ON EASTERN EUROPE: SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE USSR

by

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Just as the current situation in Eastern Europe is unprecedented in the post-World War II era, so too is the challenge that it poses to the security of the USSR. The "newness" of this challenge derives from its multiple dimensions—political, ideological, economic, and military. Moreover, the complexity of the challenge renders it much more difficult to cope with than any that Soviet leaders have faced in the region before.

To appreciate the nature of the challenge and the dilemmas it creates for Moscow, it is essential to explore the meaning of the present East European crisis from the Soviet standpoint. This can best be done in terms of the potential political, ideological, economic, and military effects of the crisis on the USSR.

As for the political threat, East European conditions could affect the USSR adversely in both external and internal senses. With respect to the external sphere, Moscow could well find its ability to control Eastern Europe and to insulate the region from Western influence considerably reduced. This possibility arises from the decreased effectiveness of its main instruments of control in the region.

Throughout the post-World War II era, Moscow has possessed the military capabilities to impose its will on Eastern Europe, and it has employed these capabilities when it deemed the occasion demanded military force. However, it has relied primarily on more indirect means to dominate the region—specifically, on local communist parties that it helped to achieve power during the years immediately after World War II.

Although the regimes that these parties set up have never acquired political legitimacy in the eyes of many of their countrymen, the regimes did manage to keep their subject populations fairly well under rein until the latter half of the 1970s. To be sure, there were significant lapses—in East Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and again in Poland in 1970. Yet the remarkable thing is that so few uprisings occurred. Furthermore, most of the upheavals grew out of splits within the ruling communist elites and not from a simple welling up of popular unrest.

In large part the success of the East European governments in avoiding major domestic challenges resulted from their positive steps to meet the aspirations of the people that they ruled, rather than from coercion. One of these steps was developing their economies. Before World War II the countries of the region had suffered from varying degrees of underdevelopment, and the typical standards of living there had been fairly low in comparison with those in the more advanced industrial states of Western Europe and North America. The devastation wreaked by the war had merely exacerbated these problems. After establishing their authority, the new communist regimes undertook to remedy this situation, and they

made considerable progress. Bulgaria's produced national income increased by an average annual rate of 11.2 percent in 1951-55, 9.6 percent in 1956-60, 6.7 percent in 1961-65, and 8.8 percent in 1966-70; Czechoslovakia's by 8.2, 6.9, 1.9, and 7.0 percent; the German Democratic Republic's by 13.1, 7.1, 3.4, and 5.3 percent; Hungary's by 5.7, 6.0, 4.1, and 6.9 percent; Poland's by 8.6, 6.6, 3.4, and 4.6 percent; and Romania's by 13.3, 6.6, 9.2, and 7.5 percent.[1] Even though the regimes may have appropriated a large portion of the expanded resources for purposes having nothing to do with consumers, decided improvements in the standards of living were nonetheless apparent throughout the region.

Another positive step was encouragement of socio-occupational mobility. Traditionally in Eastern Europe, a person's social location at birth had seemed to fix his status in life, however much he might dream of altering that position. This had been especially true for peasants, who made up the bulk of the populations of most of the countries of the region. Upon assuming power, the new communist rulers of Eastern Europe strongly promoted social mobility. From their viewpoint, such a policy had several merits. Not only would people who changed their way of life acquire a vested interest in the communist system, but the hostility of key social groups, such as workers and intellectuals, toward the regime would thus tend to diminish. A fluidity of social structures would also ensure the manpower to push forward with economic development. By the 1970s, the consequences of the policy had become profound. Large numbers of persons had taken advantage of the new fluidity of social structures to find jobs different from their fathers. In Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, for instance, roughly 50 percent of the economically active children of peasants had moved into the industrial working class. The figures for Romania and Poland were about 40 percent and more than 30 percent, respectively.[2]

In recent years, however, the communist regimes of Eastern Europe have found it harder and harder to satisfy any of the basic aspirations of their countrymen. Since the 1970s, the pace of economic development has slowed dramatically in all of the East European states. During 1971-75, Bulgaria recorded a 7.8 percent average annual rate of growth of produced national income, but the figure dropped to 6.1 percent in 1976-80 and is expected to reach only 4.1 percent in 1981-85. The rates for the other countries during these same time frames were (or, in the case of 1981-85, are projected to be): Czechoslovakia—5.6, 3.7, and 1.7 percent; the German Democratic Republic—5.4, 4.1, and 3.4 percent; Hungary—6.2, 3.2, and 2.0 percent; Poland—9.8, 1.6, and -3.3 percent; and Romania—11.3, 7.3, and 3.1 percent.[3] This general situation has greatly limited the resources that all the states—and especially those, like Poland and Romania, that borrowed heavily from the West in the 1970s to finance extensive development plans—can devote to consumers. Worse yet, the reduced capacity to bring about improvements in the standards of living of citizens has come at a time when citizen anticipation of such improvements had been steadily rising for a number of years.

