stating that the Soviet arguments could be classified into two categories, he continued:

The most simple [arguments] aim at provoking an emotional reaction among Western Europeans: American leaders have no scruple about transforming Europeans into "nuclear hostages" without guaranteeing them the possibility of survival in case of a conflict. Because it is obvious, explain the Moscow commentators in substance, that if medium-range missiles pointed toward the Soviet Union and the other Socialist countries are installed in Western Europe, the latter will be the first target and the first victim of a conflict. (September 14, 1979, p. 6)

He highlighted the way in which the Soviet media made use of selective reporting, omitting or ignoring statements or facts that did not suit their purpose. In one instance, Vernet reported how the Soviet press, prior to a visit from some French officials, praised the French

⁹March 26, 1981, p. 3.

¹⁰March 15-16, 1981, p. 2.

for not wanting "to follow the inopportune instructions of the United States," but completely ignored French condemnation of Moscow's actions in Afghanistan:

In other words . . . Paris is invited to detach itself from the United States. . . . Soviet commentators, on the other hand, do not say a word about the statements by the president of the French republic on Afghanistan. (March 4, 1980, p. 4)

Vernet felt called upon to comment on the use of this technique any number of times following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan:

. . . *Pravda* warns the allies of the United States against the "language of force" which, it says, never accomplished anything in relations with the Soviet Union and against a policy dictated by the selfish interest of the United States. "Washington is trying to impose this line on the members of NATO and other countries," adds the journal which, for several days has not missed a chance to praise the position of Westerners opposed to the measures of reprisal, while saying nothing about the condemnation expressed by West European governments about the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. (January 20-21, 1980, p. 2)

On another occasion, commenting on Soviet press treatment of a speech by President Giscard d'Estaing, Vernet again underlined the blanks:

As usual when it concerns a report on the statements by a leader of a country classified as among the "friends" of the Soviet Union, the Soviets put the accent on what suits them and remain silent about what displeases them. . . . The blanks in the report permit one to measure the extent of the disagreements. Thus, the official Soviet agency ignores totally developments in Africa and Afghanistan . . . The same "selection" is found in the part devoted to America and to the balance of forces in the world. Tass did not bring up that the Chief of State implicitly admitted that the United States had fallen somewhat behind the Soviet Union these last years . . . (January 30, 1981, p. 8)

The Soviet use of euphemisms which Vernet "translated" for the reader, was also pointed out:

The Soviet information services do not cease to enumerate the dangers that NATO strategy creates for the world from Europe to the Near East, to Asia where it is reenforced by the "hegemonists of Peking." This strategy justifies *a contrario*, the measures taken by the socialist camp to "reenforce their defensive capacity," a euphemism which designates the development of its military presence about which otherwise it remains very discreet. (May 13-14, 1980, p. 8)

In an article devoted to France, the weekly *Temps Nouveaux* that specializes in foreign policy problems . . . notes in passing that "during the [French] election campaign, the question of the battle for peace, for detente, was at the center of attention," a euphemism that allowed one to recall that at one point, relations with the Soviet Union had been the object of controversy between the candidates. (May 30, 1981, p. 5)

Vernet also pointed out that the Soviets took pains to "make the West bear the responsibility for revival of the arms race and the steps the Soviet Union might be forced to take in response."¹¹ A long article in *Pravda* about the American threat in the Near East occasioned the following remarks by Vernet:

In themselves the arguments developed are not new, but their repetition testifies to the desire to . . . blame them [the Americans] for all the aggravation of the tension. . . .

By contrast, the article credits the Soviet Union with only peaceful intentions. . . .

These attacks against American policy . . . have at least three purposes. For one thing, it turns attention away from Afghanistan. . . .

Finally, in this article, the Soviet Union throws the responsibility, in advance, on the United States for all the serious deterioration in the situation, whether in the Near East, or the Horn of Africa. (March 25, 1980, p. 5)

In the Soviet rhetoric on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the World War II meeting of American and Russian armies at the Elbe, according to Vernet, "the leit-motiv of all the declarations . . . [was]: faced with the aggressive intrigues of imperialism, the forces

¹¹*Le Monde*, December 12, 1979, p. 5.

of peace must reenforce their military capability, for the peaceful nature of the Soviet people must not be taken for a sign of weakness."¹²

Finally, Vernet called his readers' attention to the fact the Soviets are not only adept at portraying an aggressive act as a defensive one necessary to maintain peace, but have adopted the practice of offsetting aggressive action with a plan for peace:

The leaders of Moscow lack less savoir-faire than the capability to adapt. They retain all their cleverness in the art of presenting an aggressive action as a defense of detente and of covering an expansionist push by a peace plan.*

*The last example, to date, is the intervention in Afghanistan followed by a peace plan for the Indian Ocean proposed by Mr. Brezhnev in New Delhi. (January 21, 1981, p. 3)

¹²Le Monde, May 10, 1980, p. 3.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Le Monde's image of the strategic balance for 1979-1981 differed markedly from that of the earlier period. The clear-cut nuclear superiority the United States held during most of the 1948-1973 period no longer existed. That was agreed. It was also agreed that the Soviet Union had achieved nuclear parity. But during 1979-1981, *Le Monde* did not incline toward offering definitive judgments about which superpower held the advantage in the strategic balance.

