

tary is reported to have said that he perceived no clear evidence of a change in actual force structure.

Second, both alliances issued agreed statements setting out their positions as they approached the Vienna talks on conventional (non-nuclear) forces. The NATO statement placed much emphasis on the need to achieve, by negotiation, a closer balance of forces, but also emphasized, as a matter of high priority, the elimination of the capability for launching surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action. The Warsaw Treaty Organization statement called for negotiated reductions in forces in the course of which existing imbalances would be eliminated, and it repeated the call for talks on defensive doctrine. So far the politicians and the public in many NATO countries seem to have little knowledge of Mr. Gorbachev's new position or of the issue of non-offensive defence as an alternative to present strategies. Wider understanding and more public debate of the possibilities is needed in both east and west. How does the present strategy of each side compare with a defensive strategy? How could a change to a defensive strategy be implemented?

PRESENT STRATEGIES

Since 1945, thinking about non-nuclear warfare in Europe has been dominated on both sides by the notion of mobile armoured warfare which was inherited from the Second World War.

Mobile warfare aims to produce great advances on land by tanks, self-propelled artillery and mechanized infantry, supported by aircraft, following either a successful surprise attack or an intense battle in which one side wears down the other, breaks out and then sweeps forward. Surprise attacks are associated principally with the early phases of the Second World War, notably Hitler's lightning wars (blitzkriegs) against Poland and France. The slogging matches are associated with the second phase of the war when the allies, with their superior combined economic and military force coming into play, were checking and pushing back the Germans. The Battle of Kursk on the Russian front, when thousands of tanks were employed on each side—and thousands were destroyed—is the epic example.

There were in fact long periods when the war was relatively static. The defensive, as always, enjoyed advantages. If defending forces were well-led and well-prepared, in particular if they were dug-in and were using mines and earthworks, they were hard to overcome. The attacker had to concentrate his forces, build up a large numerical superiority at one or more points and try to achieve surprise by manoeuvre and deception. The defender for his part needed to be able to manoeuvre his forces so as to meet the attacker, if possible by tempting

him into a trap where he could be surrounded. There was a high premium on manoeuvre and surprise, hence on mobility. The aim was to have a decisive battle, achieve a decisive victory and sweep forward so fast that your opponent would be overwhelmed and demoralized.

These are the basic ideas, focused on the tank and other armoured fighting vehicles supported by aircraft, that have been carried forward, with modification, by both alliances.

This form of warfare relies on the internal combustion engine, and is being increasingly complicated and challenged in the era of electronics; the vehicles (tanks, artillery, armoured personnel carriers, aircraft and ships) have become progressively more vulnerable to precision-guided munitions.

In fact the two sides are not symmetrical in terms of their force structures or their doctrines.

The Warsaw Pact appears to have numerical superiority in non-nuclear forces — though how much and what it is worth is debatable — and has had the doctrine until now that, if attacked, it would swiftly take the offensive. There are several plausible explanations for this doctrine. One is that after the war, faced by the Western nuclear monopoly and then nuclear superiority, the Soviets countered by going for conventional superiority in Europe so that they could hold Europe in pawn.

Another is that in drawing up contingency plans (which is the job of military staffs) for a non-nuclear war in Europe, the rational strategy for the Warsaw Pact was to plan to advance swiftly to the Atlantic before the United States, having mobilized its resources, could pour forces and supplies into Europe, as it did in the two world wars. Other explanations are that the Soviets have sought to avoid war flowing into their own territory, causing suffering as it did during the Great Patriotic War (their name for the Second World War); and that they seek to avoid war flowing into the countries of Eastern Europe whose loyalty is questionable.

These explanations are not mutually exclusive; they may all have been in play; and we cannot know their relative importance. But the Soviet emphasis on the offensive has been articulated in their military literature since the 1920s and has been visible in the structure, deployment and training of the Warsaw Pact's forces.

On the NATO side, the *character* of the forces is not very different from that of the Warsaw Pact. But, because the forces are weaker, the doctrine was designed to deter the Warsaw Pact from attack. It prescribes a spoiling battle to hold the Warsaw Pact and then a swift resort to the first use of nuclear weapons if NATO forces begin to be overrun.

The interaction of these two doctrines and postures has