The circumstances that permitted the East European regimes to foster a high degree of social mobility have virtually disappeared in most states. By the 1970s, the bulk of the East European countries had arrived at a point where expansion of their economies no longer required mass reallocations of labor across manual-nonmanual and agriculture-

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industry lines. Rather, the future well-being of their economies depended upon a transition to a labor-intensive type of growth. Only the less developed states of Bulgaria and Romania constituted partial exceptions here. In such an overall setting, there is relatively little room for changes of socio-occupational status on the part of ambitious persons.[4] Moreover, the regimes even have solid reasons to try to discourage individuals with talent and drive from leaving the countryside. Since the 1970s, all of Eastern Europe has experienced a significant fall-off in the rate of growth of agricultural production. While Bulgaria's agricultural output rose by 2.9 percent a year on the average in 1971-75, it increased by an annual average of just 0.9 percent in 1976-80, and it is expected to expand at 2.3 percent a year on the average in 1981-85. The figures for the other states during the same periods were (or, with respect to 1981-85, are): Czechoslovakia—2.6, 2.1, and 0.9 percent; the German Democratic Republic—2.7, 1.2, and 2.3 percent; Hungary—4.6, 2.3, and 1.4 percent; Poland—3.7, -1.6, and 2.7 percent; and Romania—6.5, 3.8, and 2.2 percent.[5]

Finally, the rigidities of the existing political systems in Eastern Europe have kept the regimes there from fulfilling the mounting desires of important segments of the local population for a role in decision-making that has an impact on them as a particular group or as a part of the larger nation. Because of economic development and social modernization, the intelligentsia and worker strata of the region have increased greatly in size and social significance and they have displayed growing unhappiness at being mere objects of policy. This unhappiness has manifested itself less sharply in Romania and Bulgaria, whose societies still remain substantially peasant in character, than in other states, but it has been visible to a certain extent there as well. While some of the disgruntled social elements have a clearly anti-socialist outlook, the vast majority of them simply want to restructure social priorities, to determine the routine and nature of activity in the workplace, or to create a more libertarian political order.[6] Even goals of this sort, however, threaten the entrenched interests of the communist political elites in Eastern Europe. Consequently, with the partial exception of Hungary, these ruling elites have resisted, rather than identified themselves with, pressures for change along such lines.

The inevitable result of the declining ability of the East European regimes to bridge the gap between themselves and the people of their countries has been a weakening of the regimes' capabilities to dampen domestic political tensions. This, it is true, has varied in intensity from state to state, with Poland showing the most pronounced signs of it and Bulgaria the least. Nevertheless, it has become an area-wide phenomenon.

It is not inconceivable that all or some of the East European governments might manage to reverse this trend, but the odds against their doing so are formidable. In light of factors such as the rising costs of imports of energy and raw materials, the need to repay debts owed to the West, the lack of competitiveness in the world market of many East European goods, and inefficiencies in East European production systems, the regimes of the region seem unlikely to be in a position to bring about major improvements in local living standards for the foreseeable future. Indeed, they have already attempted to prepare their people for further belt-tightening in the years immediately ahead. The great fluidity of social structures that characterized the first two or three decades of communist rule appears to have been the product of special conditions, and these have now nearly vanished in many countries and waned in others. Restoring them looks impossible. Although the chance of some modifications of the current decision-making processes in Eastern Europe to allow for wider participation cannot be dismissed out of hand, any changes would probably fall well short of what many elements of the societies would hope to see. Moreover, even such changes would no doubt involve substantial political struggle. As Polish events

since 1980 have shown, the existing elites are inclined to cling doggedly to their prerogatives.

From Moscow's perspective, the decreased effectiveness of the East European regimes as agents of control raises the specter of increased political turbulence in a region that borders on the USSR. Such a prospect is particularly troubling to Soviet leaders because they feel that the West will inevitably try to exploit the turbulence to strengthen its position in Eastern Europe. Indeed, they take the Reagan Administration's championing of the democratization of communist countries and the Vatican's efforts to function as a mediator between the Jaruzelski government and the rebellious Polish masses as proof of the validity of that judgment.[7]

Within the USSR, the political threat that derives from the East European situation lies in the demonstration effect that political turmoil in the region could have on the Soviet Union's minorities. As even Soviet analysts ceaselessly point out, the USSR is a multinational state. Indeed, by the end of the 20th century no single ethnic group may constitute the majority of its population. Since World War II, the proportion of Great Russians, the largest and dominant ethnic group, has declined steadily. According to the 1979 Soviet census, they made up only 52.4 percent of the total, and by the year 2000 the figure will probably drop to 46-48 percent in light of recent demographic trends.[8]

While some of the minority groups—for example, Jews, Germans, and Poles—tend to be scattered around the country, a number are concentrated in territories along its borders. Moreover, despite substantial migration of Great Russians into these territories over the last several decades, most of the areas remain inhabited primarily by minority peoples. For instance, indigenous elements still comprise 53.7 percent of the Latvian Republic, 58.8 percent of the Tadzhik Republic, 63.9 percent of the Moldavian Republic, 64.7 percent of the Estonian Republic, 68.4 percent of the Turkmenian Republic, 68.7 percent of the Uzbek Republic, 68.8 percent of the Georgian Republic, 73.6 percent of the Ukrainian Republic, 78.1 percent of the Azerbaidzhani Republic, 79.4 percent of the Belorussian Republic, 80.0 percent of the Lithuanian Republic, and 89.7 percent of the Armenian Republic.[9] No less important, many of these minority peoples have ethnic or religious ties with peoples just across Soviet borders. Moldavians share a common ethnic heritage with their immediate neighbors in Romania, and Armenians, Azerbaidzhanis, Turkmen, Uzbeks, and Tadzhiks do the same with their near neighbors in Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Large numbers of Lithuanians cling to the same Catholic faith that the great bulk of Poles do, while most Azerbaidzhanis and peoples of Central Asia adhere to Islam just as the peoples of Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan do.