As *Le Monde* perceived the balance during these years, the Soviets had built up and were continuing to increase their nuclear arsenal to the point where they would be able by the early 1980s to attack all U.S. land-based missiles in their silos and still retain sufficient reserves for a second-strike capability. *Le Monde* predicted, however, that this threat would be relatively short-lived, erased in fact, in 1986 when the new American MX missile was deployed. The expected temporary Soviet advantage in numbers of missiles, while provoking an occasional conjecture that the Soviets might have an edge, did not generate the conclusion that the Soviets had a definitive overall advantage.

Le Monde's apparent reluctance to declare itself on the balance appeared to stem from the difficulties it recognized to be inherent in making such an evaluation. The significance of the numbers, in the opinion of *Le Monde*, was modified by numerous qualitative factors.

While *Le Monde* did not approach the problem of identifying these qualitative factors in a systematic fashion, analysis of the articles written by its reporters revealed what some of these factors were.

A major factor that stood in the way of making quick judgments about the strategic balance, according to *Le Monde*, was the fact that the two force postures and weapons systems were different. This appeared to be one reason that *Le Monde* examined not the numbers alone, which of course were fundamental to its view of the balance, but the way in which the parts were related. *Le Monde* emphasized that the U.S. land-based missiles which were to become vulnerable to a Soviet strike in the early 1980s represented only one-third of the U.S. strategic force. By

contrast, *Le Monde* stressed, land-based missiles constituted three-quarters of the Soviet strategic arsenal and these would be threatened by the American MX in the late 1980s.

A variety of characteristics were mentioned in discussions of the strategic arsenals of the two superpowers. Some of these involved weapon features such as accuracy, range, and throw-weight. Others referred to development, production, and employment of the weapons--for example, the quality of research and development personnel, technological know-how, or the ability to replace equipment. Of these factors, accuracy was the one referred to most frequently, perhaps because it was such a critical element in the vulnerability of the missiles on both sides: thus, the increased *accuracy* of Soviet missiles targeted on fixed U.S. land-base missiles represented a threat for the early 1980s; U.S. air-launched and submarine-launched missiles were not *accurate* enough to offset that threat; the new American MX missiles with their far superior *accuracy* would, when deployed in the late 1980s, threaten the Soviet's land-based missiles.

During 1979-1981, relative strength in conventional forces and the euromissile balance intruded into discussions of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance. It was because the Soviet Union had achieved nuclear parity that these forces took on a new significance. The weakness of the United States and its Western allies compared with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries constituted a danger because, it was feared, the Soviet Union might, under the umbrella of nuclear equality, take advantage of the situation to expand its empire. *Le Monde* also contemplated the prospect of a United States, having lost the deterrent of nuclear superiority and weaker than the Soviet Union in conventional forces, backing out of its commitment to Europe rather than risk destruction of its cities.

Other military factors *Le Monde* tended to consider in evaluating the U.S.-Soviet balance were new developments in weaponry, the relative rate of spending on military forces, strategic doctrine, and military applications of space.

Certain nonmilitary factors--the state of the economy, prowess in new technologies, and differences in the decisionmaking process and political nature of the two superpowers also appeared to have significance for *Le Monde*'s assessment of the strategic balance.

The focus of the present group of writers on missiles and the systems to deliver them appears to continue the pattern noted in the earlier study. Conventional forces and theater nuclear weapons, however, emerged from the background in the early 1970s to a more prominent position during the recent period. Defense, which received a fair amount of attention during the 1960s and early 1970s, was all but ignored during 1979-1981.

Examination of certain specific characteristics of *Le Monde's* reporting on the strategic balance indicated some continuities and some differences between 1948-1973 and 1979-1981.

Le Monde reporters seemed for the most part well aware of the time lapse between design and deployment of new weapons. However, Tatu's 1981 assertion that the cruise missile was already effectively blocking the Soviet threat to U.S. land-based missiles was a striking instance of the pattern noted in the earlier study to assign to the present changes that required several years to effect.

