A RAND NOTE

THE STATE OF WESTERN RESEARCH ON SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY AND POLICY

Benjamin S. Lambeth

October 1984

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Prepared for

The United States Air Force

Rand
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PREFACE

This Note is a preliminary stocktaking of Western research on Soviet strategic policy. It traces the evolution of the field since its beginnings in the 1950s, reviews the ongoing debate over major issues regarding the Soviet "threat," discusses some important rules of evidence and interpretation as they apply to Soviet military research, and suggests new directions the field might profitably take in the years ahead. Although it addresses numerous aspects of the Soviet scene that affect U.S. national security, it is especially concerned with Soviet military doctrine and its bearing on Soviet force planning and behavior.

The analysis presented here draws on material originally assembled for a since-terminated project entitled "The Soviet Way of War: An Integrated Approach to Soviet Doctrine and Capabilities." It was completed as a concept development effort under the Project AIR FORCE National Security Strategies Program. With modest revisions, it will appear as portions of several chapters in a book-length study now being prepared by the author, under Rand corporate sponsorship, on the doctrinal and policy dimensions of the Soviet strategic challenge. At this stage, it is impressionistic and touches only cursorily on many points that will be developed more fully in that larger study.

Earlier versions of this Note were presented at a seminar of the Rand-UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior on April 4, 1984, and at a Conference on Soviet Military Policy held at Columbia University on April 13-14, 1984.

SUMMARY

Over the past two decades, the study of Soviet military affairs has become a prime focus of Western research. This upsurge of interest is almost entirely the result of the comprehensive military buildup that has proceeded uninterrupted since the advent of the Brezhnev regime in 1964. During the years of American superiority, Soviet military thought was typically dismissed as irrelevant. Once it became clear that Moscow was no longer content to settle for a second-best position in the nuclear balance, however, that complacent attitude quickly yielded to mounting concern over Soviet strategy, with its stress on such themes as preemption and the feasibility of victory. Today, with nuclear parity a fact of life, Soviet strategy is no longer a topic of purely academic interest. It now occupies center stage as a major concern of American defense policy.

THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET MILITARY STUDIES

Serious inquiry into the Soviet military began in the early 1950s, when The Rand Corporation, under U.S. Air Force sponsorship, undertook an effort to explore the motive forces behind Soviet domestic and international conduct. Before that time, the only work that could be described as "Soviet military research" was a modest body of historical writing on the formation and combat experiences of the Red Army. Rand's early work, by contrast, sought to describe the operational principles that underlay Soviet military forces and behavior. By endorsing and encouraging this research, the USAF made an investment in the future and, unbeknown to itself at the time, played a pivotal role in "inventing" the field of Soviet military studies.

A "second wave" of research took form during the mid-1960s, when the commencement of the post-Khrushchev buildup indicated that the superpower confrontation had entered a new and potentially dangerous phase. Throughout the preceding era, the predominant focus was on doctrinal issues. By contrast, the field expanded considerably during this period to take account of such associated issues as party-military

relations, R&D and weapons acquisition, arms control interests, and crisis behavior.

Along with this broadening of the field, however, came a striking growth in contention and acrimony, as writers of diverse persuasions sought to support their opposing interpretations of the Soviet buildup. This politicization of Soviet military analysis reflected a deep divergence of view over the character of Soviet doctrine and its impact on Soviet policy. In more recent years, there have been encouraging signs of a trend toward greater sophistication and maturity in Soviet military research. Nevertheless, the debate over fundamentals continues. Students of Soviet affairs are no closer than before to agreement on the practical significance of our increasingly detailed factual knowledge about Soviet military matters.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WESTERN DEBATE

There is little argument over the Soviet doctrinal image of a future war per se. The real differences emerge when we look behind this declaratory record in search of its actual bearing on Soviet military planning. It is the overall character of the Soviet "threat," not Soviet doctrine in isolation, that primarily energizes the U.S. national security debate. Some of this contention revolves about legitimate differences over the meaning of ambiguous data. For the most part, however, it stems from conflicting a priori assumptions about the adversary.

Both sides reveal problems in the way they treat the evidence. Conservatives tend to engage excessively in uncritical quotation-mongering, as though Soviet doctrine were all-commanding in its influence on Soviet behavior and spoke for itself as a reflection of underlying Soviet premises and motivations. Arms controllers, by contrast, are often too quick to dismiss Soviet doctrine as meaningless internal exhortation, whose emphasis on such martial themes as preemption and victory cannot be taken seriously by top-level civilian leaders who presumably "know better."

The truth most likely lies somewhere in between. For example, some Western analysts have interpreted recent Soviet statements disavowing the "winnability" of nuclear war as "proof" that the Soviets have

finally discarded their traditional stance on this issue. Yet when Soviet leaders insist that such a war would be an unmitigated disaster for the USSR, they are careful to avoid suggesting that it is no longer a contingency the Soviet Union must plan for all the same. In all likelihood, they seek the best of both worlds: a force posture with a plausible war-winning capability whose very credibility in the eyes of adversaries might enhance deterrence in the first place--but on terms congenial to Soviet interests.

A central premise of Soviet doctrine is the old Roman notion that if you want peace, you had best prepare for war. This is far removed from most mainstream American approaches to deterrence. Yet it scarcely means that the Soviets take nuclear war lightly. Deterrence is no less a transcendent priority for them than it is for us. Unlike many Westerners who see deterrence and war-planning as a contradiction, however, the Soviets see them as opposite sides of the same coin. In Soviet reasoning, the idea that a state should passively consign its fate to some autonomous, self-stabilizing "system" of deterrence based on mutual vulnerability borders on nonsense.

THE CASE OF THE TULA LINE

Since the mid-1970s, there has been a major shift in Soviet declaratory rhetoric on nuclear policy. This so-called "Tula line" (named after a major address given by Brezhnev in that city in 1977) insists that the USSR does not seek superiority, disavows any planning for preemption, repudiates the idea that there can be a "victor" in nuclear war, and espouses a military doctrine that is exclusively defensive. In recent years, these themes have become standard fare in Soviet propaganda posturing. Many in the West are persuaded that they reflect a basic change in Soviet doctrine. Yet there are troublesome aspects of the "Tula line" that require closer examination.

Several continuing undercurrents in Soviet policy make it particularly hard to swallow Moscow's recent claims that its "old" doctrine has been discarded. First, senior military figures who have endorsed the Tula principles at one level have repeatedly given voice in other contexts to the continued primacy of all the classic principles of Soviet military thought. Second, even those speeches and publications

expressly aimed at promulgating the Tula message have taken care to avoid using formulations that would directly contradict established doctrinal premises. Third, and most revealing, there is nothing in recent Soviet R&D and weapons development that would indicate any substantial departure from the basic doctrinal guidance that has governed Soviet force development since the buildup began two decades ago.

The recent Soviet no-first-use vow likewise entails less than meets the eye. Not only is it compatible with Soviet doctrine when viewed in an operational context; it makes sense on military as well as political grounds. Unlike the past, when Soviet doctrine envisaged a theater offensive in which nuclear strikes would occur conjointly with conventional operations, the Soviet armed forces today are fully dual-capable. So long as Soviet conventional operations in a European war went according to plan, Soviet commanders would have no reason to initiate nuclear use and every incentive to observe nuclear restraint. There is even reason to believe that the Soviets would be prepared to countenance a small number of NATO demonstrative nuclear strikes without replying, so long as their conventional offensive remained undisrupted. But there is no ground for believing that they have relinquished their traditional determination to land the first *massive* nuclear blow in any situation where they would risk operational defeat by doing anything less.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

There is a sense in some quarters that Soviet military research has grown stale, with available materials exhausted, no new "discoveries" waiting to be made, and analysts largely reduced to rehashing old data and old arguments. In one respect, there may be some merit to this lament. Where official Soviet attitudes regarding most of the "big-picture" issues of doctrine and policy are concerned, we probably know about as much as we are going to learn from available materials.

However, there remains ample room for closer looks at the various factors that link Soviet doctrine to reality. Especially pressing in this regard is the need to broaden our appreciation of how Soviet forces would most likely be brought to bear in combat. Any study of Soviet

doctrine and hardware that ignores the elements of human prowess and operational style that will largely determine their practical leverage will inevitably distort our resultant image of the "threat." Accordingly, we need to begin displacing simple bean-counting of Soviet forces and quotational exegesis of Soviet doctrinal writings with more integrated looks into the Soviet armed forces as they really are.

This argument for developing a more balanced perspective with due attention to Soviet vulnerabilities as well as strengths, however, is anything but an invitation to render the Soviet military three feet short. There has been an unfortunate recent tendency by certain people longer on convictions than information to treat known or suspected Soviet deficiencies as a collective excuse for Western indifference, as though there existed no compensating advantages. Such efforts are an affront to responsible net assessment.

Appreciation of Soviet vulnerabilities can never provide a sufficient basis for Western security planning, if only because of the indeterminacy of so much of the pertinent evidence. Nevertheless, it can help ease our natural urge to overstate Soviet capabilities. Although the dangers of complacency are clear enough, exaggeration of Soviet prowess can be equally harmful in discrediting otherwise valid arguments for U.S. force posture improvements.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the study of Soviet military affairs has grown from an obscure backwater into a prime focus of Western research. Before the mid-1960s, it was largely the preserve of a small group of specialists whose principal writings could be counted on one hand. Today, by contrast, the field has blossomed into a minor national industry. Everybody, it seems, is now a Soviet military "expert" after a fashion. Preoccupation with Soviet defense issues no longer represents the exclusive domain of Sovietologists. It now commands the attention of broad sectors of the defense community and the concerned public as well.

Furthermore, the scope of analysis has expanded beyond its initial concentration on doctrine and concepts to include such related subjects as Soviet force characteristics, R&D trends, military politics, and associated topics that bear on the Soviet strategic challenge. As this broadened inquiry has added to the richness of information regarding the Soviet armed forces, it has also occasioned a dramatic growth in the volume of published writing on the Soviet military.[1] One can hardly pick up a defense or foreign-affairs periodical any longer without encountering at least one contribution on some aspect of the Soviet military scene.

The reasons for this upsurge of interest can be traced directly to the comprehensive buildup of Soviet military power that has proceeded uninterrupted since the advent of the Brezhnev regime in 1964. As long as the United States enjoyed overwhelming strategic superiority, Soviet attitudes about war and peace mattered little to most American policymakers. The dominant tendency during the early 1960s was to

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[1]It now takes whole books just to list and cross-reference this literature. See, for example, Myron J. Smith, Jr., *The Soviet Air and Strategic Rocket Forces, 1939-1980: A Guide to Sources in English* (Oxford: Clio Press, Ltd., 1981) and, by the same author, *The Soviet Navy, 1941-1978: A Guide to Sources in English* (Oxford: Clio Press, Ltd., 1979). For an earlier bibliography, see also Michael Parrish, *The Soviet Armed Forces: Books in English, 1950-1967* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970).

dismiss Soviet doctrinal views as anachronistic and irrelevant, given the incapacity of the Soviet Union's miniscule nuclear posture to lend them much credibility.[2]

Once it became clear, however, that the Soviets were no longer content to settle for a second-best position in the superpower relationship, this complacent view became quickly displaced by mounting concern over Soviet nuclear strategy, with its stress on such disturbing themes as preemption and the feasibility of victory. It has long been widely recognized that in any situation where the opposing sides are more or less equal in military strength, the side more likely to prevail is the side with the more astute strategic concepts.[3] With Soviet parity in nuclear forces increasingly a fact of life, it was inevitable that the finer points of Soviet doctrine and strategy would eventually cease being topics of purely academic inquiry and instead would begin to occupy center stage as major concerns of American policy.

As a result of the Soviet buildup, Western attitudes toward the Soviet military have swung from measured concern to outright alarm in some quarters. Interestingly, some commentators have gone so far as to suggest that in light of the present strategic balance, the United States might be well advised to take a page from *Soviet* military doctrine and adopt the principles of Soviet strategy as the most

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[2]As the 1960s began, the Soviet Union had virtually no intercontinental-range forces capable of supporting its doctrinal stress on preemption. At the same time, the Soviet leadership was showing no inclination to embrace the concept of stable mutual deterrence that had lately come into vogue among American defense intellectuals. This led one commentator to note what was becoming increasingly regarded as "a serious lag in Soviet strategic thinking"--as though Moscow's refusal to view the nuclear predicament in U.S. terms somehow attested to an inherently retrograde approach toward dealing with security matters. See Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr., "Russian Military Development," *Current History*, November 1960, pp. 262-266.

[3]There is a rich history of cases where superior operational prowess has even compensated for notable *deficiencies* in military strength. For example, on the eve of the Nazi attack in 1940, France looked substantially better than Germany by most static measures of military capability (particularly manpower and tanks). Nevertheless, it promptly collapsed under the weight of its own maldeployment of forces and superior German tactical acumen. See Jeffrey Record, "France 1940 and the NATO Center 1980: Some Disquieting Comparisons," *Strategic Review*, Summer 1980, pp. 67-74.

effective counterdeterrent to the Soviet threat.[4] This is a significant departure indeed from the old days of Western hubris, when U.S. defense officials sought to bring the Soviet Union into a dialogue based on acceptance of the "natural" superiority of Western strategic logic.[5] This reversal of earlier expectations that Soviet doctrine would eventually conform with our own is plainly apparent in the tendency of U.S. nuclear guidance since the mid-1970s to emulate some of the "warfighting" themes that have long been prominent in Soviet military thought.[6] Ironically, this has given rise to a movement on the part of some to decry what is now portrayed as our own growing "reverse convergence" toward accepted Soviet security solutions.[7]

Not surprisingly, along with the growth of the Soviet military challenge, the study of Soviet doctrine and capabilities has become increasingly dominated by contention as various commentators have used common data to draw often widely divergent interpretations of the Soviet threat. Yet for all the expansion the field has undergone in recent

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[4]The clearest expression of this sentiment is Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne, "Victory is Possible," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1980, pp. 14-27.