To these long-term security considerations, recent years have added another factor of concern to the Soviet leadership. Birthrates among the Slavic peoples of the USSR (Great Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) have been low, while those among the non-Slavic peoples, and particularly the Muslim peoples, have been high. As a consequence, the proportion of members of the latter in the younger age groups of the Soviet population has escalated dramatically. In 1959, for example, the combined population under age nine in the six predominantly Muslim republics of Azerbaidzhan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tadzhikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan constituted only 30 percent of the figure for persons of the same age in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, but by 1970 it had risen to 52 percent. In 1979, it had reached 59 percent, and by 2000 it is expected to hit 85 percent.[10] Thus, an increasing number of conscripts for the USSR's armed forces will have to come from minority, non-Slavic, and largely Muslim ranks for at least the rest of the century.

In view of these realities, Moscow has good reason to want to prevent unrest among the national minorities of the USSR. Yet over the last 25 years or so, it has faced growing assertiveness on the part of these groups. This has varied in intensity from group to group, with segments of the peoples of the Baltic

republics and the Ukraine perhaps pushing the hardest for self-defined "national" interests.[11] Thus far, however, such assertiveness has not taken large-scale, concerted form or produced much in the way of violent conflict.

Persistent political strife in Eastern Europe could conceivably alter that state of affairs. According to many reports, events in Poland in 1980-81 inspired work stoppages, a youth rebellion, and even a bold assertion of national identity by intellectuals in Estonia,[12] and prolonged turmoil in Eastern Europe might yield many more sympathetic vibrations of one sort or another within the USSR. Although they would be more likely to come from those minorities residing closest to Eastern Europe and having bonds of kinship or of a common religion with the peoples of the region, Moscow could not count on restricting the contamination to these groups. Knowledge about what is happening in the outside world has become increasingly difficult for the Soviet government to deny to its citizens, and an already-existing tinderbox of seething discontent among elements of another national group might need only such a spark to ignite it.

Even if, as some analysts argue, the Soviet regime possesses adequate means to keep unrest among the USSR's minorities in hand,[13] Soviet leaders know full well that heightened ethnic tensions can render them vulnerable to intensified pressure from the outside world. Their recent experience with the Jews of their population can have left them no doubt on this score. Hence, they do not look with equanimity on the potential impact of conditions in Eastern Europe on their relations with the minority national groups of the USSR.

In an ideological context, East European circumstances pose two major dangers for Moscow. First, they might well encourage increased questioning of the relationship between the communist party-state and the interests of the working class.

Since the days of Vladimir Lenin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) has depicted itself as the vanguard of the working class. That is, it has claimed to be the most self-conscious segment of the working class, with a clear understanding of the long-range interests of that class. On this basis, it has adopted a mobilizational approach toward workers, seeking to spur them to help meet its objectives but giving them no role in defining those objectives. This approach has been evident in the position of trade unions—the institutions most directly concerned with workers—in the USSR. They operate largely as "transmission belts" for decisions taken by the party, rather than as representatives of workers to the party.

Sustaining this order of things requires that workers accept party guidance and behave as they are directed. Therefore, Soviet leaders through the years have striven mightily to inculcate in workers a belief in the validity of the CPSU's vanguard function.

Evidence suggests, however, that they have not proved entirely successful in this regard. From time to time since the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, there have been strikes by workers at different places around the USSR. In recent years, moreover, these disturbances appear to have increased in number and to have become less episodic in character.[14] Of equal significance, at least one attempt has been made by Soviet workers to organize a trade union independent of the official unions. In 1978, a small group around Vladimir Klebanov announced the formation of the Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers in the Soviet Union.[15]

To be sure, Soviet authorities have quickly stamped out these expressions of worker unrest through various means—economic concessions, shows of force, and imprisonment of the more recalcitrant troublemakers. Furthermore, any challenge to the prevailing order from the working class is more likely to come from skilled manual workers and worker-technicians than from unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, and the former groups at present constitute only about one fourth of the working class population.[16] Yet Soviet leaders remain obsessed with the possibility of large-scale disaffection on the part of workers in the USSR.

This obsession emerged plainly in Soviet reactions to the formation of the independent trade union Solidarity in Poland in 1980. Soviet commentaries repeatedly stressed that there was no justification for such a body. Workers did not need a separate organization to represent them, for the Polish United Workers' Party reflected worker interests. Thus, the commentaries held, Solidarity really amounted to an anti-socialist scheme.

Fortunately, from Moscow's perspective, the advent of Solidarity did not generate any great outpourings of enthusiasm among Soviet workers,[17] and in any event the Jaruzelski regime's outlawing of Solidarity in December 1981 removed the manifestation of worker discontent that Soviet leaders feared most as a potential model for Soviet workers. Nonetheless, worker dissatisfaction with the current order continues to exist in Poland. The same is true to one degree or another throughout much of the rest of Eastern Europe. This dissatisfaction could well up in another confrontation like that in Poland during the early 1980s, or different forms of worker unrest could emerge in the region. If new crises do occur, Moscow cannot bank on the same kind of responses to them from Soviet workers as Polish developments in 1980-81 elicited.

The second ideological threat to Moscow arising from the state of affairs in Eastern Europe involves an even more direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Soviet regime than the first one does. East European conditions inspire doubts about CPSU assertions that the Soviet system has universal validity and constitutes the wave of the future.