During the earlier period, visits to U.S. installations and demonstrations by the United States and the Soviet Union of their military hardware played a substantial role in shaping *Le Monde's* views of the strategic balance. In the 1979-1981 *Le Monde* articles analyzed there was no evidence that such was still the case.

The earlier study noted in passing that *Le Monde* writers often expressed skepticism about Soviet claims. It was decided, in studying the 1979-1981 period, to see whether *Le Monde* was alerting its readers to Soviet attempts to manipulate West European opinion regarding the strategic balance. Examination showed that *Le Monde's* Moscow correspondent during these years characteristically took pains to point out to readers the Soviet attempt to drive a wedge between the United States and its Western allies, as well as the techniques it was using to accomplish this end.

Appendix A

FIGURES

The earlier study had the following introductory cautions preceding the figures:

1. These charts attempt to provide a visual overview of some aspects of the strategic balance as reported by *Le Monde* and the London *Economist*. The selection and condensation involved in such a presentation has a large element of the subjective . . .
2. U.S. or Soviet advantage in the strategic competition has been expressed as a ratio rather than as an absolute difference since comparisons often took this form. It should be remembered, however, that in later years when the number of weapons was large, a small change in ratios reflects a substantial absolute difference.
3. The highest ratio provided in the charts, namely 7:1, is to be taken as a more or less indeterminate ratio signifying a very great advantage indeed.
4. The lines representing the *Economist's* image of the balance are simplified versions of those by Herbert Goldhamer,¹ and do not distinguish between points based on qualitative and quantitative statements. The lines for *Le Monde* have been similarly simplified since *Le Monde* often published estimates from different sources during a given year and the present charts attempt to reduce these to an overall "impression."²

In order to facilitate comparison, the original charts are reproduced here, with data for 1979, 1980, and 1981 added at the bottom. The points for the more recent period are, in the case of *Le Monde*, based on quantitative statements made by its strategic specialists Jacques Isnard and Michel Tatu. Quantitative statements collected by this writer for the companion Note, *The Economist's Perception of the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Balance: An Update for 1979-1981*, provided the basis for the entries on *The Economist*.

¹Herbert Goldhamer, "The Economist's Perception . . .," pp. 30-32.

²Herbert Goldhamer, "Le Monde's Perception . . .," p. 15.

