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# The Exaggeration of American Vulnerability: The Anatomy of a Tradition

[John A. Thompson](#)

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The end of the Cold War has led not only to revised views about the threat the Soviet Union now poses to the West but also to reassessments of the threat it was supposed to constitute in the past. Strobe Talbott, for

example, has concluded that "for more than four decades, Western policy has been based on a grotesque exaggeration of what the U.S.S.R. could do if it wanted, therefore what it might do, therefore what the West must be prepared to do in response.... Worst-case assumptions about Soviet intentions have fed, and fed upon, worst-case assumptions about Soviet capabilities."<sup>1</sup>

...

Exaggerations of the Soviet threat in the past few decades can no doubt be explained in part by factors specific to this particular case—the American phobia about communism, for example, or the resonance in the postwar era of the...

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