The Bolsheviks seized power in Russia contending that their commitment to build socialism legitimized their rule, for socialism would eventually triumph over capitalism throughout the world. Although the institutions that came into being in Russia over subsequent years for the purpose of socialist construction derived less from a clear blueprint than from expediency and chance, the Soviet leadership quickly touted them as a model for other countries seeking to effect transformations along socialist lines. Its emphasis on the Russian example became particularly strong after the revolutionary upsurges it had expected to take place elsewhere failed to materialize. As a consequence of these factors, a link grew up between the right of the CPSU to retain power in the USSR and the applicability of the Soviet system to other countries.

After World War II, the extension of the Soviet system to Eastern Europe—albeit under the auspices of the USSR's Red Army—gave Soviet rulers concrete evidence to cite in support of their claims for the system. This evidence and high Soviet economic growth rates that brought corresponding improvements in the living standards of the local populace—especially after the death of Stalin—bolstered the internal position of the regime significantly. Hence, the regime displayed growing confidence that it had succeeded in winning popular acceptance, if not necessarily popular esteem. The upheavals in Hungary and Poland in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland again in 1970 did not alter this overall situation appreciably.

Recent developments in Eastern Europe and the prospects there for the foreseeable future, however, could erode much of the basis of what domestic legitimacy the CPSU government has achieved. Some of the regimes in the region—most markedly that in Poland—have already exhibited a significantly decreased capacity to deal with their subjects effectively, and the possibility that their performance in this respect will improve in the years ahead seems slim for the moment. In addition, other regimes could well experience a similar problem. Even the government in Hungary, which has managed to garner a higher measure of mass support than any of the other East European regimes, could find its ability to exact obedience reduced after the passing of Janos Kadar, who is now in his seventies. Although there appears little chance that any of the regimes will collapse, chronic political instability and turmoil in the region could still raise serious questions among Soviet citizens about whether the Soviet system is truly applicable around the world. These, in turn, could make

the Soviet public less inclined to regard the system as inevitable for the USSR.

In Moscow's eyes, the risk of such an outcome is surely enhanced by the decline in civic morale in the USSR since the 1970s. This trend is more discernible among the middle class and intelligentsia, but it extends to the working class as well. It stems from both growing disillusionment with official values and mounting pessimism about the Soviet future. In particular, there is a growing sense that the Soviet system cannot live up to expectations of it, for difficulties connected with a new stage of development have exceeded the capability of existing institutions to cope with them.[18]

With regard to the economic threat, the East European crisis could sap what vitality the Soviet economy still possesses. Such a potential reflects not only the increased economic burden that hegemony in Eastern Europe entails for the USSR but also the troubled state of the Soviet economy in the 1980s.

During the immediate postwar period, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe actually proved highly beneficial to the USSR from an economic standpoint because it permitted Moscow to plunder and exploit the more advanced countries of the region to facilitate Soviet recovery from the ravages of the war, but there was a gradual reversal of the situation over the ensuing years as a consequence of Moscow's growing concern with ensuring the viability of the local communist regimes. By 1960-64, the USSR was channeling an average of $186 million a year into the region in implicit trade subsidies alone. These subsidies derived from the terms that it set for trade with East European states. It exported fuels, raw materials, and food at prices below the corresponding world market prices in exchange for machinery, equipment, and industrial consumer goods at prices above the corresponding world market prices.[19]

Although the level of the subsidies climbed more or less steadily during subsequent years, it was not until the mid-1970s that sharp jumps occurred. In 1965-69, the subsidies amounted to about $474 million a year on the average; in 1970-71, they reached $975 million annually; and in 1972-73, they dropped back to $600-800 million a year. Then in 1974-78, they shot up to an annual average of about $5.8 *billion*. Estimates for 1979 and 1980 place the figure at $11.6 billion and $17.8 billion, respectively. These last magnitudes are staggering. The 1979 level constituted about 47 percent of the USSR's total imports from the industrial West for that year, and the 1980 level, about 70 percent of such imports.

To some extent, this dramatic escalation of Soviet subsidies to Eastern Europe was the outgrowth of the giant leap in world market prices of fuels in 1973-74, but that by no means afforded the total explanation. A more fundamental cause lay in the declining economic growth rates of the countries of the region—a problem rooted in the failure of the East European regimes to bring about a transition from growth based on additional inputs of labor and capital to growth based on improvements in productivity.[20]

Despite the size of Soviet subsidies to the region, however, a number of factors kept the economic burden that Moscow incurred to maintain its position there lighter in the 1970s than might otherwise have been the case. In 1975, a new price-setting formula went into effect for trade between the USSR and East European states. Before then, foreign trade prices had been revised every five years in keeping with average world market prices during the preceding five years; afterward, prices were adjusted every year in line with average world prices over the previous five-year period. Thus, by 1980 the terms of trade between the USSR and Eastern Europe had shifted a full 30 percent in the Soviet favor as compared with 1970.

East European countries also managed to borrow from the West on a massive scale to finance their efforts to cope with the deceleration of their economic growth by means of imports of Western technology and know-how. At the end of 1970, their aggregate net debt to the West stood at $6 billion, but by the end of 1975 the figure had risen to $21.2 billion. By the time 1980 drew

to a close, it had reached $55.8 billion. Of this total, Poland accounted for $22.3 billion; the German Democratic Republic, for $11.6 billion; Romania, for $9.4 billion; Hungary, for $6.6 billion; Czechoslovakia, for $3.4 billion; and Bulgaria, for $2.5 billion.