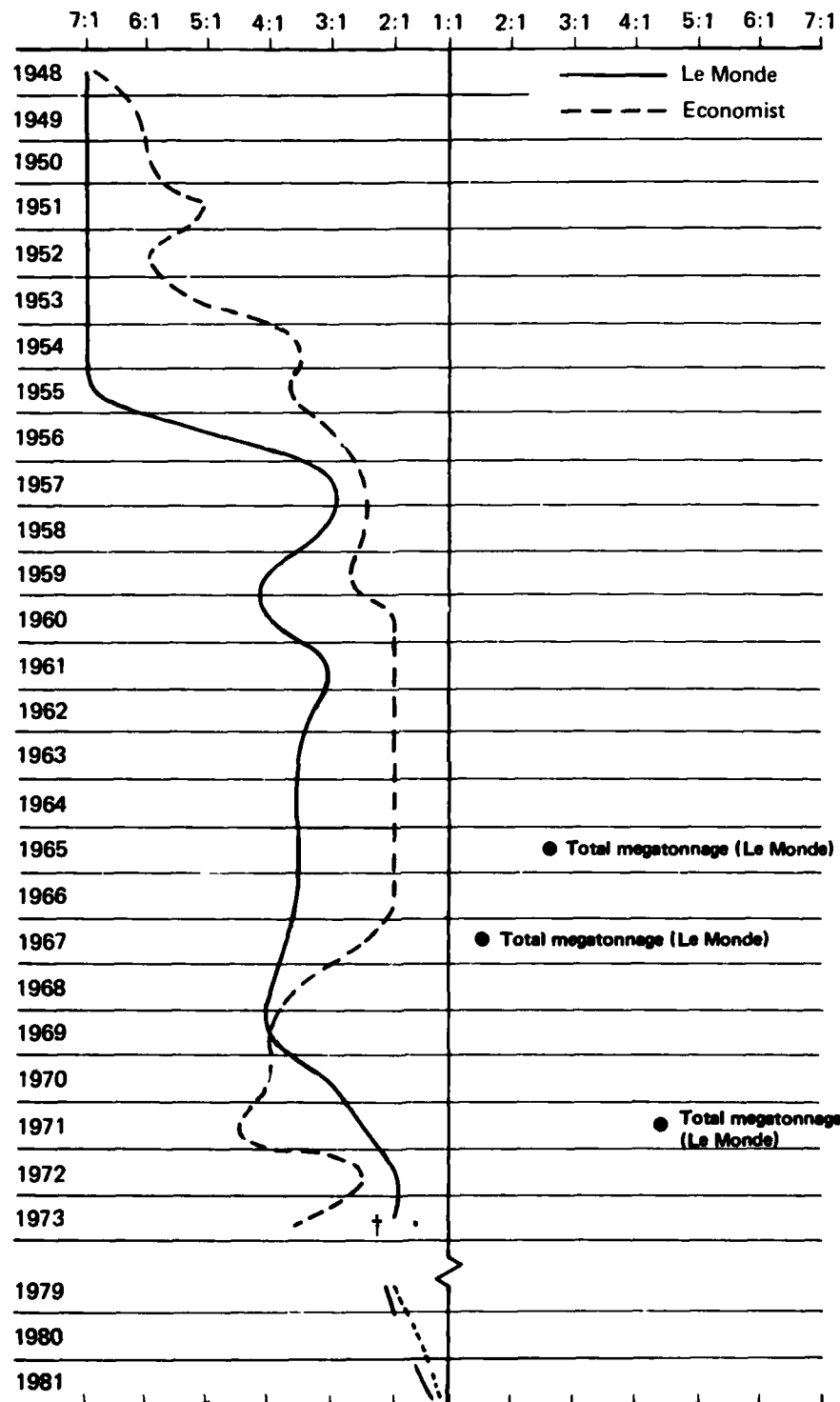


Fig. A.1 — *Le Monde's* and London *Economist's* perception of
U.S. - SU strategic balance:
Number of nuclear bombs and warheads

† No data available where breaks occur.