[5]Underlying that effort was an intellectual outlook that saw the world, in Stanley Hoffmann's phrase, as merely a projection of American rationality, in which "opponents are supposed either to reason like Americans or to be in need of education bringing them to this level." *Gulliver's Troubles, or the Setting of American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 160.

[6]Among other things, this trend has entailed an increase in the priority assigned to countermilitary targeting in U.S. nuclear contingency plans and a more explicit search for options designed to maintain the operational initiative in case of a catastrophic deterrence failure. The highlights of this policy shift can be gathered from Desmond Ball, *Deja Vu: The Return to Counterforce in the Nixon Administration* (Santa Monica: California Seminar on Arms Control and Foreign Policy, December 1974); Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Selective Nuclear Options in American and Soviet Strategic Policy* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-2034-DDRE, December 1976); Desmond Ball, *Developments in U.S. Strategic Nuclear Policy Under the Carter Administration*, ACIS Working Paper No. 21 (Los Angeles: Center for International and Strategic Affairs, UCLA, February 1980); and Barry R. Posen and Stephen Van Evera, "Defense Policy and the Reagan Administration: Departure from Containment," *International Security*, Summer 1983, pp. 3-45.

[7]See Donald W. Hanson, "Is Soviet Strategic Doctrine Superior?" *International Security*, Winter 1982/1983, pp. 61-83, and the critique of the "Sovietization" of American strategy in Leon Wieseltier, "Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace," *The New Republic*, January 10 and 17, 1983, pp. 24-28.

years, there has been remarkably little effort within the community to attempt a stocktaking of our progress. After all is said and done, what do we really *know* about Soviet military thinking and how it bears on Soviet force development? What constitutes "evidence" in this difficult field, in which the object of inquiry is beset by secrecy, treats disinformation as a high art form, and makes every effort to conceal its security preparations from scrutiny by the outside world?

To be sure, the Soviet Union is not totally opaque. The old Churchillian image of the USSR as a "riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma" is plainly inappropriate to the facts of today's Soviet force expansion and modernization, even if the processes and motivations that lie behind them remain less than self-evident. All the same, we may know less than we think about many aspects of the Soviet military scene. Examples of such uncertainty include Soviet leadership views on the requirements of deterrence, the relevance of doctrine in shaping Soviet force posture trends, the interplay between technology and strategy in Soviet defense decisionmaking, and perhaps most important, what the Soviet Union might actually do if it found itself caught in a serious military showdown with the West. In the face of such uncertainty, how much confidence should we ascribe to what we think we know about these matters? Where must hard "facts" yield to speculation and informed judgment? In what instances are we obliged to be frank in conceding ignorance?

This Note is a first-order exercise in professional *samokritika*. Its object is to help lay down a basis for debate about current Western research on the Soviet military, primarily regarding strategic nuclear issues. To be clear about its boundaries, the Note does not address such associated matters as Soviet defense economics; the weapons acquisition process; concepts and capabilities for conventional war; recent developments in the Soviet Navy, especially with regard to nonnuclear missions; the role of military power as a tool of Soviet policy in third areas; and the whole complex of issues (manpower, morale, ethnic problems, unit efficiency and reliability, and so on) that might be lumped for convenience under the general heading of Soviet military sociology. I will refer to these and related topics from time to time for illustrative material, but my main goal is to offer a

framework for thinking about Moscow's broader outlook on its security dilemma.

The Note begins with a brief review of the field's evolution since its inception in the early 1950s. It then examines the current Western debate over Soviet strategic motivations, with a view toward highlighting outstanding issues and identifying some of the problems that attend their treatment by the various contending schools of thought. Following that, it deals with various problems of interpretation that continue to bedevil the study of Soviet strategic matters and reviews some important rules of evidence that all of us tend to forget on occasion. Finally, it offers some concluding thoughts on our current state of knowledge and suggests a path of inquiry which future research efforts might usefully pursue. In the process, I will not refrain from venturing substantive judgments of my own whenever it seems appropriate to do so. My main interest, however, concerns analytical issues rather than specific points of interpretation. Insofar as I adopt a personal viewpoint, I will mainly be seeking to stress the complexity of issues and arbitrate opposing schools of thought rather than to take sides one way or the other in the debate. Ultimately, the consensus I seek does not concern any particular perspective on the Soviet challenge so much as the broader state of the field and the character of the analytical tasks we still face.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET MILITARY STUDIES

Serious Western inquiry into the Soviet military began in the early 1950s, when The Rand Corporation (under U.S. Air Force sponsorship) undertook an effort to penetrate the "Iron Curtain" and explore the various forces that underlay Soviet domestic and international conduct.[1] A major focus of Rand's research in this regard concerned the sources of Soviet military and economic power at a time when both were all but unobservable to outsiders because of pervasive Soviet secrecy. By endorsing and encouraging this work, the Air Force in effect made a blind investment in the future and, unbeknown to itself at the time, played a pivotal role in "inventing" the field of Soviet military studies. Without its early support, the field would doubtless have eventually emerged in any case, if only because of the steady growth in Soviet power and international assertiveness. But it would have been much longer to mature and would have had to work overtime in catching up on the extensive research into Soviet military thought that was done almost exclusively at Rand during that formative decade.

THE EARLY YEARS

Although numerous individuals later to rise to national prominence involved themselves to varying degrees in this research, credit for breaking first ground properly belongs to Raymond Garthoff, whose *Soviet Military Doctrine* introduced the Western world to the essentials of Soviet thought on the conduct of war.[2] Before its publication in 1953,

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[1]Among the more prominent early products of this effort were Margaret Mead, *Soviet Attitudes Toward Authority* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951); Nathan Leites, *A Study of Bolshevism* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951); Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952); Abram Bergson and Hans Heymann, *Soviet National Income and Product, 1940-1948* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954); Myron Rush, *The Rise of Khrushchev* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1958); and Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). For more on the USAF tie to Rand that supported this research, see Bruce L. R. Smith, *The RAND Corporation: Case Study of a Non-Profit Advisory Corporation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

[2]Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Military Doctrine* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953).

the only work that could be described as "Soviet military research" was a modest body of historical writing on the formation and combat experiences of the Red Army.[3] By contrast, Garthoff's pioneering study was based on an exhaustive survey of available Soviet military literature and sought to describe the operational principles that lay behind Soviet wartime behavior.

Subsequent work by this first generation built on the foundation laid by Garthoff and broadened our knowledge by exploring the evolving Soviet perspective on the strategic implications of nuclear weapons. This research occurred more or less in lockstep with the unfolding internal Soviet political-military debate on that subject. Garthoff and Herbert Dinerstein each produced seminal studies during the late 1950s that carefully charted the emergence of a distinct Soviet approach to nuclear strategy, starting with the initial ferment stimulated by the death of Stalin and proceeding through the debate over the relevance of his enshrined "permanently operating factors" toward final acceptance of a new consensus embracing the criticality of surprise and preemption in Soviet strategy.[4]

With the early 1960s came the Sokolovskii volume and its introduction to Western observers.[5] This collaborative undertaking (the first sustained Soviet treatment of military concepts since the publication of General Svechin's *Strategiia* in 1926) codified the internal consensus on military doctrine that finally emerged in the wake of the post-Stalin strategic debate. It quickly became a centerpiece of Western commentary on Soviet military trends and was analyzed

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[3]See, for example, Dmitri Fedotoff-White, *The Growth of the Red Army* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944) and W. E. D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, *The Russian Campaigns of 1941-43* (New York: Penguin Books, 1944). The only significant treatment of Soviet military concepts emphasized ideological and social rather than operational factors. See Edward Meade Earle, "Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin: Soviet Concepts of War," in Edward Meade Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944).

[4]Raymond L. Garthoff, *Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958) and H. S. Dinerstein, *War and the Soviet Union* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959).

[5]Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii, ed., *Voennaia strategiia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1962). Later editions of this compendium were published in 1963 and 1968.

extensively by Thomas Wolfe in a translation of the book produced by Rand.[6] Shortly thereafter, Wolfe authored a separate account of Soviet military policy that illuminated Soviet views on the whole spectrum of force employment and identified outstanding issues in the continuing Soviet defense debate.[7] All this activity, beginning with Garthoff's initial work a decade earlier, took place at a time when Western deterrence theory and strategic research were still in their formative period. An early attempt was made by Arnold Horelick and Myron Rush to bridge the two fields by relating Soviet military policy to Soviet foreign conduct and the broader U.S.-Soviet strategic relationship.[8] By and large, however, Soviet military studies and parallel research on Western defense issues remained separate domains of activity without much cross-communication.

Among the distinctive features of this generation of Soviet military analysts (aside from the path-breaking nature of their contributions) were their abiding professionalism and attention to detail. All were bona fide Soviet specialists with solid Russian language skills. They understood Soviet history, politics, and culture and were well suited to interpreting Soviet materials with due sensitivity to their contextual setting. Although their writings were scarcely free of opinion, they remained marked by a notable absence of cant.[9] Their enduring contribution was a comprehensive portrait of the development, taxonomy, and principal themes of Soviet military thought. The implications of these findings for U.S. policy were left, for the most part, for others to figure out.

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[6]Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii, ed., *Soviet Military Strategy*, translated with an introduction and analytical comments by H. S. Dinerstein, Leon Goure, and Thomas W. Wolfe of The Rand Corporation (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964).

[7]Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

[8]Arnold L. Horelick and Myron Rush, *Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

[9]One of my Rand colleagues has chided me for idealizing the collective work of this generation. While mindful of the temptation to contrast recent efforts with a stylized image of supposedly "better" research done during the "good old days," I stand by my view (which I believe is shared by most observers) that those studies remain unsurpassed in quality, depth of analysis, and standards of scholarship.

BROADENED HORIZONS AND THE ADVENT OF CONTROVERSY

A "second wave" of Soviet military studies in the United States began to take form during the mid-1960s, when the ouster of Khrushchev, the commencement of the comprehensive Soviet buildup under Brezhnev, and the clear challenge to American security it implied all signalled that the U.S.-Soviet relationship had entered a new and potentially dangerous phase. This stage in the development of the field was triggered by heightened concern over the threat generated by Moscow's march toward strategic parity. Its distinctive traits included a greatly expanded roster of claimants to expertise (or at least a concerned voice) on matters related to the Soviet challenge and, not surprisingly, a marked burgeoning in the volume of published writing on the subject. A related aspect was the progressive influx of new commentators from diverse corners of the national security community who lacked any background in Soviet area studies.

The most salient hallmark of this phase in the field's development was a significant growth in the scope of inquiry it embraced. During the preceding era, the predominant focus of research was on the theoretical content of Soviet doctrine. Although preoccupation with this topic scarcely abated during the subsequent period, the field nevertheless expanded considerably to take account of such associated issues as Soviet Party-military relations, force planning and defense policy processes, R&D and weapons acquisition, and international crisis behavior.[10] In consonance with this increased interest in the political

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[10]The pioneering work in the first area was Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967). Notable contributions to the other three topics were Matthew P. Gallagher and Karl Spielmann, Jr., *Soviet Decisionmaking for Defense: A Critique of U.S. Perspectives on the Arms Race* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1972) and David Holloway, "Technology and Political Decision in Soviet Armaments Policy," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974; Arthur Alexander, *R&D in Soviet Aviation* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-589-PR, November 1970) and *Armor Development in the Soviet Union and the United States* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-1860-NA, June 1976); and Hannes Adomeit, *Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior: From Confrontation to Coexistence*, Adelphi Papers No. 101 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1973).

and institutional aspects of Soviet military affairs, efforts were made (with varying degrees of success) to apply Western models of decisionmaking toward explaining Soviet political-military behavior.[11] Relatedly, alongside the disturbing growth of Soviet intercontinental attack capabilities came a commensurate increase in the attention given to Soviet weapons characteristics, targeting concepts, and technology trends. Finally, with the first inklings of a potential SALT dialogue that began to appear around 1967, there arose a concomitant probing of Soviet interest in arms control--in contrast to previous work during the late 1950s and early 1960s, which largely keyed on the diplomatic and propaganda aspects of Soviet "disarmament" posturing.[12]

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[11]The most notable of these was Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little-Brown, 1971). See also Edward L. Warner, III, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics: An Institutional Analysis* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1977). These works were useful in demonstrating that even a one-party authoritarian system cannot always be understood solely from a unitary-actor perspective. The problem with applying Western decision theories to the Soviet Union, however, is that they demand a degree of access rarely available because of Soviet secrecy and societal closure. Moreover, they are typically geared toward the most readily comparable features of those systems under investigation. In the Soviet case, however, it is often the unique aspects that are most interesting--and also most influential in governing Soviet behavior. William Odom has observed that "the most persuasive argument for the totalitarian model is to try to imagine the study of Soviet politics without it. We understand contemporary Soviet politics more by the ways in which it departs from the totalitarian model than we do from new models." "A Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics," *World Politics*, July 1976, p. 567. For a more general critique, see also Arnold L. Horelick, A. Ross Johnson, and John D. Steinbruner, *The Study of Soviet Foreign Policy: A Review of Decision-Theory-Related Approaches* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-1334, November 1973).

