The Soviet threat is real

The Reagan Administration has repeatedly warned of the growing Soviet threat to American security. Unfortunately, President Reagan has adopted a simplistic military approach to deal with this problem. His war rhetoric, nuclear arms buildups, weapons sales, and support of repressive dictatorships only escalates tensions and instability without addressing the US-Soviet geopolitical struggle.

The Reagan Administration has come to characterize the Soviet government as a repressive totalitarian regime unafraid to use military force to advance its political aims. Despite growing economic problems and growing worker unrest, the Soviet bloc continues to expand its formidable military machine at the expense of its civilian sector. The USSR, and its proxies have exploited political, economic, and military might to impose themselves on Southeast Asia to Western Europe, Soviet transgressions range from the invasion of Afghanistan to use of chemical weapons in Afghanistan to support of savage commuter dictatorships around the globe. The chilling implications of totalitarian law in Poland has led to new Western alleviation of Soviet duplicity. Recognizing the implications of Soviet actions, the US must restrain the obstreperous Soviet Union while maintaining world peace.

Even Americans who believe in nuclear annihilation must be central to such a policy, yet President Reagan has ignored this necessity. His Administration's lone comments on nuclear warfare have fed Soviet propagandists while frightening United States allies and citizens. In addition, the White House has committed huge quantities of America's resources to nuclear overkill, thereby increasing the military tensions that lead to accidental baboonism and destabilizing the strategic balance. This escalation fails to deter the Soviets. President Reagan should realize that serious arms control negotiations are necessary to stop the various nuclear warfare race - He should act accordingly.

The Administration's indiscriminate use of warfare risks have not, while not increasing security. Weapons sales to Latin America, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia have not forged lasting friendships and have often stimulated anti-US sentiment in coupled regions. US restraint on this matter would earn widespread praise and further the cause of peace.

President Reagan is further damaging US interests by supporting brutal regimes in El Salvador, Argentina, South Africa, and elsewhere. This misguided policy antagonizes US allies, weakens domestic resolve.

To the Editor:

The plan to inscribe the names of MIT's Korean and Vietnamese war dead in Lobby 10 seems to me ill timed and ill advised. This is a time of growing international concern over what many see as signs of approaching war: a breakdown in communication between the superpowers, increasing belligerent public statements, severing of scientific and cultural exchanges, and dramatic increases in military budgets. Our present government is run by men who see all world conflicts as a confrontation between our way of life and that of the Soviet Union. They have made the vocabulary of nuclear annihilation and threat commonplace and appear ready to destroy the world in order to save it.

While I do not think the Korean or Vietnamese wars are winnable, I respect the memory of those who died in them. Most of them were dedicated, some were not. Some were brave. Most were caught up in events beyond their control. This is what I must change. Although Mr. Reagan and his patrons have not learned the central lessons of Korea and Vietnam, we must endeavor to. Lessons about the limits of military power in a changing world. Lessons about the difference between official pronouncements and reality. Lessons about the responsibility of individuals to think critically about and participate in the foreign policy decisions of their government. We cannot afford to fall into the familiar pattern: both sides arm in the name of "defence," marching to war for ideology and economics, and in the aftermath, building memorials to the dead.

In lobby 10 we have the view of President Walker concerning the "Great War," a slightly obsolescent reference to World War I: "only victory remains and a fame forever secured." This is nonsense. Victory does not remain. In recent years we have been awash in reminders of defeat. What he called fame can as easily be looked at as a kind of grim folk tale.

I do not oppose the idea of memorializing a group of names, with no indication that they were war dead, or that any serious thought has been given to the prevention of war strikes et al as an inappropriate remembrance of the dead and a dangerous disservice to the living.

Steven L. Wertheim, G