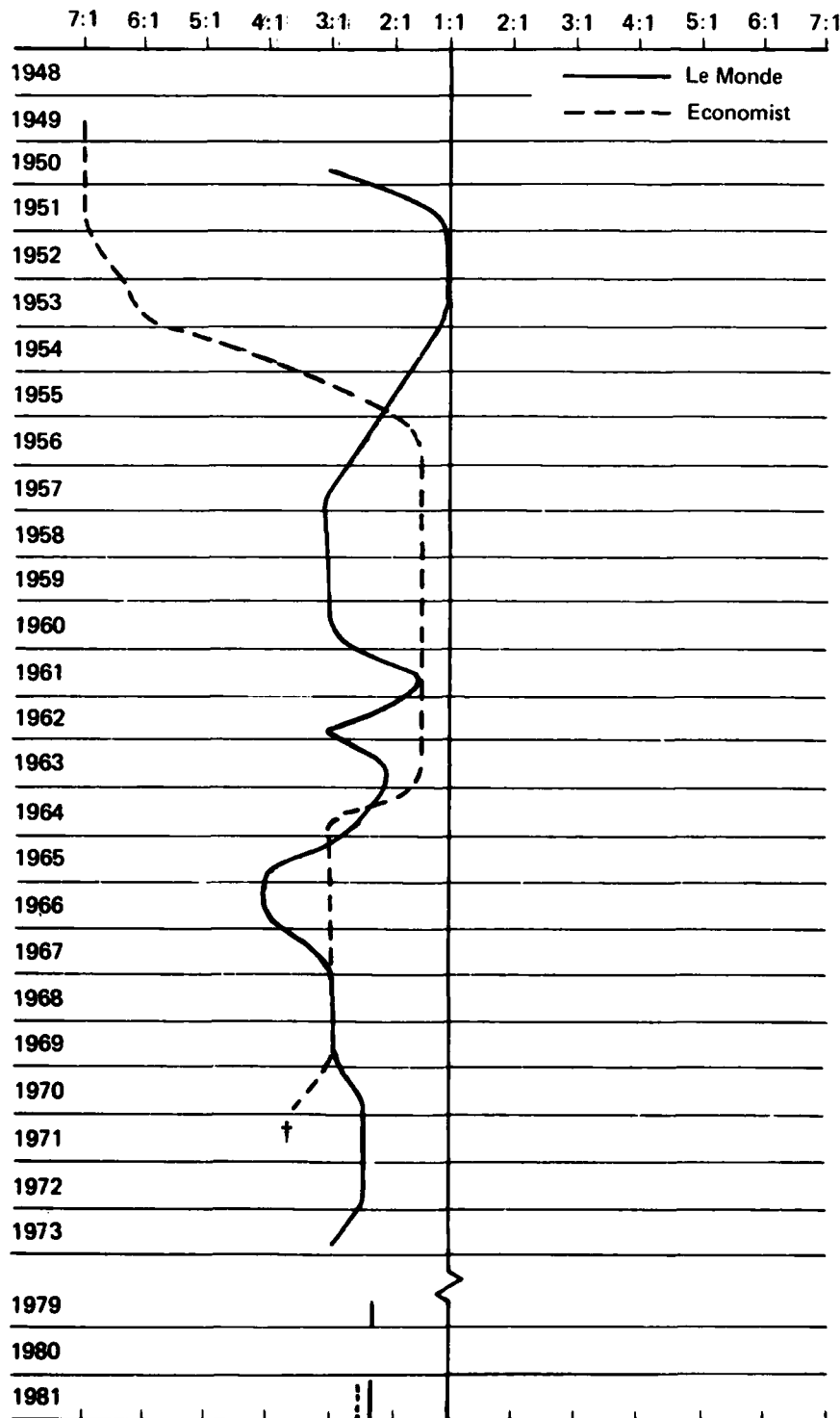


Fig. A.2 - *Le Monde's* and London *Economist's* perception of
U.S. - SU strategic balance:
Strategic bombers*

†No data available where breaks occur.

*Figures for 1979-1981 exclude the Soviet Backfire bomber.

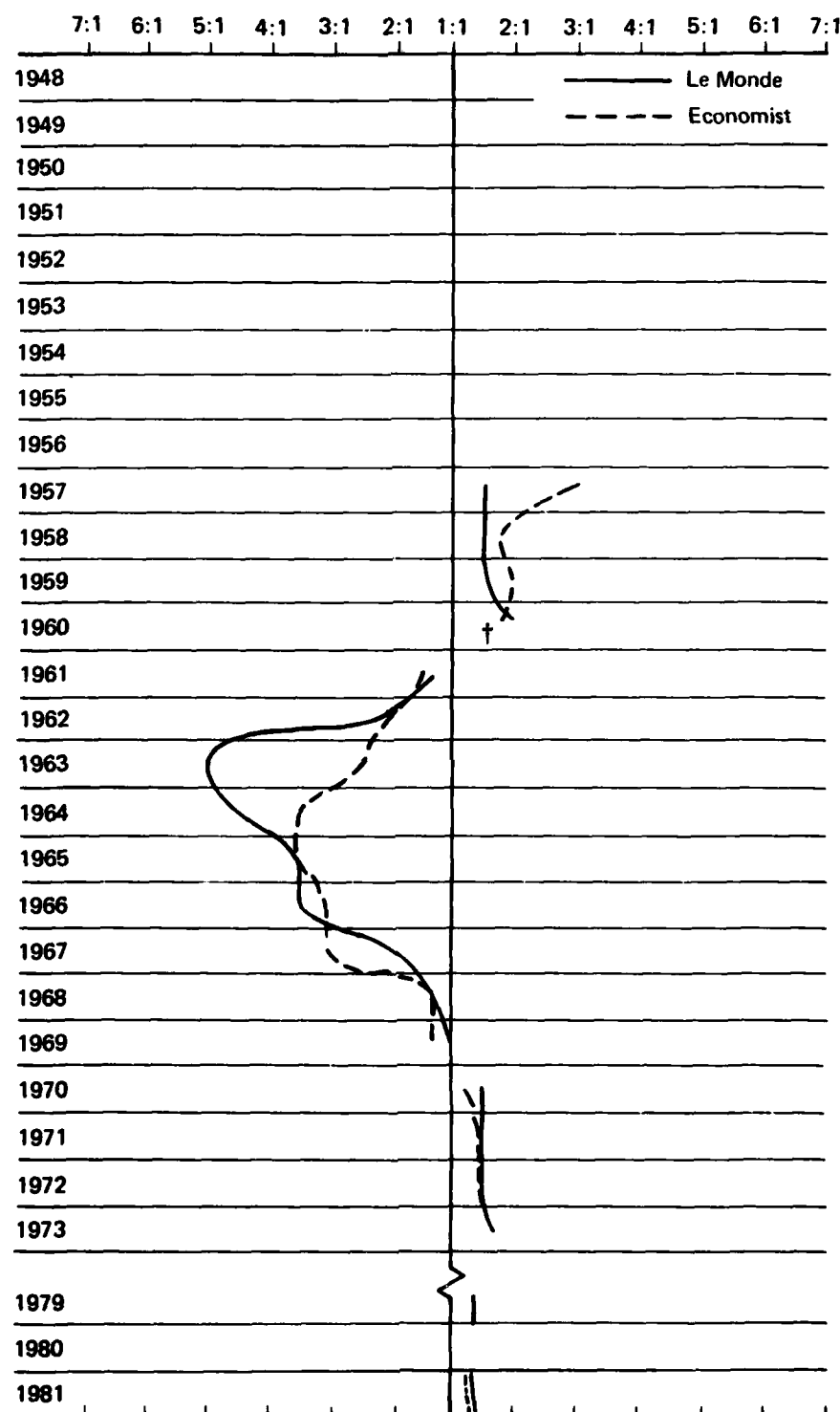


Fig. A.3 - *Le Monde's* and *London Economist's* perception of
U.S. - SU strategic balance:
ICBMs

† No data available where breaks occur.