[12]See, for example, Roman Kolkowicz, Matthew P. Gallagher, and Benjamin S. Lambeth, with Walter C. Clemens and Peter Colm, *The Soviet Union and Arms Control: A Superpower Dilemma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), and Thomas W. Wolfe, "Soviet Interests in SALT," in William R. Kintner and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., eds., *SALT: Implications for Arms Control in the 1970s* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), pp. 21-54. The principal earlier work on Soviet "disarmament" policy was John W. Spanier, *The Politics of Disarmament: A Study in Soviet-American Gamesmanship* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962). Useful transitional studies were Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union and Disarmament* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), and Thomas B. Larson, *Disarmament and Soviet Policy, 1964-1968* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968). For further discussion, see Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Arms Control and Defense Planning in Soviet Strategic Policy," in Richard Burt, ed., *Arms Control and*

Along with this broadening of the field, however, came a striking growth in the contentiousness of Western commentary on the Soviet military. The dispassionate tone that largely prevailed during the 1950s and 1960s increasingly gave way to countervailing polemics and special pleading for assorted points of view, as writers of diverse persuasions sought to marshal available data to support their opposing interpretations of the Soviet buildup. This increasing politicization of the Soviet military field was perhaps inevitable in light of the mounting policy ramifications of the Soviet force modernization effort, which understandably constituted a source of deep concern for U.S. defense planners. Insofar as it fostered debate among serious analysts who could disagree honestly over a mixed and ambiguous body of data, this controversy was a healthy stimulus for all protagonists to do better research.

The problem, however, was that the field also became increasingly flooded by dilettantism and superficiality as more and more *experts manques* weighed in with barely disguised opinion pieces advocating one or another interpretation of the evolving Soviet "threat." Beyond the many constructive efforts to broaden the field that took place following the mid-1960s, there was a dramatic growth in public acrimony over the meaning of Soviet force developments as contending spokesmen waged verbal combat over such questions as the nature of Soviet strategic goals, the extent of Soviet belief in the attainability of nuclear victory, and whether or not the Soviet leadership shared prevailing Western views regarding the desiderata of mutual deterrence. Underlying the various contending views on these issues was an abiding split over the fundamental character of Soviet doctrine and its impact on Soviet policy. And unlike the pioneering research done during the 1950s and early 1960s, the contributions toward this debate (on both sides) were often indifferent to context and uneven in quality and depth.

In recent years, there have been encouraging signs of a trend toward greater maturity in Soviet military research. Although the persistence of Soviet competitiveness and continued disagreement about

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Defense Postures in the 1980s (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 59-74.

its implications for U.S. policy make it improbable that we will ever see a return to analysis devoid of argumentation, there has nonetheless been a resurgence of first-rate research in virtually all areas of the field, whose major value has been to contribute light rather than merely more heat to discussions of the Soviet military. This work shares a pronounced tone of professionalism, a heavy emphasis on documentation, close attention to nuance in the data, an appreciation of the importance of context, and (most commendably) a predominant focus on interpretation rather than advocacy.[13] Many of today's newcomers to the field draw strength from multiple bases of expertise. Some combine strong grounding in Soviet area studies and Russian language with a solid grasp of organizational behavior and institutional politics. Others come to the field with predominant conversancy in strategic analysis. But unlike so many novitiates who figured in the debates of the preceding phase, these individuals appear to be taking the necessary pains to do their homework. The result has been a substantial decline in dilettantism (if not disagreement) throughout the field and a concomitant growth in the sophistication of work in all quarters.[14] Yet despite this improvement in our approaches toward Soviet military matters, the debate over fundamentals persists.[15] We seem no closer than before to agreement on the critical question of what strategic significance and policy consequences we should ascribe to our increasingly detailed knowledge about the Soviet armed forces.

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[13]An excellent recent example is Amy W. Knight, "The KGB's Special Departments in the Soviet Armed Forces," *Orbis*, Summer 1984, pp. 257-280.

[14]I recognize that this overview is impressionistic and has oversimplified many trends. The distinctions drawn have sought mainly to illuminate the changing character and orientation of Soviet military studies rather than to "periodize" the field arbitrarily. Clearly there has been substantial overlap during this time span, and elements of each "phase" I have attempted to identify have been present to varying degrees in both periods.

[15]For a recent reflection of this in the popular media, see "Debate Over a Doctrine," *Time*, December 30, 1983.

III. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WESTERN DEBATE

Of course, Soviet military doctrine itself is scarcely obscure. On the contrary, there has been voluminous Soviet writing on doctrinal issues since the early 1960s that has been exhaustively surveyed by Western analysts. Notwithstanding dramatic improvements in the size and capability of the Soviet force posture, that writing has remained remarkably consistent in its essentials. To be sure, there have been numerous refinements in Soviet strategy at the operational level as the Soviet High Command has progressively sought to exploit new options afforded by changes in technology and the military balance. But on the fundamental nature of the security predicament and the broad imperatives for Soviet force planning dictated by it, the general guidelines outlined by Sokolovskii in 1962 continue to dominate Soviet military thinking today.

Although one might at first suspect otherwise given the proliferation of Western research on the Soviet military, there seems to be little disagreement within the community regarding the nature of Soviet views on the probable character of a future war or, for that matter, on their prescriptive implications for Soviet defense policy. Just to summarize the key themes of Soviet doctrine on which a broad Western consensus seems to prevail, the Soviets insist that any major superpower showdown would constitute a decisive clash of the opposing social systems. The ensuing war would unavoidably be global in scale, pitting two coalitions against one another in a contest for total objectives. Such a war, in the Soviet view, would see employment of the full spectrum of conventional and nuclear weapons available to each side and would feature combat in all arenas (land, sea, and air), both in forward theaters and directly between the opposed homelands themselves.

In conducting their combat operations, the Soviets would strive to exploit the elements of surprise, mass, shock, simultaneity, and momentum to seize and maintain the operational initiative. They would also lay heavy emphasis on countermilitary targeting to destroy the enemy's ability to continue fighting. No sanctuaries would be honored

in these operations, nor would the Soviets observe self-imposed limitations intended to convey intrawar diplomatic "signals" to the adversary. On the contrary, the Soviets would vigorously strive to undermine the enemy's capacity for collective action through determined attacks on his command and control system, with a view toward achieving recognizable military victory. Soviet commentators anticipate that this war would be relatively short, yet they allow that it could be protracted as well. Although they give little indication as to what their underlying image of victory entails, a plausible inference is that it would include at a minimum the continued survival of the Soviet state, domination of the Eurasian periphery, control of critical sea lines of communication, and elimination of the United States as a significant actor in world affairs.

This, at least, is what Soviet doctrine says on the surface. Most analysts accept it as such without much contention. The key differences emerge when we look behind this declaratory record in search of its operational significance for Soviet and Western security planning. Once we begin to probe beneath the surface impression conveyed by Soviet writings, we quickly discover that matters are far more complex and uncertain than an uncritical reading of disembodied doctrinal quotations would have us believe.

The real debate is not over Soviet doctrine per se but over how it should be understood. Perhaps the sole exception of note is the well-known "Garthoff-Pipes controversy" over whether the Soviet Union adheres to the concept of mutual deterrence.[1] Even here, there is less real contention than first meets the eye. Although I believe that both Raymond Garthoff and Richard Pipes can be fairly faulted for misinterpreting some key points of substance, each is largely concerned with a different dimension of Soviet military thought and reflects a different emphasis in his respective point of view. Garthoff is mainly

[1]See "A Garthoff-Pipes Debate on Soviet Strategic Doctrine," *Strategic Review*, Fall 1982, pp. 36-63. This exchange included a revised version of an earlier article by Garthoff ("Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy," *International Security*, Summer 1978), a critique of that piece by Richard Pipes (whose previous article "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Can Fight and Win a Nuclear War," *Commentary*, July 1977, did much to galvanize the current debate over Soviet doctrine), and a rebuttal by Garthoff.

preoccupied with the political component of Soviet military doctrine, with its stress on deterrence and international diplomacy. Pipes, by contrast, largely addresses the military-technical side of Soviet doctrine, which is the province of uniformed professionals and concerns what to do if deterrence fails. As the following discussion will point out, there is no necessary contradiction between stress on deterrence by the Soviet political leadership and dominance of concern over offensive war-waging in the Soviet military literature. Each merely constitutes a subset of a larger, internally consistent body of thought.

Beneath all the rhetoric, then, it is the core nature of the Soviet adversary (its military strength, external motivations, and resultant "threat" implications for the West) rather than Soviet doctrine in isolation that primarily continues to energize the U.S. debate over national security.[2] Although some of this contention revolves about legitimate differences over the meaning of often ambiguous and fragmentary indicators, it is largely a product of conflicting a priori assumptions about the adversary. As one analyst has noted in this regard, "for the purposes of formulating U.S. defense and arms control policy, the interpretation of Soviet military doctrine subscribed to by U.S. decisionmakers is at least as important as the actual meaning of Soviet military writings.... Policymakers do not choose an interpretation of this subject on the basis of translation or scholasticism. Decisionmakers subscribe to interpretations of Soviet military thought based on the policy implications of the various schools of thought."[3] By way of example, one need only recall the hue and cry that arose when the so-called "B Team" was assembled in 1975 to conduct a competitive estimate of the Soviet strategic challenge using the same intelligence data available to the primary drafters.[4] Given the

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[2]For a thorough survey of the various contending views on Soviet military doctrine, see Gerald Segal and John Baylis, "Soviet Strategy: An Introduction," in John Baylis and Gerald Segal, eds., *Soviet Strategy* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 9-51.

[3]Douglas M. Hart, "The Hermeneutics of Soviet Military Doctrine," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1984, p. 78. Another observer has put the same point even more succinctly: "The real fight in Washington is not over the size of the defense budget but over differing views of the Soviet Union." Charles William Maynes, "Military: It's Bang vs. Bucks," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1983.

[4]For details, see Lawrence Freedman, *U.S. Intelligence and the*

uniformly conservative composition of the group, there were widespread objections (borne out, not surprisingly) that its conclusions would naturally come down on the pessimistic side. (Of course, one could have levelled the same charge in reverse at the critics.)

KEY ISSUES IN CONTENTION

The principal differences that currently divide the field concern the authoritativeness of Soviet military doctrine, its impact on Soviet force development, its value as a predictor of Soviet wartime behavior, and the extent to which it has changed in response to shifts in the strategic and technological environment. In their attempts to answer these questions, both sides in the argument reveal problems in the way they treat the evidence. On the conservative side, there is a tendency to engage excessively in uncritical quotation-mongering from the Soviet military literature, as though Soviet doctrine were all-commanding in its influence on Soviet behavior and spoke for itself as a reflection of underlying Soviet premises and motivations.[5] On the opposite side of the debate, this narrow fixation on doctrine without regard for context is matched by an equally prismatic approach that posits a "natural" divergence between Party and military views concerning the Soviet security dilemma. In this perspective, Soviet doctrine is routinely tossed aside as meaningless internal military exhortation, whose emphasis on surprise, preemption, victory, and so on cannot be taken seriously by civilian Party leaders who command a broader view of Soviet survival interests and are presumed to "know better."[6] Both of these

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Soviet Strategic Threat (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977), pp. 196-198.

[5]See, for example, Joseph Douglass, Jr., and Amoretta Hoeber, *Soviet Strategy for Nuclear War* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1979). A particularly unsettling practice by writers in this group is their tendency to quote as gospel those Soviet statements that support their preconceptions, while dismissing as "disinformation" those that do not. One can fully empathize with the suspiciousness over Soviet motives that animates their work, yet maintain a jaundiced view of their approach. Simply stringing together quotations from the Soviet literature--*whatever* point of view one is seeking to support--is not analysis.

[6]A recent instance of this indulgence was former Defense Secretary McNamara's expressed unease over those tough-sounding Soviet writings of the 1960s and early 1970s which, in his words, "were used so

polar views reflect a blend of truth and hyperbole, and the reality of Soviet military intent probably lies somewhere in between. This is not the place to adjudicate the whole range of issues in contention between these opposing schools. Nevertheless, it may help narrow the apparent distance between them if we can sort out some of the more recurrent points of controversy.

The question of war as a continuation of politics. Some people impressed by recent Soviet statements that nuclear war is unwinnable have cited these remarks as "proof" that the traditional Clausewitzian notions of Soviet doctrine about war as an extension of politics have become irrelevant. Conversely, analysts more inclined to take Soviet doctrine at face value are convinced that the Soviet leadership remains unsentimental about nuclear war and would not blink at the thought of initiating strikes against the United States given a sufficiently dire state of international crisis. Both views are more or less half correct. When Soviet leaders insist that nuclear war would be an unmitigated calamity, they are very careful to avoid adding any intimation (however implicit) that nuclear war is no longer a contingency the Soviet Union must plan against.[7] Should war occur,

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devastatingly by opponents of nuclear arms control in the debate on the SALT II Treaty." McNamara's solution was to dismiss those writings as "badly out of date" and to accept without challenge Brezhnev's more recent statements disavowing any Soviet preemptive inclinations as self-evident confirmation of a Soviet "doctrinal shift." In doing so, he swallowed the Soviet "Tula argument" hook, line, and sinker. Robert S. McNamara, "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1983, pp. 65-66. How to separate the wheat from the chaff in this "Tula line" (so named after a 1977 speech by Brezhnev in that city) will be deferred for more detailed treatment below. It may be noted here, however, that this interpretation of it comes from the same McNamara who, on the very eve of the Soviet buildup in 1965, confidently intoned that the Soviet leaders "have decided that they have lost the quantitative race, and they are not seeking to engage us in that contest. There is no indication that the Soviets are seeking to develop a nuclear force as large as ours." Interview in *U.S. News and World Report*, April 12, 1965.