Last but not least, the mounting political ferment in Poland did not get wholly out of hand in Moscow's eyes during the decade. Although the communist regime there provoked major protests from workers in 1976 by attempting to raise prices on many basic commodities, it succeeded in restoring at least the facade of discipline within fairly short order. As a consequence, Soviet leaders did not feel any imperative to try to placate the restive Polish populace through a pronounced step-up of economic aid to the country. During the latter half of the 1970s, Poland received only about 17 percent of Soviet trade subsidies to Eastern Europe—roughly the same share that it had gotten during earlier years. For comparative purposes, it should be noted that such continuity did not pertain throughout Eastern Europe. Although Bulgaria had not been the beneficiary of any implicit trade subsidies from the USSR in 1960-69 and had garnered only a small proportion of such Soviet assistance to Eastern Europe in the early 1970s, its share of Moscow's total trade subsidies to the region in the post-1974 period ran to 17 percent.

Unfortunately for the USSR, these factors have now either disappeared or lost much of their previous significance. In the late summer of 1980, the smoldering political situation in Poland finally erupted into a large-scale popular rebellion. Seeking to help the embattled communist regime there to reassert its authority, Soviet leaders furnished an estimated $10 billion in credits and subsidies to the country in 1980-81 to shore up the battered Polish economy. This sent the USSR's economic aid to Eastern Europe soaring to an average of $20 billion annually during that two-year period.[21] The declaration of martial law by the Jaruzelski government in December 1981, it is true, ended for the moment the political drift that had so worried Moscow, but Soviet leaders still see a compelling need to pour funds into the Polish economy to prevent increasing economic hardship from sparking another political upheaval.

Eastern Europe has found it exceedingly difficult to obtain new economic credits from the West in the 1980s, and the chances of any great change in this state of affairs in the foreseeable future appear quite bleak. Wharton Econometric Forecasting Associates estimates that between 1981 and 1985 the region's net hard-currency debt to the noncommunist world will rise by only $9-17 billion, or 16-30 percent in current-dollar terms. If that estimate proves accurate, the increase in the East European debt will not even keep pace with the global rate of inflation, which is expected to average seven percent annually during 1982-85.[22] There are both economic and political reasons for this dismal outlook. As for the former, Poland and Romania have experienced problems in repaying their debts, and the threat of default still lurks in the background, especially in the case of Poland. Hence, Western banks and governments are likely to limit the expansion of their exposure in the region until the risks involved diminish. The primary political consideration has to do with heightened tension between East and West in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and the Polish government's outlawing of Solidarity in December 1981. Such an atmosphere substantially reduces the incentives for Western banks and governments to extend new credits to East European countries.

Although the 1975 pricing formula for trade between the USSR and Eastern Europe has resulted in increasingly favorable terms of trade for the USSR in the 1980s and promises to continue to do so, this trend is less and less relevant to the economic costs that hegemony in Eastern Europe entails for Moscow, for the economic circumstances now prevailing in Eastern Europe virtually compel Soviet leaders to channel large amounts of economic aid into the region in order to ensure their dominance there. As pointed out previously, economic growth has slowed drastically in all the East European

countries over the last decade or so, and no reversal of this situation seems probable at least through the mid-1980s. Consequently, the East European regimes have a reduced capacity to meet popular demands for rising standards of living and could face escalating popular unrest as a result. In such a context, Moscow can ill afford to ignore the region's economic requirements. If implicit trade subsidies persist in decreasing, then Soviet assistance will simply have to take other forms.

In light of these various considerations, the prospects that Moscow's bill for aid to Eastern Europe in the years immediately ahead will fall much below the $20 billion annually that it averaged in 1980-81 are not at all bright. Such a level of economic assistance would represent a formidable claim upon Soviet resources at any time, but that claim is particularly imposing at the moment because of the mounting economic problems that the USSR has encountered in recent years.

Since the end of the 1960s, the country's overall growth rate has been falling, and the decline has been quite sharp since 1976. The average annual rate of growth of GNP hit 5.2 percent during 1966-70 and then dropped to 3.7 percent during 1971-75, 2.7 during 1976-80, and an estimated 2.0 percent during 1981-82. In per capita terms, the figures went from 4.2 percent to 2.7 percent, 1.8 percent, and an estimated 1.2 percent during the same periods.[23] Although analysts differ as to the outlook for Moscow to turn around or even arrest this trend in the 1980s, no one anticipates a dramatic upswing in the growth rate during the decade.[24]

To make matters worse, certain conditions that during the 1970s helped somewhat to offset the economy's deteriorating performance no longer exist. Between 1970 and 1980, the USSR's terms of trade with noncommunist countries improved enormously. The prices of oil on the world market rose twentyfold, the price of gold increased fourteenfold, and the prices of many other Soviet exports of raw materials tripled. At the same time, the prices that the USSR paid for imports of manufactured goods and grain went up only 100-150 percent.[25] No developments of this sort have occurred or appear likely in the 1980s. During the 1970s, the USSR also benefited from detente with the West. In particular, the funds that Moscow invested in an arms buildup actually produced major gains in its military posture with respect to the United States, for the United States did not undertake to match that buildup. With the heightening of East-West tension in the 1980s and the consequent step-up of military outlays by the Reagan Administration, however, it will by no means be easy for the USSR even to sustain its present military position in the years ahead.

Thus, Soviet leaders now confront an increased scarcity of resources with which to pursue their diverse ends, and there is a real possibility that they might severely exacerbate this scarcity if they do not exercise restraint in the demands that they place on the economy, at least until they can reverse its slide toward stagnation. High levels of assistance to Eastern Europe could be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back in this regard.