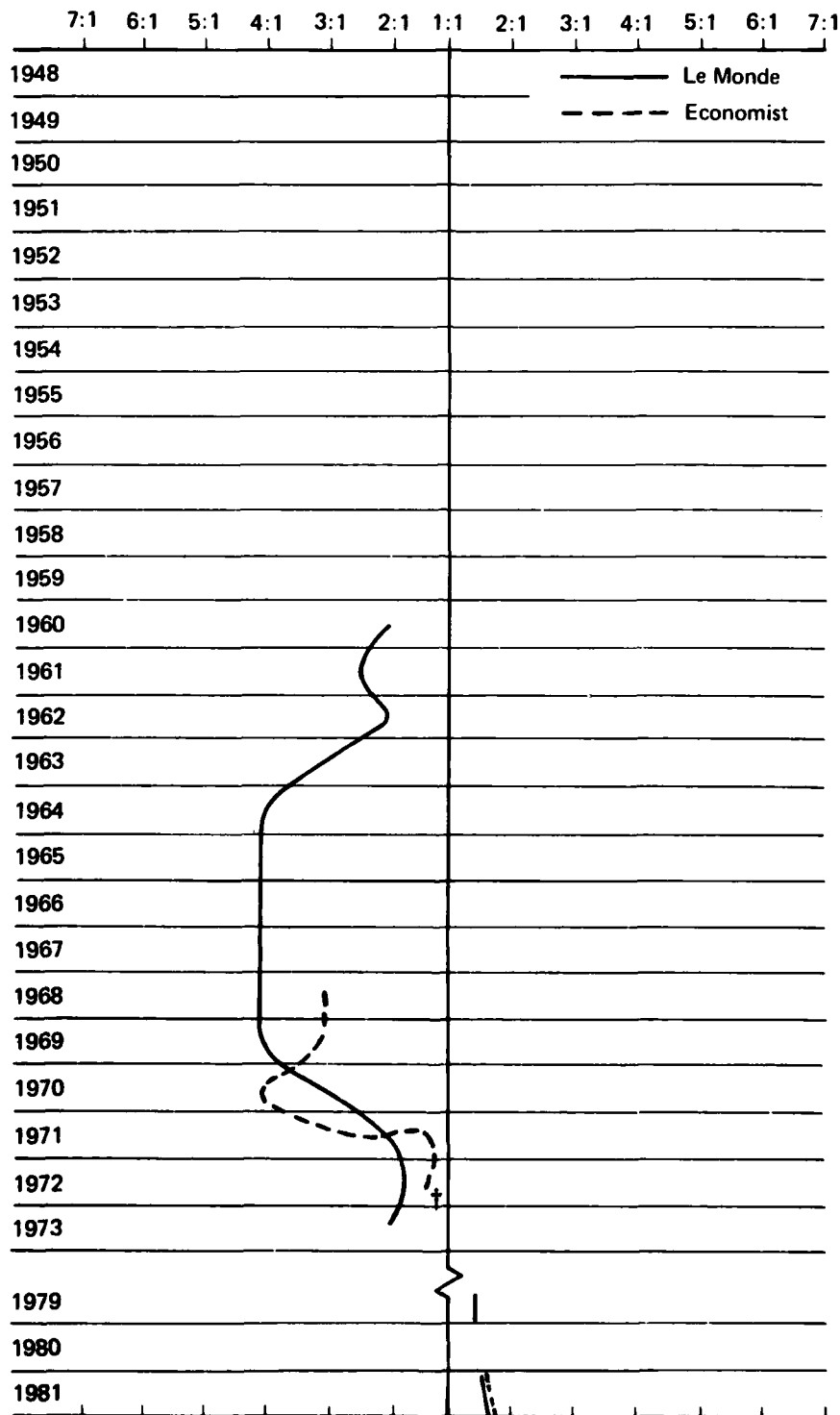


Fig. A.4 - *Le Monde's* and London *Economist's* perception of
U.S. - SU strategic balance:
SLBMs

† No data available where breaks occur.

Appendix B

RESULTS OF A TABULATION OF MILITARY VS. NONMILITARY ITEMS IN A SAMPLE OF ISSUES OF *LE MONDE*, 1979-1981

Preparatory research for the present Note produced the impression that military matters received more attention in *Le Monde* during the latter part of the period under study than in the early months of 1979. It was guessed that events such as the hostage crisis and Afghanistan focused attention on military affairs. The tabulation reported here was undertaken to put this impression to the test.