[7]Brezhnev declared in 1981 that "it is dangerous madness to try to defeat each other in an arms race, to count on victory in a nuclear war" (*Pravda*, October 21, 1981). Many in the West interpreted this as an authoritative repudiation of the traditional Soviet refrain on the issue of nuclear victory. However, Brezhnev did not say that victory is impossible. He only said that one should not plan on it. Likewise, his statement that "only he who has decided to commit suicide can start a

Soviet doctrine (even at the political level) still counsels that Soviet involvement would be legitimate and geared toward advancing the triumph of socialism with every resource available. This continued embrace of the notion that war is about politics--even in the face of the paradoxes of deterrence--scarcely means, however, that the Soviets are indifferent to the unprecedented destructiveness of nuclear weapons. Even the most case-hardened Soviet military ideologues, after all, recognize the risks and costs of nuclear war and reject the idea that it can be considered an acceptable instrument of policy.[8] In effect, the Soviets seek the best of both worlds: a force posture with a plausible war-winning capability whose very credibility in the eyes of adversaries has the effect of enhancing deterrence on terms congenial to Soviet interests.

The offensive orientation of Soviet military doctrine. Since the late 1970s, Soviet spokesmen have sought to disavow Western allegations that Soviet doctrine harbors any endorsement of preemption at the edge of war. As we shall discuss in more detail later, there is a substantial element of disingenuousness in this line of rhetoric that is clearly belied by concurrent Soviet military pronouncements and continuing trends in Soviet force development.[9] Nevertheless, the combat-

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nuclear war in the hope of emerging victorious from it" fell considerably short of admitting that the Soviets have given up hedging their bets against the contingency all the same.

[8]The most renowned of the so-called "Red hawks," Colonel Ye. Rybkin, wrote in 1973 that "nuclear weapons will cause very serious destruction and an unprecedented number of victims.... Recognition of the fact that a war involving the use of nuclear weapons remains a just war on our part does not at all mean that we welcome such a war.... A nuclear war on the part of socialism can only be a *forced* continuation of politics and a retaliatory defensive step against the aggressors." *Voina i politika v sovremennuiu epokhu* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973), p. 27. Eight years earlier, Rybkin had authored a hard-hitting piece whose most arresting passage argued that "any a priori rejection of the possibility of victory is harmful because it leads to moral disarmament, to a disbelief in victory, and to fatalism and passivity." "On the Essence of a World Nuclear-Missile War," *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, No. 17, 1965, pp. 50-56. For a translation and analysis, see Roman Kolkowicz, *The Red "Hawks" on the Rationality of Nuclear War* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, RM-4899-PR, March 1966).

[9]This latest turn of Soviet declaratory posturing on the nuclear issue reminds one of Strobe Talbott's comment several years ago about how "there has never been anything more offensive than a Russian on the defensive." "Whatever Happened to Detente?" *Time*, June 23, 1980, p. 34.

oriented character of Soviet military doctrine in no way bespeaks any inherent Soviet aggressiveness or proclivity toward gratuitous risk-taking.[10] Put differently, Soviet doctrine is firmly rooted in the notion that the best defense is a good offense.[11] Even purely defensive functions are underwritten by Soviet deployments in considerable part to support more effective offensive force employment. Moreover, certain offensive functions (such as comprehensive countersilo and countermilitary targeting) have, in recent years, taken up the slack left by unrequited defensive efforts (especially in the realm of air and missile defense) and thereby provided the Soviets a de facto defense through damage limitation. When Soviet leaders insist that Soviet doctrine is not "offensive," they are referring to its political rather than its technical dimension. In effect, they are simply proclaiming that the Soviet Union has no intention of starting a nuclear war without provocation. There is nothing surprising about this proposition, and one must take care not to make more of it than it warrants. One need not posit an image of the USSR as a nation bent on war to demonstrate that its forces and employment concepts are configured to take the offensive whenever major war appears foreordained. In such a situation,

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[10]This does not mean, to be sure, that the Soviets are at all diffident about throwing their weight around whenever the opportunities are present and the risks are manageable. Perhaps the most graphic depiction of this dimension of Soviet foreign policy was that offered some years ago by the late Senator Henry Jackson, who likened the USSR to a hotel thief prowling the hallways in search of unlocked doors. In general, Moscow has shown a markedly increased proclivity to pursue military adventures at the margins since its attainment of parity, as attested by its involvements in Ethiopia, Angola, and Afghanistan, among other places. But this has been very distinct from the Soviet approach toward nuclear diplomacy, which continues to be marked by great caution and circumspection. For further discussion, see Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Uncertainties for the Soviet War Planner," *International Security*, Winter 1982/83, pp. 139-166.

[11]For an early Soviet statement that defense is not an end in itself but rather is integrally tied (through its damage-limiting function) to the overall offensive mission, see Major General I. Zavialov, "On Soviet Military Doctrine," *Krasnaia zvezda*, March 30, 1967. This view has been reaffirmed in more recent Soviet military writing: "The main form of military action will be the strategic offensive. As to the strategic defensive, it is only acceptable as a temporary condition for holding off the offensive of enemy strategic groupings." Lieutenant General M. Kir'yan, *Voenno-tekhnicheskii progres i vooruzhenye sily SSSR* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1982), p. 315.

of course, Soviet leaders would have to assess the risks of preemption against the costs of continued inaction in the face of uncertainty. Either way, their decision would be momentous. Although there is no telling what counsel the Soviet leaders would follow if actually confronted with a dilemma of this magnitude, there is little denying the course of action Soviet doctrine would prescribe--notwithstanding efforts by the Soviet media since the late 1970s to suggest otherwise.

Strategic superiority as a Soviet force posture goal. Many conservatives in the debate over Soviet intentions are convinced that the Soviet leadership harbors ambitions of pulling decisively ahead of the United States in the strategic competition. Liberals and arms controllers, on the other hand, point toward Soviet obeisance to the constraints of SALT II and Soviet verbal commitment to the goal of "equal security" with the United States as evidence that the Soviets are prepared to settle for something like the status quo in the military balance. Both views contain elements of truth and overstatement. To take the conservative argument first, there is no doubt that strategic superiority was a central theme in Soviet declaratory policy during the mid-1960s. Once SALT got under way in 1969, however, this refrain became increasingly counterproductive to Soviet efforts to cultivate an image of compliance with the spirit of detente. Not only that, the Soviet leaders had just exerted considerable effort over the preceding half-decade to redress their embarrassing situation of strategic inferiority to the United States. Indeed, it was the emergence of parity (and express American acknowledgment of that fact) that laid the basis for the SALT accords reached in 1972.[12] Although there were no grounds for confidence that the Soviets had finally grown content to rest on their laurels and settle for "mere" equality to the United States, they were clearly uninterested in pursuing a declaratory line (let alone a pace of military construction) that would threaten to force the United States into offsetting measures whose effect might be to wrest away the USSR's hard-earned parity. Largely for these reasons, "superiority" dropped out of the vocabulary of mainline Soviet discourse on strategic matters.

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[12]Most recently, the Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Marshal V. Tolubko, reminded Soviet readers of SALT's role in

This does not mean, however, that the Soviets embraced the concept of "equality" as it was typically understood in the United States. When the Soviets profess that all they insist upon is "adequate security," what they mean is freedom from perceived danger from any quarter. The Soviets tend to believe they can never have too much power to vouchsafe this status beyond reasonable doubt. It is the immoderateness of Soviet strategic ambitions (and an associated absence of any apparent Soviet yardstick of "sufficiency") naturally created by this imperative that largely accounts for the persistence of East-West arms competition. In effect, the Soviet Union seeks absolute security, however much its leaders may disavow "aggressive" intent in international relations. The problem for stability posed by this orientation is that it necessarily implies a state of absolute insecurity for everybody else. It is this component of Soviet policy, perhaps more than any other factor in academic "arms race" theory, that lies behind continued Soviet force expansion and modernization irrespective of the prevailing diplomatic climate between the superpowers.[13] Whether or not the Soviets seek "strategic superiority," every aspect of their force development over the past two decades points toward their determination to see what the traffic will bear in pursuit of whatever strategic advantages they can acquire at the margins, within their own technical and budgetary grasp and the limits of American tolerance.

The argument over deterrence vs. warfighting. This is one of the most recurrent points of contention in the continuing debate over Soviet military concepts. Yet for all the sparks generated by the crossfire between the opposing schools of opinion on the matter, it turns out on close examination to be largely a non-issue. Not that there are no differences of note between American and Soviet strategic perspectives. On the contrary, there has long been in the United States an entrenched (some call it theological) orthodoxy which holds that stable deterrence

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"enshrining the sides' strategic weapons parity." "The People's Exploit," *Trud*, May 9, 1984.

[13]This argument is developed further in Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Soviet Strategic Conduct and the Prospects for Stability," in *The Future of Strategic Deterrence*, Part II, Adelphi Papers No. 161 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980), pp. 27-38.

requires a situation in which both sides are held hostage to the certainty of a devastating reply in the event that either should launch a first strike. In this view, it is shared vulnerability to assured retaliation that allegedly removes any incentive for either side to attempt such a strike.[14]

This mindset is entirely alien to Soviet military thinking. In the Soviet view, the surest security guarantee is a force posture that would allow them to seize the initiative at the brink of war and defeat the enemy decisively in the shortest possible time. In effect, the central premise of their doctrine (in both its political and technical dimensions) is the old Roman notion that if you want peace, you had best prepare for war--*si vis pacem, para bellum*. This does not mean, to be sure, that they would as soon have war as peace. Like their American counterparts, they are under no illusions about the uncertainties that would attach to *all* nuclear contingencies, whatever Soviet doctrine may say about the theoretical possibility of victory. Deterrence of nuclear war is no less a transcendent priority for them than it is for us. Where they differ from us is in the way they approach the problem. In the view of many Western analysts, deterrence and nuclear war planning are perceived, as Robert Jervis has noted, as a contradiction in terms.[15] The Soviets, for their part, tend to see them instead as opposite sides of the same coin. In the Soviet idiom, "deterrence" (a term actually foreign to the Soviet military lexicon) is nothing like the often overintellectualized concept that Western strategists are so familiar with.[16] Instead, it is simply the outgrowth of a force posture

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[14]As noted earlier, the U.S. defense establishment has progressively moved away from this orthodoxy over the past decade, starting with the Schlesinger targeting reforms initiated by the Nixon/Ford administration and continuing through the "countervailing strategy" of the Carter incumbency to the current stress on readiness, warfighting options, and strategic defense initiatives by President Reagan. Nevertheless, commitment to the notion of deterrence enforced by mutual second-strike potential remains a powerful undercurrent in American strategic thought.

[15] Robert Jervis, "The Madness Beyond MAD: Current American Nuclear Strategy," *PS*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Winter 1984, p. 33.

[16]The Russian word *sderzhivanie* ("keeping out"), usually translated as "deterrence," means not only that but also "containment," a much broader concept. Another term used to denote "deterrence" (*ustrashenie*, or "intimidation") is generally applied to the policies of the United

that leaves no doubt in the mind of any adversary that he will be decisively crushed should he start a war. Although the instruments of enforcement (nuclear weapons) may be new, the underlying logic is as old as the history of armed conflict. For Soviet strategic planners, it simply goes against common sense to approach the problem any differently. Beyond the continuity of modern Soviet military thought with its nineteenth century Prussian antecedents, there is the added factor of Bolshevik ideology, which is insistent on controlling the historic process to the fullest extent possible. In Soviet reasoning, the idea that a state should passively consign its fate to some autonomous, impersonal, self-equilibrating "system" of deterrence based on mutual vulnerability is inadmissible. Indeed, this very view was once given unambiguous expression by no less than the late General Nikolai Talenskii, a prominent Soviet theoretician of the 1960s often cited in other contexts by Western analysts in their efforts to demonstrate Soviet acceptance of American strategic logic.[17]

Raymond Garthoff is dead right to insist that Soviet leaders are as awed by the specter of nuclear war as anybody else. He is equally correct to point out that whatever image of toughness Soviet military writings may project, the Soviet leadership--uniformed as well as civilian--harbors nothing but profound respect for what such a war would

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States, not the Soviet Union. There is no Russian word for "deterrence" as it is commonly understood in the West, namely, as the result of a stable balance of opposing military forces.

[17]The passage by Talenskii so popular with American arms control enthusiasts held that "in our time there is no more dangerous an illusion than the idea that thermonuclear war can still serve as an instrument of politics, that it is possible to achieve political aims through the use of nuclear weapons and at the same time survive, and that it is possible to find acceptable forms of nuclear war." "Reflecting on the Last War," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, No. 5, May 1965, p. 23. In another article published around the same time, however, Talenskii left little doubt about his attitude toward the idea of deterrence based on mutual vulnerability: "When the security of a state is based only on mutual deterrence ..., it is directly dependent on the good will and designs of the other side, which is a highly subjective and indefinite factor.... It would hardly be in the interests of any peaceloving state to forgo the creation of its own effective means of defense ... and make its security dependent only on deterrence, that is, on whether the other side will refrain from attacking." "Antimissile Systems and Disarmament," in John Erickson, ed., *The Military-Technical Revolution* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 225-227.

mean for the continued livelihood of the Soviet state. He has performed a valuable service by pointing out that Soviet doctrine is anything but a self-fulfilling prophecy--that while it may offer important guidelines for force development, it scarcely reflects any underlying Soviet operational confidence.