In a military sense, the state of affairs in Eastern Europe presents two key challenges to Soviet security. To begin with, it could lower the odds that the East European armed forces would perform reliably in any operations of the Warsaw Pact against NATO forces. Such operations might take place in the context of a conflict launched by the Pact as well as one in which the Pact merely responded to an attack.

Moscow has long evinced a concern that during an internal or external crisis the East European armed forces might not carry out the tasks assigned to them, and it has sought to mitigate this possibility through various measures.[26] It has insisted that the Soviet High Command exercise operational control over all Warsaw Pact forces in wartime. It has attempted to develop a network of relationships between East European military elites and Soviet military elites. During the early years of the Warsaw Pact's existence, such efforts often involved the assignment of Soviet officers to jobs within the local East European military structures; however, the

emphasis since the 1960s has been on the training of East European officers in the USSR, joint military maneuvers, the coordination of intelligence functions, and the like. Moscow has also encouraged the communist regimes in Eastern Europe to conduct vigorous programs of political socialization in their armed forces, especially within the officer corps. The underlying premise here seems to be that acceptance of the local regimes would increase not only the likelihood that the East European armed forces would act in support of their governments, but the chances as well that those armed forces would behave as the USSR wished.

By the late 1970s, the effect of such measures on the reliability of the East European armed forces in scenarios most directly relevant to the USSR differed from country to country. They had perhaps been most successful in the case of Bulgaria. There both regular military elements and the conscripts appeared disposed to play their designated role. Elsewhere, the situation was less positive from the Soviet viewpoint. In Poland and the German Democratic Republic, a loyal officer corps with a high degree of professional expertise had emerged, but the willingness of conscripts, who made up well over half of the total military forces of the two states, to follow orders in a conflict remained open to question. This was particularly true with respect to Poland. Both regular military elements and conscripts in Hungary and Czechoslovakia continued to display resentment of Soviet military intervention in their countries in 1956 and 1968, respectively, and of Moscow's determination not to reduce its military presence on their national soil. Although the officer corps in Romania had developed a strong identification with the communist regime there, the political leadership of the state had chosen to try to prevent a war between the Warsaw Pact and NATO if at all possible and to avoid engagement in the fighting if one took place. Moreover, there was little assurance that Romanian conscripts, whose numbers constituted more than half of the state's military forces, would behave in a disciplined manner in a crisis.

As far from ideal as these circumstances might have seemed from the Soviet perspective, they could worsen considerably if the general conditions that have prevailed in the region thus far in the 1980s persist for an extended period. Indeed, the reliability of Poland's armed forces in any sort of conflict has probably dropped significantly already. By declaring martial law and suspending Solidarity in December 1981, the Polish officer corps showed that it has developed an outlook not unlike Moscow's in many respects and is prepared to act in accordance with that outlook. Yet the crackdown on the free trade union movement, and especially Soviet prodding of Polish authorities to take such a step, has visibly widened the gulf between the Polish masses and the local regime, and it is from these masses that the Polish military services must draw their conscripts. Even reducing popular disaffection to earlier levels will require intensive effort on the part of the government.

In looking to the future, it should also be underscored that the recent expansion of the Polish military's role in the political life of the country could ultimately affect the officer corps' reliability adversely from the Soviet standpoint. Although the views of the Polish military elite coincide with those of Soviet leaders in many ways, the Polish officer corps is not merely a tool of the USSR, for nationalism still runs deep within it. As events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 demonstrated, heavy involvement in politics can bring such nationalist sentiments of an East European military elite to the fore, thereby producing friction between them and Moscow.

Elsewhere in the region, the potential for a decline in the military reliability of local armed forces varies, and the differences from place to place reflect likely shadings in the attitudes of both conscripts and officers. As for conscripts, their willingness to obey orders to fight could well decrease to the extent that public disaffection with the communist regime of their state continues to mount, but for the near and medium term the level of that disaffection will probably rise at diverse rates in individual countries. Czechoslovakia and Romania seem to be the major

candidates for a rapid increase in public discontent, with the German Democratic Republic falling somewhat below them on the list. Bulgaria and Hungary appear to have less unfavorable prospects in this regard. With respect to officers, the lesser the degree to which local governments have infused them with a corporate sense of identity and insulated them from the rest of society, the greater the chances that they will mirror the dissatisfactions of the broad populace. Hence, their commitment to carry out their appointed military tasks becomes more closely tied to changes in the popular mood. At present, the perspectives of the officer corps in Czechoslovakia and Hungary seem most subject to influence by the local masses in their states, while those of the military elites in the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria appear the least so. The situation in Romania lies somewhere between these extremes but probably closer to the latter than to the former.

The second danger of a military nature that East European conditions create for the USSR has to do with transit routes and lines of communication. Currently, Moscow deploys 25 of its own divisions along the forward lines of Warsaw Pact territory. Twenty of these divisions, consisting of 380,000 men, are in the German Democratic Republic, while the remaining five, totaling 80,000 men, are in Czechoslovakia. In addition, the USSR maintains another six of its own divisions on the Pact's major strategic flanks. Of these, four (65,000 men) are in Hungary, and the other two (40,000 men) are in Poland.[27] To command, reinforce, and supply these units, the Soviet High Command must prevent disruption of transit routes and lines of communication through East European countries.