First, a sample of issues of *Le Monde* was selected. One issue per week for each of the 156 weeks in the three-year period was chosen, starting with a day selected at random and rotating the days thereafter. Thus, the first issue being a Friday in the first week of January 1979 (January 5), the next issue was Saturday of the following week (January 13), and so on.

The issues that fell into the sample are shown in Table B.1.

Each issue in the sample was examined from first page to last for items dealing with the United States and the Soviet Union. The criterion for inclusion of an item as being about the United States or the Soviet Union was the obvious one of mention in the section heading, headline, subhead, or lead paragraph of the country's name, a major city, or an individual, institution or organization (e.g., IBM), or subject (e.g., the dollar) identified with the country.¹ This procedure yielded three groups of items: those dealing with the United States

¹It was found that rigid application of this criterion could result in absurdities, so not every item that met it was included in the tabulation. An article might, for example, contain a passing reference to the United States in the lead paragraph and actually be focused on another country. Such items were not included. Similarly, other items that did *not* satisfy the criterion *were* included. An article might not mention the United States in the headline, subhead, or lead paragraph but devote several paragraphs to the United States in the body of the text. Items of this type were included. In sum, since the objective was to reflect the way a reader might view a given item, common sense was the decisive factor in judging whether or not to include an item in the tabulation.

Table B.1

ISSUES OF *LE MONDE* INCLUDED IN SAMPLE

Month	Date of Issue		
	1979	1980	1981
January	5 (Friday) 13 14-15 ¹ 23 31	2 (Wednesday) 10 18 26 27-28	6 (Tuesday) 14 22 30
February	8 16 24 25-26	5 13 21 29	7 8-9 17 25
March	6 14 22 30	8 9-10 18 26	5 13 21 22-23 31
April	7 8-9 17 25	3 11 19 20-21 29	8 16 24
May	3 11 19 20-21 29	7 15 23 31	2 3-4 12 20 28
June	6 14 22 30	1-2 10 18 26	5 13 14-15 23
July	1-2 10 18 26	4 12 13-14 22 30	1 9 17 25 26-27
August	3 11 12-13 21 29	7 15 23 24-25	4 12 20 28

¹*Le Monde* publishes six issues a week: one per day Monday through Saturday, and a single issue for Sunday and Monday which carries two dates (e.g., 14-15 January 1979).

Month	Date of Issue		
	1979	1980	1981
September	6	2	5
	14	10	6-7
	22	18	15
	23-24	26	23
October	2	4	1
	10	5-6	9
	18	14	17
	26	22	18-19
		30	27
November	3	7	4
	4-5	15	12
	13	16-17	20
	21	25	28
	29		29-30
December	7	3	8
	15	11	16
	16-17	19	24
	25 (Tuesday)	27	
		28-29 (Sunday-Monday)	
Total issues	52	53	51

alone; those dealing with the Soviet Union alone; and those dealing with both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Within these three groups, each item was classified as being either a "Military" item or a "Nonmilitary" item. A reference anywhere in the text of an article to military matters, whether to the strategic balance, the defense budget, a military action, the threat of a military action, the possibility of a military action, military sales, military aid, or even the possibility of military assistance being given or discontinued, resulted in a classification of "Military." The remaining items fell into the "Nonmilitary" category.

It was recognized that this was at best a very crude measure. It took no account of the prominence of an item, its length, its location, column spread, the proportion of the item dealing with military subjects, whether the treatment was favorable or unfavorable, etc.

nonetheless provide a rough measure of the attention given to military matters during 1979-1981.

As Table B.2 below shows, attention to military matters did increase during the period studied. Of all the items about the United States and the Soviet Union that appeared in the 1979 issues sampled, fewer than one out of five (17 percent) referred to military affairs or activities; in 1980 and 1981, more than one-quarter of the items about the United States and the Soviet Union were "Military." For a sample of this size the increase is significant statistically at the 0.99 probability level.

Table B.2
PROPORTION OF "MILITARY" AND "NONMILITARY"
ITEMS AMONG ALL ITEMS ABOUT THE
UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION

Type of Item	1979	1980	1981
"Military"	17%	28%	27%
"Nonmilitary"	83%	72%	73%
Total number	882	1,183	877

As evidenced by the figures in Table B.3, the overall increase in "Military" items can be accounted for primarily by an increase in "Military" items involving the Soviet Union, the proportion of items about the United States dealing with military matters having increased only slightly over the three-year period. Not surprisingly, items referring to both the United States and the Soviet Union tended to be predominantly "Military."