Yet he is quite off the mark, it seems to me, in his effort to prove that Soviet leaders have at long last accommodated to the Western concept of mutual deterrence as a desirable regulator of the superpower balance. True, they accept the *existence* of mutual deterrence, simply because it is an undeniable fact of life. But there is nothing I know of--including the material Garthoff cites--that would indicate any Soviet conviction that the "mutual" part of the situation is a preferred state of affairs to be maintained into perpetuity.[18] For them, it is the United States, not the Soviet Union, that needs to be deterred. The USSR is, by definition, a "peaceloving" state. When Soviet spokesmen publicly assert that the current military balance makes it impossible for "any" state to escape a retaliatory rebuff in response to an attack, it takes little reading between the lines to see that it is the United States, not the Soviet Union, that they have in mind. They most certainly are not voicing contentment that Soviet security is safeguarded because the United States can successfully retaliate against a Soviet attack as well.

Soviet doctrine at the technical level continues to stress the criticality of striving for an effective war-waging posture. Nothing in current Soviet force development activity--ranging from ballistic-missile and bomber defense through persistent Soviet gains in hard-target counterforce capability--gives any hint of a Soviet belief that

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[18]Where Garthoff goes beyond the evidence, I believe, is in his claim that "there is a Soviet interest in mutual deterrence based on assured mutual retaliatory capability." "Mutual Deterrence, Parity, and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy," in Derek Leebaert, ed., *Soviet Military Thinking* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 104. As an example, he cites a statement of the Soviet SALT I delegation noting that "we all agree that war between our two countries would be disastrous for both sides. And it would be tantamount to suicide for the one who decided to start such a war." There is nothing here to suggest any Soviet belief that such a war would necessarily entail *mutual* suicide, and Soviet doctrinal statements on preemption have never indicated that it would be the Soviet Union that would initiate the war.

the road to security lies through assuring their own vulnerability.[19] Soviet leaders may place deterrence of U.S. attack at the top of their list of priorities, but they are also striving with determination to deny the United States a countervailing deterrent. Not only that, they are pressing hard for a plausible war-waging option of their own. The rationale for their effort was expressed with elegant simplicity by Khrushchev in his memoirs and has shown no sign of losing its commanding grip on Soviet military thought in the years since: "If the enemy starts a war against you, then it is your duty to do everything possible to survive the war and win in the end."[20]

DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

All in all, we know much more about Soviet military policy today than we did during the formative years of the field's development. This is partly due to improvements in the availability and quality of pertinent data. As far as doctrinal matters are concerned, there have been notable increases in the volume of documentary material and in the intensity of debate since the early years immediately following Stalin's death. Particularly in the mid-1960s, after the Soviets had made their initial adjustment to nuclear weapons and were well into the throes of working out a consensus on nuclear strategy and an appropriate division of institutional roles between the Party and the armed forces, there was a cornucopia of writing in the open military press. A major dialogue was flourishing, and then-Minister of Defense Marshal Malinovskii was not far off base when he asserted that "we [now] set forth the basic theses of Soviet military doctrine, both in its political and its technical aspects, openly--not hiding such details that even in the recent past were considered a great state secret."[21]

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[19]This unwillingness to entertain self-denying ordinances in the interest of deterrence "stability" has deep roots in Soviet military thought. As the SALT dialogue was just beginning in 1967, no less a reputed "moderate" than the late Premier Kosygin flatly told President Johnson at the Glassboro summit that a ban on ballistic missile defenses was, in Henry Kissinger's words, "the most absurd proposition he had ever heard." *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), p. 208.

[20]*Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. by Strobe Talbott (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 570.

[21]Marshal R. Malinovskii, *Bditel'no stoiat' na strazhe mira* (Moscow: Voenizdat), 1962, p. 23. A similar view was voiced by

Beyond the contributions of the Soviet military literature, we have also benefited from a virtual revolution in the availability of collateral data on Soviet weapons and forces. Throughout most of the 1950s, the USSR was a black box as far as Western intelligence was concerned. With the development of nonintrusive means such as satellite photography and other forms of remote sensing, however, the Soviet military has become much more transparent to Western observers. Furthermore, as the Soviet arms buildup has increasingly made the Soviet threat a central U.S. defense policy issue, more and more of the data provided by these means have filtered into open discussion as successive administrations have sought to bolster their case for military appropriations and other defense policy initiatives. To be sure, there remain major limits on our ability to peer through the shrouds of secrecy that continue to obscure day-to-day Soviet military activity. There is more than passing merit to the lament that if the Soviets only published equivalent counterparts to our technical journals like *Aviation Week*, we could close down the entire intelligence community and still be as well off as at present.[22] Nevertheless, Western analysts of the Soviet military now command a broad base of technical information about Soviet forces which provides a valuable means of cross-checking primary Soviet source materials.

Finally, we know more today than ever before about the Soviet military simply because harder and closer looks are being taken in all quarters. Research on Soviet military affairs has now become a full-fledged multidisciplinary activity, involving not only foreign area specialists but economists, strategic analysts, and all varieties of

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Khrushchev in a speech to a Moscow construction workers' conference: "After today's conference, my speech will be published. There is a great deal of criticism in it. Our enemies will howl: Look, there is a crisis in the Soviet Union; there is this and that in the Soviet Union. We should not be afraid of that, comrades. If we start to hide our shortcomings, we will impede the creation of conditions for swiftly eliminating them." Radio Moscow domestic service, April 24, 1963.

[22]In this regard, former CIA Director William Colby has suggested that "for a $50 subscription to *Aviation Week* magazine, the Russians can learn about us what it takes us billions to learn about them." Quoted in Saul Pett, "By Land, Sea, Air, Space, U.S., Soviets Endlessly Spy," *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1984.

technical specialists--including military officers with an appropriate blend of Soviet area training, analytical talent, and operational experience.[23] Unfortunately, there continues to be less than satisfactory dialogue and mutual learning among these diverse groupings, and each subspecialty suffers weaknesses as well as strengths. Moreover, the quantity of work produced by the field as a whole has not been uniformly matched by depth of insight or fairness to the limitations of the evidence. Nevertheless, newcomers to the field have the advantage of being able to start from a much more substantial point of departure than was possible even a decade ago.

There remains an important question concerning how much we actually *understand* from this expanded knowledge base. Here, the record appears considerably more mixed. To take the case of doctrine again, we have an elaborate record of Soviet declaratory views, but that record is so nondescript as to offer little guidance on the operational details of Soviet force employment concepts. Even the more general premises and assumptions that underlie Soviet strategic policy contain sufficient ambiguity to permit multiple interpretations.[24] In the preceding discussion of outstanding issues in the debate over Soviet doctrine, I tried to illuminate the middle ground that combines the greatest

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[23]On the last count, some of the best analysis of Soviet theater-war potential is being done by Project Checkmate, an Air Staff effort to enhance USAF planning for NATO and third-area contingencies by examining Soviet military repertoires and vulnerabilities from an operational perspective. See Captain James Lawrence, "Readiness: Project Checkmate," *Aerospace Safety*, September 1978, pp. 1-5.

[24]The classic case in point involves the question of appropriate Soviet conduct for seizing the initiative at the brink of war. Soviet doctrinal pronouncements running back to the 1960s have regularly featured injunctions to "break up," "frustrate," or "nip in the bud" any enemy attempt at nuclear surprise by dealing him a "crushing rebuff in due time." Although few analysts have seen such statements as evidence of Soviet readiness to launch a nuclear attack out of thin air (and fewer still have been content to equate them with a purely retaliatory strategy along the lines of the American model throughout the 1960s), there has been ample disagreement as to whether they refer to preemption, launch on warning, or launch under attack--all related but distinct force employment approaches. This is too complex an issue to be explored in detail here. The point that matters, however, is that although doctrine may indicate general Soviet proclivities regarding the importance of denying the enemy the first blow in a nuclear showdown, it in no way provides explicit rules for action in such a situation.

strengths of each viewpoint. Yet even these efforts at synthesis are open to disputation. Although they strive to account for the evidence on all sides of the issue, they are ultimately only inferences themselves. Like all such interpretations, they are prone to being faulted on grounds of unintended bias and failure to incorporate hidden factors that may suggest a different underlying reality. Particularly when we move from the general to the specific in Soviet strategic policy, we must recognize significant limits to what we can assert with confidence. If Soviet strategy is taken to include not merely overarching axioms about the requirements of deterrence but also such supremely operational details as contingency plans, target priorities, strike schedules, and the like, we would be deceiving both ourselves and our audiences if we pretended to command more than the vaguest clues about their character. Granted, we can venture informed guesses based on the fragmentary data available, but neither Soviet declaratory commentary, force characteristics, or what little we can observe from Soviet military exercises is sufficient in most cases to let us to go far beyond that.

In this connection, it is instructive to consider two separate levels of inquiry into the Soviet military--one highly empirical and the other largely speculative and inductive. Fritz Ermarth has drawn a thoughtful contrast between what he calls intelligence "secrets" and intelligence "mysteries." The first category involves hard "knowables" that we are simply kept from discovering because of Soviet military secrecy. Examples here include Soviet weapons performance details, war plans, R&D activities, and the like. The other category entails questions of a more open-ended nature, for which even the Soviets may not necessarily have clear answers. These entail such issues as the interrelationships among doctrine, technology, and procurement policy; the internal and external influences on Soviet defense decisionmaking; and perhaps most interesting of all, what specific actions the Soviet leaders might select or be driven to take in a serious political-military crisis. These questions are matters of interpretation rather than fact and usually require a good bit of intellectual artistry to make sense out of the assorted bits of evidence that bear on them. In most cases, the Soviets may be as uncertain as we are.

To consider an example, we know what Soviet doctrine says about the chances of keeping a war between the superpowers limited once nuclear weapons are introduced: Not good enough to count on even in the best of circumstances.[25] Yet we also know that both Soviet theater and intercontinental forces have acquired capabilities in recent years for carrying out selective strikes that go well beyond anything addressed by Soviet doctrine--including options expressly proscribed by that doctrine. How these inconsistent pieces of evidence should be shaken out is anything but self-evident. Indeed, there may be *no* single answer to the question of whether (and in what circumstances) the Soviets would be inclined to contemplate a selective nuclear employment strategy. Instead, one can imagine the head of the General Staff himself being presented this question by a Party superior--and replying in all candor that it would depend on the situation.

One can further point to a middle level of questions for which the data are less than abundant, yet for which reasonably satisfactory answers can be developed through hard and diligent digging. Many such questions relate to Soviet military institutions, organizations, and processes, for which there is considerable (if often obscure and untranslated) material in the Soviet literature. Two cases that come to mind are David Holloway's fascinating account of the Soviet Union's development of the atomic bomb and the richly detailed study of the Main Political Administration's role in military politics by Timothy Colton.[26]

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[25] In a typical rendition of this Soviet line, a February 10, 1978, article in *Krasnaia zvezda* stated that a limited nuclear war as envisaged in Western strategic writings would "inevitably escalate ... with the possibility of the nuclear annihilation of the United States." See Paul Wohl, "Soviets Warn West Against Nuclear War," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 14, 1978. A similar theme was voiced more recently by Marshal Ogarkov: "The idea of nuclear war has never been tested. But by logic, to keep such a war limited will not be possible. Inevitably such a war will extend to all-out war." Leslie H. Gelb, "Soviet Marshal Warns the U.S. on Its Missiles," *New York Times*, March 17, 1983.

[26] David Holloway, "Entering the Nuclear Arms Race: The Soviet Decision to Build the Atomic Bomb, 1939-45," *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 11 (London: SAGE Publishers, 1981), pp. 159-197, and Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Finally, there are varying degrees of certitude even in Fritz Ermarth's notion of intelligence "secrets." For example, Soviet Air Force planners surely know (which we do not) the unrefueled combat radius of the FENCER interdiction fighter for any given mission profile and weapons loading. We are driven to do the best we can through inferences based on engineering analysis of assumptions about the FENCER's operating parameters, whereas the Soviets presumably enjoy the certain knowledge that derives from extensive operational experience with the aircraft. But contrast this with the question of the SS-18 ICBM's accuracy. In this case, the Soviets also know (as we do not) what circular error probable (CEP) they ascribe to this weapon based on their limited flight test data. Yet even the Soviets can never know for sure what the accuracy of their overall SS-18 force is short of actually using it. Even putative matters of technical "fact" can harbor significant elements of ambiguity.

IV. PROBLEMS OF EVIDENCE AND INTERPRETATION

This brings us to the question of how we use available evidence in arriving at what we *think* we know about Soviet military matters. A recent compendium on Soviet military thought noted the recurrent practice of analysts engaging in the "academic swordplay of footnoting the same generally available published references" and then proceeding to use them in drawing "different and occasionally contradictory conclusions."[1] In part, the Soviet military field is no different from any other, in that it provides abundant temptations to fit selected evidence into a preconceived mold. Yet even the most cautious and disciplined analysts rarely pay explicit attention to rigorous rules of evidence. As often as not, we tend to fall back on intuition and judgment, weighing and incorporating data largely according to the criterion of "if it looks right, use it."