Moscow has evinced great sensitivity to this need. During the Polish upheaval of 1980-81, for instance, the Soviet news agency TASS picked up a dispatch from the Polish army newspaper, *Zolnierz Wolnosci*, which called attention to Poland's location across "the transit routes and lines of communication from the Soviet Union to the GDR." *Krasnaia Zvezda*, the Soviet military newspaper, then gave the TASS story prominent play.[28]

To some degree, of course, the USSR can reduce its dependence on these transit routes and lines of communication by means such as the stockpiling of ammunition, spare parts, and rations in forward areas and the use of airborne systems of command and control, and it has no doubt resorted to all these measures. Yet its vulnerability cannot be totally eliminated.

If popular unrest continues to rise in Eastern Europe and the local communist regimes find it increasingly hard to control, Soviet forces there might confront random impediments to their operations or even outright harrassment and sabotage. While these might not loom of overwhelming importance during peacetime, they could pose a serious problem in the event of a war with NATO.

What renders these diverse threats so difficult for Moscow to cope with is not their individual potencies but the linkages among them. Because of the character of these linkages, steps taken to alleviate one threat may wind up intensifying others.

For example, the USSR clearly possesses the military power to move into any East European state to quell popular opposition to the local communist regime there, but adopting this course of action could increase Moscow's economic woes by heightening the economic costs of preserving Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. Sustaining military forces abroad normally requires more funds than supporting them at home. More critical, a Soviet military intervention might leave the populace of the East European country sullen and recalcitrant, and inducing a populace in this frame of mind to help improve the performance of the local economy so as to prevent the national growth rate from persisting in a downward slide would constitute a formidable task. The ultimate outcome could be a need for the USSR to increase its own economic inputs to keep the country afloat economically.

At the same time, eschewing military

intervention could set in train developments that could have a highly destabilizing effect within the Soviet polity. To keep the local communist government viable, Moscow might find it essential to allow that government to make certain concessions to its workers or other elements of the population. These, in turn, could prompt similar groups within the USSR to seek comparable concessions from Soviet leaders.

Furthermore, exercising military restraint could have a negative effect on the reliability of the state's armed forces in conflicts of direct concern to the USSR. Such restraint, especially if coupled with increased Soviet permissiveness regarding the responses of the local regime to pressures from its subjects, might cause the country's officer corps to pay greater attention to the demands and aspirations of their countrymen. Otherwise, it might discover itself isolated and its corporate position in jeopardy—particularly if, as in the German Democratic Republic, it has over the years become fairly divorced from society at large. Closer ties with the general public, of course, might well fan nationalist feelings among the military elite, and these could temper the willingness of that elite to behave in accordance with Soviet wishes in a crisis.

In short, the new complexity of the challenge that the USSR faces in Eastern Europe has deprived Moscow of any pat reaction to that challenge. Under such circumstances, the approach of Soviet leaders to the challenge will in the foreseeable future probably fluctuate greatly over time and from place to place. Moscow will not, to be sure, hesitate to employ raw military power whenever it believes that this is the only alternative to a loss of its dominant position in the region, but it will in all likelihood resort to such measures only in extremes. On other occasions, it will rely essentially on exhortation, cajolery, and incentives, and the combination of these will shift constantly as it tries to tailor the mix to specific conditions. Soviet policy toward Eastern Europe in the years ahead may well turn out to be even less predictable than it has been in the recent past. Above all, defining the limits of the USSR's tolerance of aberrant behavior in the region may become increasingly hard.

NOTES

1. These data come from official East European statistical yearbooks.

2. For more detailed treatment, see Walter D. Connor, "Social Change and Stability in Eastern Europe," *Problems of Communism*, 26 (November-December 1977), 16-32; and *Socialism, Politics, and Equality: Hierarchy and Change in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979).

3. The data for 1971-75 and 1976-80 are drawn from official East European statistical yearbooks. The forecasts for 1981-85 are those of the Centrally Planned Economies Service of the Wharton Econometric Forecasting Associates. For further discussion of these projections, see Jan Vanous, "East European Economic Slowdown," *Problems of Communism*, 31 (July-August 1982), 1-19.

4. See Connor, "Social Change and Stability in Eastern Europe" and *Socialism, Politics, and Equality*.

5. On the sources for these data and estimates, see note 3.

6. For analyses of circumstances in individual countries, see intermittent reports in *Radio Free Europe Research* since the mid-1970s. See also Kenneth Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," *World Politics*, 28 (October 1975), 69-96; Connor, "Social Change and Stability in Eastern Europe," *Socialism, Politics, and Equality*, and "Dissent in Eastern Europe: A New Coalition?" *Problems of Communism*, 29 (January-February 1980), 1-17; Daniel N. Nelson, "Worker-Party Conflict in Romania," *Problems of Communism*, 30 (September-October 1981), 40-49.

7. See *Pravda*, 20 October 1982; Radio Moscow, TASS in English to North America and TASS in English, 19 October 1982; Radio Moscow in Polish to Poland, 18 June 1983.

8. See Murray Feshback, "Between the Lines of the 1979 Soviet Census," *Problems of Communism*, 31 (January-February 1982), 35.