Table B.3

PROPORTION OF "MILITARY" ITEMS BY TYPE OF ITEM

Subject of Item	Percentage of "Military" Items		
	1979	1980	1981
United States	11	13	16
Soviet Union	23	48	37
Both	60	70	75

The reason for the increased proportion of "Military" items in 1980 is not far to seek. The figure that follows tracks the actual number of "Military" items that appeared in the sample issues month by month. The peak in January 1980 was provoked by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its aftermath. The smaller peak that appeared in March 1981 resulted largely from the Reagan administration's beginning efforts to strengthen American defenses and those of its allies.

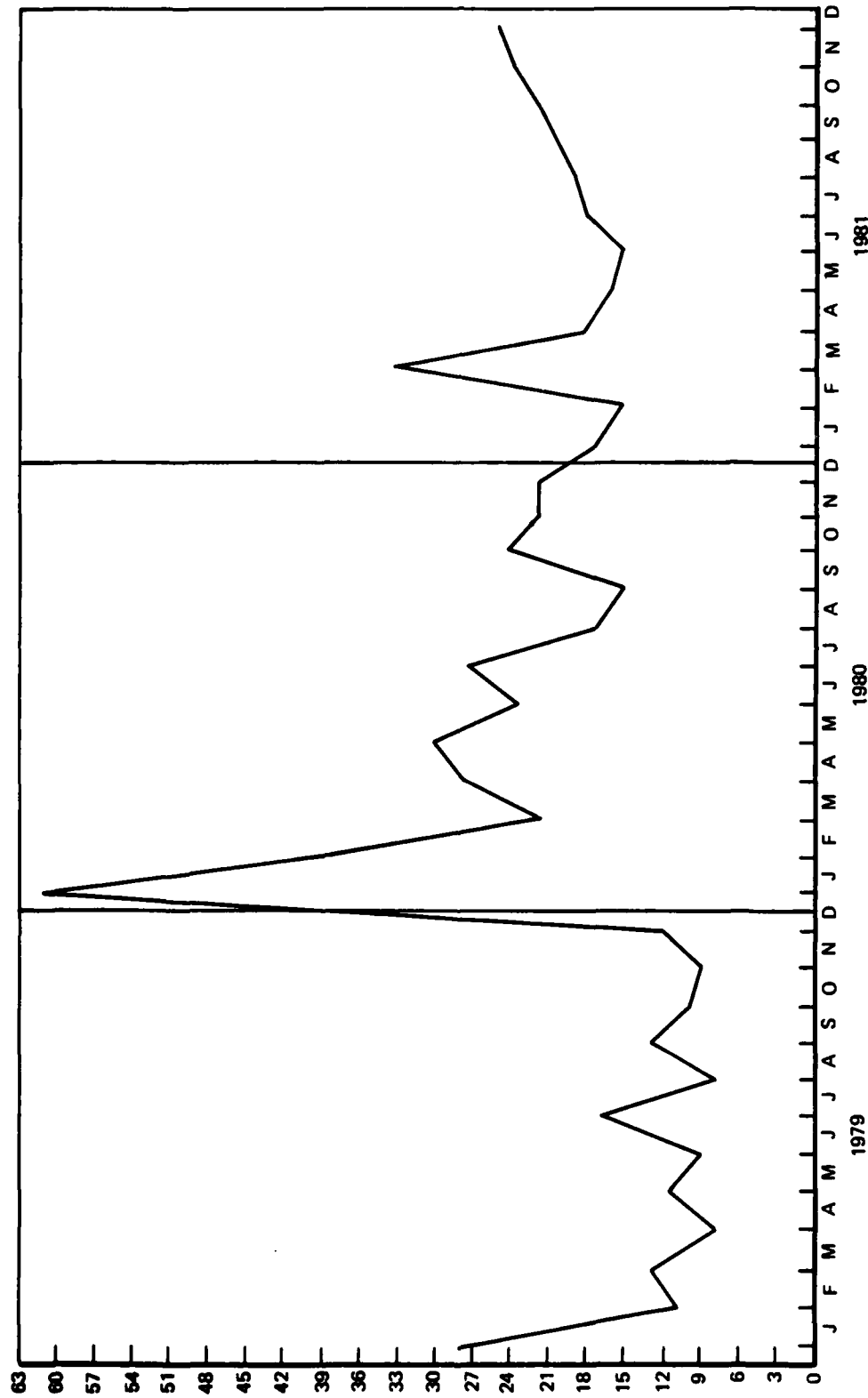


Fig. B.1 -- Number of "military" items per month in issues of *Le Monde* sampled 1979 - 1981

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