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this practice so long as one takes care to avoid knowingly lapsing into tendentiousness. Ultimately one has to arrive at a conclusion, and honest scholars will always find ample ground for disagreement whenever the line separating analytic inferences from policy preferences is so blurred as it typically is in the Soviet military field. But it is still important to remember that there are few absolutes regarding Soviet motivations and that our conclusions need to be hedged in more or less direct proportion to the ambiguity and incompleteness of the evidence.[2] The following discussion reflects on some of the more notable problems that hinder

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[1]Derek Leebaert, "The Context of Soviet Military Thinking," in Derek Leebaert, ed., *Soviet Military Thinking* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 15.

[2]One useful test of honesty with data is the extent to which we allow ourselves to be surprised from time to time in studying Soviet military processes. As Jack Snyder has pointed out, "overcommitment to one interpretation is likely to desensitize us to new information on Soviet motives. Disastrous intelligence failures can often be traced to the premature adoption of an exclusive interpretation that locks out all but the most blatant disconfirming evidence." "The Enigma of Soviet Strategic Policy," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn 1977, p. 93.

good analysis of Soviet military affairs and offers suggestions regarding useful analytical practices worth keeping in mind.

THE TROUBLE WITH TRANSLATIONS

To begin with, there is the need to assure that citation of source materials is fully representative. Granted, even a thorough canvass of the relevant Soviet literature will typically permit only occasional glimpses into the reality that lies behind--and may often be substantially misleading. Given the character of Soviet society, the Soviet military press naturally leaves out vastly greater amounts of useful information than it includes. Accordingly, one must take fullest advantage of what little is available. In this regard, one incurs major penalties by relying solely on translated material--an increasingly common practice on the part of Soviet watchers who have not paid their dues by learning Russian. In recent years, the U.S. government has come to do a commendable job of identifying and translating the most significant articles appearing in the Soviet defense literature.[3] Nevertheless, there is much material--especially in the area of operations and training at the unit level--that falls between the cracks. Moreover, many of the lengthier works (books on military topics and occasional memoirs) never get translated. Of those that do, there remains the question whether the translations are the most astute selections. Even hard-core Kremlinologists frequently fall back on translated materials whenever they are available, simply because time is scarce and doing so is generally easier than trying to plow through the original Russian. But relying on translations because one has no other choice is a major impediment to serious research. At best, it means missing a great deal of material that could either add to the richness of the analysis or cast doubt on its validity. At worst, it is akin to looking for one's keys where the light is best. In all events, it means abdicating control over one's data base to somebody else's decisions.[4]

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[3]The most useful sources are the USSR Daily Report published by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service; the Soviet Military Translations series issued by the Joint Publications Research Service; the selected books from the Soviet "Officers' Library" series periodically translated by the United States Air Force; and the Soviet Press Translations forum regularly produced by the Directorate of Soviet Affairs, Hq USAF.

[4]As John Erickson has gently put it, "I fear that many of our

THE CRITICALITY OF CONTEXT

Another pitfall concerns the potential for misinterpreting Soviet materials. Although the Soviet media is carefully controlled, it scarcely speaks with a single voice. Just as it is risky to rely on translated materials exclusively, it is highly misleading simply to ransack the literature in search of documentation for a particular viewpoint without sensitivity to the character of the sources, as though each carried equal authoritativeness and relevance. One needs in every case to bear in mind who the spokesman is and what institutional or political axes he may have to grind. One must also pay attention to the relative currency of each source and determine that it is pertinent to the issue at hand. All of us have been guilty at one time or another of citing Soviet statements out of chronological sequence, as though the historical context of the statement made no difference. Sometimes this is reasonable, but not always. For example, it is perfectly acceptable to cite Sokolovskii on general matters of force employment doctrine (such as the importance of surprise and initiative, the criticality of defeating the enemy militarily, and so on), since most of his perspectives continue to figure prominently in Soviet military thinking today. But to cite the writing of Colonel Bondarenko back in 1966 in support of an argument that the Soviet Union remains committed to seeking strategic superiority over the United States would grossly misrepresent the prevailing Soviet line on that issue, whatever the private ambitions of the Soviet leadership might be.[5]

'Soviet experts' do not read Russian and must perforce wait on official translations, which may or may not materialize. They are not captives of 'Soviet disinformation' but rather of *our* information process and processing." "The Soviet View of Deterrence: A General Survey," *Survival*, November-December 1982, p. 250.

[5]The most explicit and vocal call for Soviet superiority during the 1960s was Bondarenko's "Military-Technological Superiority--The Most Important Factor for the Reliable Defense of the Country," *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, No. 17, September 1966, pp. 7-14. Today's refrain (reaffirmed by Chernenko) was first enunciated by Brezhnev in 1977. His most favored line, uttered at every suitable opportunity, maintained that "we are not seeking superiority over the West. We do not need it. All we need is reliable security." Interview in *Time*, January 22, 1979, p. 22. The problem with the "reliable security" formula, of course, is that it leaves unanswered the key question of "how much is enough?"

Relatedly, the vehicle in which a Soviet viewpoint is expressed will often offer clues regarding how that viewpoint should be interpreted. As a general rule, Soviet writings have been more disciplined since the beginnings of the Brezhnev era than they were during Khrushchev's final years, even though one can point to notable exceptions both during the initial consolidation phase of the Brezhnev leadership and in the more recent transition period that commenced about a year before Brezhnev's demise. Aside from this periodic ferment, however, one would be hard put to show much evidence of Party-military conflict over the basics of Soviet security policy during the past two decades. Whatever underlying differences there may have been within the Soviet defense community regarding resource priorities and program implementation, senior officials on both sides of the defense establishment have shown little inclination to engage in frontal assaults against one another in the open literature.

Nevertheless, Soviet publications are widely acknowledged--not only by Western analysts but by informed Soviet emigres as well--to reflect the dominant values of their sponsoring institutions. This applies with special force to the Soviet military, which has long sought (usually with success) to enforce a monopoly on discussion of strategic and operational matters.[6] But what does this tell us in practical terms? When Marshal Ogarkov spoke about the need for heightened vigilance and the importance of pressing hard on the frontiers of military technology, was he expressing a parochial view of the General Staff or merely giving voice to one dimension of a broader outlook that is accepted by the Party leaders as well? Conversely, when Brezhnev used to harp on the imperatives of deterrence and the awesome destructiveness of nuclear weapons, was he articulating an enlightened "civilian" perspective on

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[6]The best-known illustration of this was the instance of then-General Ogarkov's upbraiding of Ambassador Gerard Smith during the SALT I negotiations for openly describing Soviet ICBMs to his obviously untutored Soviet counterpart, Vladimir Semenov. As recounted by John Newhouse, Ogarkov "took aside a U.S. delegate and said there was no reason why the Americans should disclose their knowledge of Russian military matters to civilian members of his delegation. Such information, said Ogarkov, is strictly the affair of the military." *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 56.

Soviet security requirements and essentially telling the military how things were going to be? Or was he merely emphasizing the political rather than the military-technical dimension of Soviet doctrine? As we shall argue in greater detail below, there may be far less "debate" implied by these seemingly contradictory points of view than first meets the eye. Particularly in light of ongoing Soviet military programs and other indicators (such as military exercises and patterns of continuity in the doctrinal literature), they may simply represent different emphases on a common policy outlook.

In these and comparable cases, context will provide important clues, and informed judgment will play a major role in determining the answer.[7] What must be remembered, however, is the danger of drawing conclusions prematurely from fragmentary indicators. One can, of course, temporize indefinitely with "on the one hand/on the other hand" equivocations and never arrive at an analytically satisfying conclusion. At issue here, however, is the opposite problem of jumping to interpretations that may prove groundless on closer examination. Worst of all in this regard, fortunately the exception to the rule, is indiscriminate citation of sources out of context so as to "document" a particular point of view. Like the Bible, the Soviet military literature can be subverted to support any polemical cause if misused in this manner. Such efforts can usually be unmasked without difficulty as exhortation rather than analysis.

A more common pitfall involves using dated material in dealing with issues of current import, often because the older material is "juicier" or more graphic than contemporary Soviet literature. This temptation is especially compelling when old quotations are the only ones we have to

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[7]In a thoughtful discussion of methodological issues, Jack Snyder notes that "the most successful interpreters of Soviet strategic thought have tried to place their raw data ... into a coherent political, historical, and organizational context.... Embedded in a context that makes sense, data lose some of the ambiguity that plagues them when considered singly." However, he cautions, "making indirect evidence more revealing in no way renders the evidence itself any less indirect than it was to begin with. Accordingly, all conclusions derived from such evidence should still be viewed with a large dose of circumspection." *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-2154-AF, September 1977), pp. 8, 16.

go on.[8] Nevertheless, the potential for this practice to misrepresent reality is obvious. One would certainly never attempt to characterize U.S. defense policy at any moment by randomly stringing together citations spanning diverse administrations and policy settings. Yet we frequently see this technique employed in discussions of Soviet defense policy, which for all its regimentation remains subject to many of the same day-to-day vagaries and shifting institutional pressures that affect military politics in any society.

ASSESSING THE SOVIET MILITARY LITERATURE

Even when the analyst makes every effort to assemble a comprehensive and properly interconnected data mosaic, problems of interpretation remain. One involves correctly decoding the intended messages of various materials. Take, for example, the case of *Krasnaia zvezda* and *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, the two most prominent Soviet political-military forums. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Western analysts routinely quoted material in these publications as expressions of the "military voice" in the party-military dialogue. Whenever that material conveyed a hard-line view on the appropriate content of Soviet doctrine, the common tendency (by myself no less than by others) was to cite them as illustrations of rear-guard military resistance against the party's inclinations toward arms control and detente.[9]

Before long, however, observers persuaded of the inseparability of party and military views rose to point out that both publications are closely supervised by the MPA, the party's major political control mechanism within the armed forces. Since the MPA is a party organization, these individuals maintained, it could hardly endorse views contrary to the party line. Therefore, they concluded, *Krasnaia zvezda* and *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, far from representing a dissonant voice, in fact constituted faithful reflections of Soviet state policy.[10]

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[8]One is reminded here of the Russian aphorism *nabesptich'e i zhopa solovei*, which, politely rendered, refers to getting by as best one can with what one has.

[9]See, for example, Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Argument for Superiority: A New Voice in the Soviet Strategic Debate* (Washington: Institute for Defense Analyses, N-419R, January 1967).

[10]*Krasnaia zvezda* is the official organ of the Ministry of Defense,

This view enjoyed a certain appeal until later research by Timothy Colton demonstrated that for all its veneer as a party control instrument, the MPA is in fact composed of military professionals, is far more oriented toward providing administrative support to the military than to fulfilling watchdog roles, and with rare exceptions is more Catholic than the Pope in throwing its weight behind the defense of military values in Soviet internal discourse.[11] Beyond that, the content of its publications generally resonates well with doctrinal writings appearing in *Voennaia mysl'* and other house organs of the Soviet General Staff. Admittedly, the corporate views of the Party and military may well depart from one another--even seriously--from time to time. The only point of this example is that any effort to establish such dissension on the premise that MPA publications automatically speak for the party is likely to end up pursuing a blind lead.

On the other hand, assuming a broad consensus of party and military views on most defense issues, does it follow that the Soviet military has no incentive to use the media for special pleading? Not at all. The two institutions may have no problem agreeing on essentials, yet can still harbor divergent views on points of emphasis and priority. In particular, specific services may find occasion to use the media for advancing their respective missions and budgetary interests. A case in point may be the recurrent refrain of Admiral Gorshkov that since nuclear submarines are more survivable than fixed land-based ICBMs, the Soviet SSBN fleet commands a place of special importance in the

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whereas *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil* is published by the MPA directly. Regarding the latter, William Kintner and Harriet Scott have argued that "the authority of the journal derives in large part from the fact that the Main Political Administration is, in effect, a constituent part of the Communist Party secretariat rather than simply an administration within the headquarters apparatus of the Ministry of Defense." They also maintain that "Soviet military writers are constrained by the Communist Party, acting through its military watchdog, the Main Political Administration." Taken literally, this view implies that whatever private differences there may be between them, the party and the armed forces invariably speak with a single voice in public discourse. William R. Kintner and Harriet Fast Scott, eds., *The Nuclear Revolution in Soviet Military Affairs* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), pp. 7, 391.

[11]Colton, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-84.

hierarchy of Soviet deterrent forces.[12] His intimation that SLBMs can be withheld for intrawar deterrence or follow-on strikes after the initial ICBM exchange has led some in the West to infer that SSBNs now make up the USSR's "strategic reserve."[13] Do they? Is this a function formally assigned to them in Soviet war planning? Or do Gorshkov's pronouncements on this matter merely represent a Navy attempt to plump for increased allocations in the continuing Soviet budgetary battle? It could be either or both. Clearly Gorshkov is expressing an institutional view. But to generalize further by construing his remarks as a broader expression of Soviet defense policy would require collateral indicators from other contexts (perhaps in the way the Soviets employ their SSBNs in operational training exercises). In short, the Soviet military literature rarely "speaks for itself," however informative it may be in supplying partial insights.

THE MARGINAL RELEVANCE OF THE CIVILIAN INSTITUTES

Probably the most common misuse of Soviet source materials is the growing tendency in some circles to ascribe excessive weight to the writings and views of those civilian *institutchiki* who "specialize" in foreign and international security affairs. Many analysts consider these individuals to be Soviet mirror-images of American defense professionals who enjoy classified access and provide research support on various policy issues to the U.S. government.[14] It is no longer unusual for American scholars to visit Moscow for professional "dialogue" with their assumed Soviet "colleagues" and then return home

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[12]Gorshkov has stated that "missile-carrying submarines, owing to their great survivability in comparison to land-based launch installations, are an even more effective means of deterrence" than ICBMs. Quoted in E. T. Wooldridge, "The Gorshkov Papers: Soviet Naval Doctrine for the Nuclear Age," *Orbis*, Winter 1975, p. 1167.