9. S. I. Bruk, "Ethnodemographic Processes in the USSR," *Istoriia SSSR* (September-October 1980), pp. 24-47.

10. See Feshback, "Between the Lines of the 1979 Soviet Census," pp. 29, 32-33.

11. The rising assertiveness of the USSR's national minorities has been widely discussed over the last decade. For a good capsule look at the issue, see Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Social Trends," in Robert F. Byrnes, ed., *After Brezhnev: Sources of Soviet Conduct in the 1980s* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 221-33. For coverage of the Baltic peoples and the Ukrainians specifically, see intermittent reports in *Radio Liberty Research*. Of particular interest, too, are Grey Hodnett and Peter J. Potichnyj, *The Ukraine and the Czechoslovak Crisis* (Canberra: Australian National Univ., 1970) and Romuald J. Misiunas, "Baltic Identity and Sovietization," *Problems of Communism*, 31 (March-April 1982), 37-41.

12. For a summary of these reports, along with an analysis of the Estonian situation, see V. Stanley Vardys, "Polish Echoes in the Baltic," *Problems of Communism*, 32 (July-August 1983), 25-27.

13. Lapidus, "Social Trends," pp. 231-33, makes a persuasive case for this position.

14. For a rundown of the major disturbances that have come to the attention of the West, see Betsy Gidwitz, "Labor

Unrest in the Soviet Union," *Problems of Communism*, 31 (November-December 1982), 32-35.

15. John C. Michael, "The Independent Trade-Union Movement in the Soviet Union," *Radio Liberty Research*, no. 304 (11 October 1979); "U.S. Bankers in Russia Waiting Out Lull," *The New York Times*, 27 February 1978, pp. D1, D3; Craig R. Whitney, "Dissident Unionists in Moscow Pledge Continuing Struggle," *The New York Times*, 28 February 1978, p. 7.

16. For a first-rate analysis along these lines, see Alex Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?" *Problems of Communism*, 31 (November-December 1982), 1-24. Charles E. Ziegler reaches a similar conclusion in "Worker Participation and Worker Discontent in the Soviet Union," *Political Science Quarterly*, 98 (Summer 1983), 235-53.

17. Although concrete data on this point are skimpy, see S. Pukhov, "The Attitudes of Moscovites to the Solidarity Union," mimeo (1982), cited in Pravda, "Is There a Soviet Working Class?" p. 22. This reports on an unofficial opinion poll of 618 respondents, including 163 workers, that took place between late September and early December 1981. The poll appears to have been conducted professionally within the obvious constraints obtaining.

18. For a concise summary of the changing attitudes of the Soviet populace in recent years, see Lapidus, "Social Trends," pp. 233-42.

19. Unless otherwise noted, this section's discussion of the economic costs to the Soviet Union of maintaining hegemony in Eastern Europe is based upon Michael Marrese and Jan Vanous, *Implicit Subsidies and Non-Market Benefits in Soviet Trade with Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, Univ. of California, 1982); Jan Vanous, "East European Economic Slowdown," *Problems of Communism*, 31 (July-August 1982), 1-19; Michael Marrese and Jan Vanous, "Soviet Policy Options in Trade Relations with Eastern Europe," in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *Soviet Economy in the 1980's: Problems and Prospects* (Washington: GPO, 1983), Pt. 1, pp. 102-16.

20. For more extended analysis of the economic slowdown in Eastern Europe and its ramifications, see especially Vanous, "East European Economic Slowdown."

21. On Soviet aid to Poland in 1980-81, see Elizabeth Ann Goldstein, "Soviet Economic Assistance to Poland, 1980-81," in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *Soviet Economy in the 1980's*, Pt. 2, pp. 556-74. For Soviet aid to Eastern Europe as a whole during those years, see Vanous, "East European Economic Slowdown," p. 9.

22. See Vanous, "East European Economic Slowdown," pp. 10-11.

23. The growth rates for 1966-70 through 1976-80 come from Directorate of Intelligence, US Central Intelligence Agency, *Handbook of Economic Statistics, 1982*, CPAS 82-10006 (Washington: GPO, September 1982), pp. 68-69. Estimates for 1981-82 are drawn from Daniel L. Bond and Herbert S. Levine, "The Soviet Domestic Economy in the 1980s," a paper prepared for a conference on "The Soviet Economy and Military Spending" in Washington D.C., on 4 February 1983, and to be published in a volume on the Soviet Union in the 1980s edited by Helmut Sonnenfeldt.

24. For a useful summary of Western perspectives, see Bond and Levine, "The Soviet Domestic Economy in the 1980s." For insights into Soviet thinking on the issue, see M. Elizabeth Denton, "Soviet Perceptions of Economic Prospects," in US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *Soviet Economy in the 1980s*, Pt. 1, pp. 30-45, and the confidential memorandum prepared by a group of economists associated with the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences in Novosibirsk and presented to an unannounced economic conference in April 1983, as excerpted in "Excerpts From Soviet Study on the Need for an Overhaul of the Economy," *The New York Times*, 5 August 1983, p. A4.

25. Wharton Econometric Forecasting Associates, *Centrally Planned Economies Outlook*, April 1982, p. 37.

26. For detailed analysis of these measures and their effects (examined in the next paragraph), see particularly A. Ross Johnson, Robert W. Dean, and Alexander Alexiev, *East European Military Establishments: The Warsaw Pact Northern Tier* (New York: Crane Russak, 1983); Ivan Volgyes, *The Political Reliability of the Warsaw Pact Armies: The Southern Tier* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1982). The seminal source for these and other recent discussions of the reliability of East European armed forces is Dale Herspring and Ivan Volgyes, "The Political Reliability of the Armed Forces of Eastern Europe," *Armed Forces and Society*, 6 (Winter 1980), 270-96.

27. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1982-1983* (London: IISS, 1982), p. 14.

28. *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 12 December 1980.