

sonal, material and human losses that it involved, have left a profound imprint on the Soviet Union. Soviet political culture displays a very deeply felt “never again” syndrome, which strengthens the systemically determined preoccupation with national security.

Beyond this, the Marxist-Leninist world view suggests that, during the global transition to communism, conflict between socialist and capitalist systems is an ineradicable element of world politics. Along these lines, a Soviet military writer recently quoted Lenin to the effect that

the mutual relations of peoples, the entire world system of states, is defined by the struggle of a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states, at the head of which is Soviet Russia.¹⁰

This assumption of permanent hostility between social systems — a hostility which in the Soviet view received empirical confirmation with the Entente intervention in 1919-22, with World War II, and with the Cold War — has informed Soviet diplomacy since the revolution and strengthens further the Soviet preoccupation with military power. Particular historical and ideological factors thus blend with general systemic ones to produce a Soviet conception of national security which is, to put it mildly, extreme.

The bipolar structure of the international system dictates that the major putative, if not actual, threat to Soviet security is the United States. It is not particularly surprising, therefore, that the Soviet Union is engaged on a global strategic rivalry with the United States and that much of its foreign policy seems directed at undermining American influence and position throughout the system. Since the United States is the established leading actor within the system, whereas the Soviet Union is a comparatively new arrival to global politics, Soviet behaviour in the Third World in particular has had a strong revisionist character. Paradoxically, therefore, motivations which are essentially defensive in origin have favoured an offensive global strategy directed against the United States.

Such a strategy is reinforced by other aspects of the role of ideology in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. Ideology serves not only

¹⁰ Col. S. Gusarevich, “KPSS ob anti-sotsialisticheskoi blokovoï politike imperIALIZMA”, *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal (Journal of Military History)* (1981), #4, p. 4. This journal is a leading military academic publication, directed at the officer corps and intended to improve officers’ understanding of historical and doctrinal questions.