[13]See, for example, Captain Thomas A. Brooks, USN, "Their Submarines," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 1984, pp. 48-49.

[14]One of several problems with James McConnell's argument that Soviet strategy has displaced nuclear planning with an emphasis on conventional employment is his lumping together of quotations from civilians like Henry Trofimenko with those of various military writers without qualification, as though all spoke with uniform authority on Soviet security matters. See *The Soviet Shift in Emphasis from Nuclear to Conventional: The Long-Term Perspective*, CRC-490--Vol. I (Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analyses, June 1983).

to report, without even a pretense at critical reflection, on what they have learned about the "real thinking" behind Soviet policy.[15]

Granted, a select few of rare seniority within this Soviet community (such as Georgii Arbatov) may relate to Westerners with some degree of explicit leadership sanction. But it is quite wrong to regard them in the aggregate as "experts" of any bureaucratic standing whose views reflect authoritative thinking--particularly on matters concerning Soviet (as opposed to U.S. or NATO) policy.[16] It has been widely noted by knowledgeable emigres (and privately conceded by the more forthright *institutchiki* themselves) that they rarely have much input of note into the Soviet policy process. They certainly are not privy to the inner workings of the defense establishment.[17] William Bader perhaps best described these institutes over a decade ago as giant "vacuum cleaners" whose primary function is to collect as much information on the United States as possible while offering little in return beyond a stock rendering of the prevailing line dressed up in quasi-professional language.[18] Their commentary on strategic issues is heavily laced with Western terminology and typically echoes the familiar arguments of our own defense critics. Moreover, their work generally commands a larger following abroad than it does within the Soviet Union. Although it is

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[15]See, for example, Seweryn Bialer, "Danger in Moscow," *New York Review of Books*, February 16, 1984, pp. 6-10.

[16]A helpful corrective to this tendency is offered in Nora Beloff, "Escape from Boredom: A Defector's Story," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1980. This article presents the account of Galina Orionova, a former staffer at Arbatov's Institute of the USA and Canada, who describes that establishment's lack of significant internal leverage, as well as its vital propaganda function in duping Westerners about the real intent of Soviet policies.

[17]According to a former section head at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, civilian researchers are not given access to data on Soviet military programs and are obliged to use sources published openly in the West. Even then, they do not discuss Soviet systems but only the armaments of the United States. They also write for the leadership solely on request and are usually directed to stick to factual matters and refrain from offering recommendations. See Igor S. Glagolev, "The Soviet Decisionmaking Process in Arms Control Negotiations," *Orbis*, Winter 1978, pp. 769-770.

[18]Informal trip report to participants in a Ford Foundation project on strategic concepts, July 1970.

routinely reviewed for political acceptability, emigre reports indicate that it may be written more to pad professional resumes or advance individual career interests than to convey official "signals."[19] All in all, the most notable accomplishment of Moscow's *institutchiki* may have been to convince many of their American interlocutors that they command greater influence within the Soviet policy establishment than is actually the case.

STATEMENTS VS. CAPABILITIES

Sensitivity to context (i.e. how a particular piece of evidence stands up in light of other indicators) is no less important in appraising Soviet technical capabilities than it is in illuminating issues of a broader political-military nature. Consider, in this regard, the question of launch under attack. In response to the growing accuracy of U.S. missiles and the shorter warning time portended by the deployment of Pershing II to Europe, the Soviet leadership has recently taken the position that it can no longer "rule out" launching its own missiles upon unambiguous warning of an incoming attack. Some American commentators have interpreted this shift in the Soviet declaratory line as an indication that Soviet operational doctrine itself has changed. Has it? We know that a certain psychopolitical value accrues from this sort of declaratory suggestion. After all, we have said the same thing ourselves on occasion. Such declarations are easily aired in peacetime, since they entail no precommitment yet enhance deterrence all the same by playing to the other side's fears and uncertainties. Nevertheless, launch on warning runs diametrically against the grain of Soviet doctrine's emphasis on retaining operational control over the war process at all times. Indeed, its entire logic rests on the abandonment

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[19]According to a study based on extensive interviews with Soviet emigres formerly involved in a production capacity with the Soviet media, "the 'author' of an article may have a variety of motives for wishing to appear in print, of which communication of the substance of the article is only one. He may simply be promoting himself; he may be signing his name to a page of ghost-written boilerplate for the sake of the fee involved; or he may be gaining the publication credits he needs for his *kandidat* or *doktor* degree. In other words, there may be no message intended at all." Lilita Dzirkals, Thane Gustafson, and A. Ross Johnson, *The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in the USSR* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-2869, September 1982), p. 65.

of any semblance of control in favor of blind reliance on a mindless gamble. Launch on warning may be useful as a peacetime deterrent threat, but it could prove suicidal if actually carried out as a wartime strategy. Like the threat of reflexive counterurban retaliation, it guarantees, in Albert Wohlstetter's words, "a course of action under every circumstance of attack that makes sense in none."[20] Accordingly, whatever the Soviet leaders may say on this score, it taxes credulity to suggest that they would easily give in to such a dire resort in the heat of a crisis.

Massive preemption, on the other hand, could make great sense in any situation where the Soviet leaders were convinced that inaction carried greater risks. For all its circumlocutions on this subject in recent years, moreover, Soviet doctrine leaves little doubt about the operational preferences of the General Staff. As in the case of launch under attack, however, important questions remain about feasibility. One such question relates to the day-to-day alert status of Soviet forces. Before the advent of current-generation Soviet ICBMs, Soviet missile guidance platforms were reportedly left in a dormant mode because they lacked frictionless gas-bearing gyroscopes that would permit them to remain constantly aligned and ready for launch.[21] Likewise, Soviet bombers did not pull strip alert like their SAC counterparts, and only a small number of Soviet submarines were maintained on operational patrol at any given time. In effect, this reduced Moscow's long-standing stress on preemption to a paper doctrine for all circumstances short of a crisis in which Soviet forces would have time to generate to full readiness--by which time the West might have enough warning to carry out appropriate countermeasures.

Today, the readiness of Soviet forces has undoubtedly improved, but there remains the question whether the Soviet command and control system is suitably configured for such quick-response force employment. It is

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[20]Albert Wohlstetter, "Threats and Promises of Peace: Europe and America in the New Era," *Orbis*, Winter 1974, p. 1126.

[21]Interview with former Defense Secretary Harold Brown, "Could Russia Blunder into Nuclear War?" *U.S. News and World Report*, September 5, 1977, p. 18. See also Robert P. Berman and John C. Baker, *Soviet Strategic Forces: Requirements and Responses* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 88.

important not to forget the pervasive institutional and bureaucratic drag that renders all decisionmaking in the Soviet Union so deliberate and ponderous. Some of the administrative turgidity that permeates Soviet society as a whole is bound to spill over into the national security process.[22] Recall how long it took the Soviets to decide on intervening in Czechoslovakia in 1968--in a situation where there was virtually no threat of Western opposition.[23] Soviet decisionmaking is largely a product of consensus politics. It is therefore not unreasonable to wonder whether launch under attack (if not preemption, for that matter) is not fundamentally incompatible with a collective leadership system. Whatever the case, these considerations offer a useful reminder of the need to beware the pitfalls of single-factor analysis. (An important exception may be the possibility that some Soviet options involve predelegated authority to execute certain procedures in selected situations. The KAL 007 episode is a potential case in point. Here, the system appears to have followed standard operating procedure to a fault. What is so fascinating and disturbing about that event is not so much the possibility that a conscious decision was made at the highest levels to shoot the airliner down, which seems unlikely, but precisely the opposite, namely, that *no* decision was made *not* to shoot it down. Such unthinking responsiveness could be a recipe for disaster if it is built into Soviet nuclear employment doctrine as well.)

The recent Soviet move to increase the number of its Delta-class SSBNs on operational patrol in the mid-Atlantic in reponse to U.S. nuclear force modernization in Europe presents another example of how single-factor analysis can be misleading. Clearly the Soviets intended

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[22]A thought that occurred as I was leaving the Soviet Union after a visit in 1981 was idle curiosity over how this country could ever organize itself to preempt in a nuclear crisis when it took me over an hour to pay my hotel bill--to people who *wanted* my money!

[23]After the event, Brezhnev recounted that one major concern among the Politburo was that "this step would threaten the authority of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the people of the world." Jiri Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968: Anatomy of a Decision* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 142. Similarly, before the Soviets finally chose to invade Hungary in 1956, Khrushchev recalled: "I don't know how many times we changed our minds back and forth." *Khrushchev Remembers, op. cit.*, p. 148.

to send the United States a "message." Yet the net effect may have been quite different from what the Soviets intended. Although this forward deployment increased the number of Soviet SLBMs that could be fired on a depressed trajectory attack (with its associated reduced warning time) against U.S. bomber bases and other time-urgent targets, it also moved those Soviet submarines out of their protected bastions into open ocean areas within easier reach of U.S. ASW assets--and therefore within harm's way in the event of war.[24] Question: Did Moscow's calling this gesture a threat make it threatening in fact? Readers can judge for themselves which piece of the puzzle fills out the picture better.

Perhaps a more instructive illustration can be found in the putative Warsaw Pact "air operation plan" by which Soviet tactical airpower would presumably attempt to disarm NATO's nuclear forces in the event of war in Europe. Despite legions of operations researchers who have built careers dissecting alternative ways the Soviets might carry out such a plan, all too few have sat back and asked why the Soviets would necessarily approach such a mission this way in the first place--or how they might fare in the event that they tried. In fact, a conventional air campaign could prove to be a very inefficient way for the Soviets to engage NATO's nuclear forces, because of a combination of complications occasioned by lack of adequate Soviet hard-structure munitions, rigid and inflexible Soviet concepts of force management, relatively unimpressive Soviet aircrew quality and adaptability, and the execrable weather environment in Europe that--except on a lucky summer day--would severely frustrate any such campaign even in the absence of these other difficulties. This is not to say that NATO commanders would have an easy time of things as a result. Soviet fighters could severely hamper NATO's tactical air sortie generation capability and also bring significant force to bear against unhardened targets of direct relevance to an ongoing conventional war. Soviet planners could deal with NATO's nuclear posture by means of chemical attacks and threats of preemption

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[24]On this point, Navy Secretary John Lehman stated: "I invite them to deploy all their Deltas there. The purpose is to send us a political message but, from the military standpoint, it pleases us." Quoted in Robert C. Toth, "Advanced Soviet A-Subs Move to North Atlantic, Navy Secretary Asserts," *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1984.

with SS-20s should NATO signal any indication of intent to initiate the massive use of nuclear weapons. Whatever the case, it does not follow that just because Soviet doctrinal literature stipulates a certain image of warfare, we should accept that image as an ironclad forecast of Soviet conduct without considering other information that might bear on Soviet options and limitations.

THE FORCE POSTURE AS A MIRROR OF SOVIET INTENT

Lest this be misread as a counsel for minimizing the threat, we must also be alert to imaginative Soviet employment options that are *not* treated in the doctrinal literature, yet which could be drawn upon with great effect in the event of war. I have noted elsewhere that there is nothing doctrinaire about Soviet military doctrine.[25] The Soviet force posture has become increasingly diversified in recent years, and Soviet commanders are just as capable of improvising unconventional options as we are. A bizarre (if admittedly implausible) illustration may help clarify the point. Western analysts have long been fixated by the canonical ICBM exchange, as though this were the only form an intercontinental nuclear war might take. Yet we know that unlike the USSR, the United States is an open society extremely vulnerable to organized sabotage. There is nothing in principle wrong with the idea of a thousand well-trained KGB agents with nuclear satchel charges all rushing out from hiding at a prearranged time and depositing their packages on unguarded Minuteman silo doors to take care of that target set in the Soviet war plan. Of course, this is a fanciful scenario for a number of good reasons, and I am not suggesting that it would ever be a preferred Soviet operational choice. But it should help energize us to think beyond the bounds of conventional wisdom in striving to understand Soviet force employment options. The air operation is not the only way open to the Soviets for dealing with NATO's fighter bases. Even short of the chemical and nuclear options noted above, saboteurs could cause significant harassment through well-delivered mortar attacks, while airborne forces penetrated ahead of Soviet ground

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[25]Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Selective Nuclear Options in Soviet Strategy," in Johan Holst and Uwe Nerlich, eds., *Beyond Nuclear Deterrence: New Aims, New Arms* (New York: Crane, Russak, and Co., 1977, p. 99.

formations to capture the bases. Rapidly advancing armored forces could do the same.[26] For other high priority targets, the Soviets have acquired increasingly impressive capabilities to engage in a variety of selective nuclear operations, even as Soviet declaratory comments continue to rule out such options as being "infeasible." For example, they can employ MIRVed SS-18s in barrage attacks against U.S. carrier battle groups at sea, even though such operations have never been hinted at in Soviet writings. And so on.

These illustrations are offered to underscore the importance of examining *all* available evidence in search of the most exhaustive possible portrait of Soviet strengths, limitations, perceptions, intentions, and motivations. The Soviet documentary literature conveys important insights when properly used, but it rarely tells more than part of the story. It is invariably fragmentary and can be misleading if viewed in isolation. One need only imagine how skewed an attempt to study *American* defense planning would be rendered by exclusive resort to comparable materials available in the United States. (For an amusing reductio ad absurdum, consider William Kaufmann's "Ritz-Carlton theory," which speculates about the sort of caricature untutored Soviet analysts might form of the American "threat" were they to be closeted in the famous Boston hotel for weeks on end and fed nothing but a steady diet of *Aviation Week* and Pentagon press handouts.) In sum, what the Soviets say must not only be carefully scrutinized for internal consistency and instructive merit on its own terms, but also examined in light of what the Soviets actually do.

The reverse of this approach can be equally insightful. Periodically we encounter technical indicators that show close conformity to Soviet doctrinal pronouncements. Anyone unpersuaded of the Soviet leadership's determination to prepare for the possibility of a protracted nuclear war need only consider the ample data bearing on the hardening and redundancy of the Soviet command and control network.[27] Although this scarcely bespeaks any Soviet confidence in the

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[26] I once saw a briefing chart depicting a T-72 tank staring a parked F-15 face to face. The caption below read: "You're engaged!"

[27] The Soviets have also conducted silo reloading exercises with their SS-18 ICBM, suggesting a belief that nuclear war would involve more than a single round of missiles launched by each side. See

practical winnability of nuclear war, it says volumes about the leadership's commitment to acquiring as much enduring survivability as its technology and resources will permit. Likewise, critics of the notion that the Soviets designed their SS-9 ICBM during the mid-1960s to be a first-generation Minuteman killer in conjunction with a preemptive counterforce doctrine would have had to contend with highly suggestive technical evidence that this weapon was intended to neutralize Minuteman launch control centers.[28] And they would have been swamped entirely by evidence of a comparable nature which reportedly indicated that SS-9 firing azimuths were directly oriented toward Minuteman fields.[29] Again, the issue is not whether the Soviets commanded a practical employment option as a result of these arrangements. The question is simply one of Soviet intent. Hardware and related observables often provide just as valuable a check on the validity of Soviet declaratory statements as published Soviet materials offer in shedding light on Soviet force posture trends.

WHEN IS A DEBATE A DEBATE?

A frequent error made in the study of Soviet military discourse is the automatic assumption that any perceived divergence of views among various commentators ipso facto signals the presence of a policy "debate." Sometimes this boils down to a simple case of mistaken connectivity between what appear to be viewpoints in contention. For example, consider the hypothetical case in which article A appears one week in *Krasnaia zvezda*, followed by article B (which takes a different view) the next week in *Pravda*. If the author of B criticizes the author

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Clarence A. Robinson, "Soviet SALT Violation Feared," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, September 22, 1980, pp. 14-15.

[28]Former Defense Secretary Harold Brown stated several years ago that "the more than 200 SS-9s were almost surely targeted against the 100 Minuteman launch control complexes, two missiles to a complex for reliability." Richard Burt, "Brown Says Soviet Long Sought Way to Knock Out U.S. Missiles," *New York Times*, May 31, 1979.

[29]As described by one writer, the missile had a "preferred azimuth ... indicated by the alignment of radio antennas that broadcast messages that help the SS-9 orient itself during the first phase of flight. The SS-9's preferred azimuth unmistakably terminated at the missile fields in the American Midwest." Thomas Powers, "Choosing a Strategy for World War III," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1982, p. 106.

of A by name, that is one thing. But most Soviet articles on major policy matters go through extensive review cycles and are signed to the press well before their actual appearance. It is thus entirely possible in such a case that the drafting of article B could have been completed well before the publication of article A, and that neither author was aware that the other was writing on the same subject. Ascribing political significance to the contrast between the two, in this case, would be a classic instance of the fallacy of misplaced relevance, in which the only "debate" was one conjured up in the mind of the analyst.

This is not to say that real disputation--often of great political moment--does not periodically surface in the Soviet public media. Much of our understanding of Soviet political processes derives from precisely such evidence of controversy. But the analyst needs to be alert to the possibility that what may *appear* to be evidence of contention may in fact be something quite different--especially in times when the Soviet political scene is relatively tranquil and there is no obvious reason why such conflict should be taking place. In this regard, several useful distinctions may be worth considering. One is the difference between domestic debates that are real and occur during times of policy ferment and public "discussion" of issues that occurs only during the mobilization phase after basic decisions have been made and agreements have been reached among the various protagonists. The dispute between the Khrushchev and the military over combined arms vs. a missiles-only deterrent most likely was a case of the first category. The 1965-67 party-military dialogue over strategic doctrine and institutional roles in the wake of Khrushchev's ouster, by contrast, probably belonged to the second.

Another distinction concerns real issues vs. "pseudo-debates" of little import which insiders do not take seriously. The key difference here lies between the outbreak of disputation signalling that an issue is judged by the leadership to be important and orchestrated controversy which denotes that an issue is considered so trivial (or so decisively settled) it can be discussed openly, without fear of adverse repercussions. Knowledgeable emigres formerly involved with the Soviet media have remarked in this regard that "a great deal of what appears to be diversity and public debate in the Soviet press is ... deliberately

engineered from above."[30] One respondent expressly cited the 1973 "exchange" between Alexander Bovin and Col Ye. Rybkin over the question of nuclear war as an instrument of policy as an example of the latter category.[31] This episode was characteristic of periodic leadership ploys to use the media for illuminating selected issues and then driving home the intended point by indicating the "correct" position.

Such contrivances are far from limited to overarching issues of Soviet security. Indeed, the mechanism is perhaps most commonly employed in dealing with conflicting views over day-to-day military operations and training. In such cases, contributions to the debate are solicited from above, either in the form of "letters to the editor" or as journal articles. Controlled expressions of varying opinions and points of view are then aired over a period of time, until a senior officer invariably weighs in with a definitive piece that settles the issue. A good example was the recent "debate" in the Soviet Air Force's monthly magazine over the relative merits of single-ship vs. paired fighter employment in aerial combat. (The final verdict, for good tactical reason, was cast in favor of the latter position.)[32]

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[30]Quoted in Dzirkals, Gustafson, and Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

[31]After noting "protracted and sharp discussion" in the West concerning the question whether "nuclear war has retained its capacity to be an extension and an instrument of policy," Rybkin added: "Unfortunately, similar kinds of erroneous statements sometimes show up in our press. In this respect, we should indicate the statements of Comrade A. Bovin which have appeared on the pages of certain periodicals. While correctly asserting that a total nuclear war is not acceptable as a means of achieving a political goal, A. Bovin ... makes a noticeable methodological mistake" in deducing from this that "nuclear weapons have changed the position that nuclear war, if the imperialists were able to unleash one, would be an extension of policy. Those individuals who deny this are confusing the causes, essence, and social nature of the phenomenon with the expediency of using it as a means of achieving a political goal." Colonel Ye. Rybkin, "The Leninist Concept of War and the Present," *Kommunist vooruzhenykh sil*, No. 20, October 1973, p. 26. In an earlier article ("Peace and Social Progress," *Izvestiia*, September 11, 1973), Bovin had written that a nuclear war would bring "inestimable misfortunes to mankind."

[32]This series of articles, which appeared during 1981 and 1982 in *Aviatsiia i kosmonavtika*, has been translated and published in *The Soviet Awareness Red Eagle Reader*, Special Edition (Washington, D.C.: Directorate of Soviet Affairs, U.S. Air Force Intelligence Service, 1982), pp. 14-24.

Last, there is the case where indicators of controversy in the media do not represent the tip of any larger iceberg at all. Knowledgeable emigres note that on most topical issues that really matter, members of the Soviet apparatus get their information from inside channels (through official documents or word of mouth) and typically ignore the published literature. They also point out that the Soviets have their own variant of a publish-or-perish syndrome and that Soviet writers often produce articles "not to communicate an item of information but to add a credit to their bibliographies."[33] This may hold especially true for military academics and the civilian *institutchiki* whose stock in trade is commentary on political-military matters. Their publications, especially those that appear in forums intended for foreign consumption (or in foreign journals themselves) are rarely likely to represent a significant voice in the internal dialogue. In cases where such articles reflect inconsistency or controversy, the only "debate" of note is likely to be solely among the authors themselves--over a comparatively obscure point about which the higher leadership could not care less.

THE CASE OF THE TULA LINE

Probably the most important interpretive issue currently before us concerns the shift in high-level Soviet declaratory rhetoric on nuclear policy since the mid-1970s, along with the associated decline in the volume and specificity of Soviet military commentary during this same period. The key question here is whether Soviet nuclear planning guidance has really evolved in consonance with the new leadership refrain or, instead, whether the Soviet leaders have merely been manipulating foreign audiences with a studied propaganda campaign while proceeding with business as usual in the force development arena.

The roots of this issue lie in the steady refinement of what has been called the "Tula line," so named after a major foreign policy address given by Brezhnev in that city in January 1977.[34] In that

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[33]Dzirkals, Gustafson, and Johnson, *op. cit*, p. 64.

[34]"Speech of Comrade L. I. Brezhnev," *Izvestiia*, January 19, 1977. To the best of my knowledge, the term was first suggested by Andrew

speech, the late Soviet leader adopted a fundamentally new tone in Soviet declaratory policy which entailed some significant departures from previous Soviet doctrinal formulations. Brezhnev declared that the Soviet Union rejected strategic superiority as a policy goal and merely sought to be the military equal of the United States. He further asserted that nuclear war cannot be controlled and indicated that the Soviet Union would not be a party to the development of selective nuclear options. More notably, he reversed two of the most enshrined axioms of Soviet doctrine by disavowing any Soviet planning for preemption and claiming that no one could count on emerging from nuclear war the winner. Indeed, he went further by declaring that Soviet military doctrine lacked any offensive content and was solely defensive in character. Finally, he laid the groundwork for what in 1982 became a formal theme in Soviet propaganda, namely, Soviet accession to a unilateral nuclear no-first-use pledge.[35]

The combined message formed by these propositions soon became the predominant refrain of Soviet external commentary. Brezhnev routinely reiterated the main points of his Tula remarks at every opportunity and made a special point of emphasizing them in interviews with Western journalists. Soon, they began to crop up in the speeches of other party figures and elsewhere in the Soviet media. Most interestingly, they began to be echoed by the Soviet military as well, first in a widely quoted *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* article by the former Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Ogarkov, and then in major pamphlets by Ogarkov and the Minister of Defense, Marshal Ustinov.[36] In addition, this new declaratory refrain figured prominently in a Soviet Defense Ministry publication issued for external consumption in response to an earlier U.S. Defense Department report on the Soviet threat.[37] In short order,

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Goldberg, "The Tula Line: Change and Continuity in Soviet Nuclear Doctrine Since 1977," unpublished manuscript, October 1983.

[35]TASS communique, June 15, 1982.

[36]See, respectively, Marshal N. Ogarkov, "Military Strategy," in *Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia*, Vol. 7 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979), pp. 555-565; Ogarkov, *Vsegda v gotovnosti k zashchite otechestva* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1982); and Marshal of the Soviet Union D. Ustinov, *Sluzhim rodine, delu kommunizma* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1982).

[37]*Whence the Threat to Peace* (Moscow: Military Publishing House, USSR Ministry of Defense, 1982, in English). Among other things, this booklet dismissed as "nonexistent" those Soviet writings and statements

the "Tula line" had become part and parcel of the Soviet military's declaratory posturing, expressed in terms indistinguishable from similar commentary emanating from the civilian side.[38] In one of its more interesting variants, it came in the guise of retired Lt. Gen. Milshtein, a former General Staff officer attached to Arbatov's Institute, repeatedly lecturing Americans during trips to the United States about how ostensible "Red hawks" like Col. Rybkin should (depending on which version you heard) be dismissed as low-level officers who knew nothing of Soviet defense policy or ignored as irrelevant ideologues who were not "real" military professionals.[39]

It would oversimplify things to discredit this new Soviet line out of hand, as some in the West have done, as nothing more than cynical prevarication. For one thing, much of the Tula line can be reconciled with the classic principles of Soviet military thought once the fine print on both sides is carefully scrutinized. For another, it has long been recognized by Western analysts that the Soviets can scarcely lie to their own officers charged with implementing Soviet defense guidance merely in order to deceive outsiders. Although the Soviets have occasionally had to tapdance smartly in their efforts to square the Tula line with the traditional injunctions of Soviet military doctrine, the language of the Tula refrain has generally been crafted so as to allow the Soviets to eat their cake and have it too.[40] We noted at the outset

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cited by Western analysts as evidence that "Soviet military doctrine is of an aggressively offensive nature and that the Soviet Union counts on winning a nuclear war by means of a preemptive strike" (p. 11). The use of language here is clever. No responsible analyst that I know of has suggested either that Soviet doctrine is "aggressively" offensive or that the Soviet Union "counts on" achieving victory through nuclear preemption.

[38]For a good capsule review of this material, though one more inclined than the present discussion to view it as reflecting a basic shift in Soviet military thought, see David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 48-58.

[39]Seminar at The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, California, October 1, 1979. In a later interview, Milshtein went even further in trying to distance the current Soviet line from earlier military writings: "To arrive at a correct evaluation of our doctrine today, you must not rely on Sokolovskii's book but on those quite unambiguous Soviet documents and statements that have appeared in more recent years." Anthony Austin, "Moscow Expert Says U.S. Errs on Soviet War Aims," *New York Times*, August 25, 1980.

[40]For example, in a 1981 article Marshal Ogarkov showed due

that there is no incompatibility between Moscow's emphasis on warfighting in its defense preparations and its stress on deterrence at the state policy level. The issue has never been *whether* the Soviet leadership is committed to preventing nuclear war, but simply how they have chosen to accommodate that challenge. There is no reason why Soviet military leaders cannot easily live with political rhetoric dramatizing the notion that a nuclear war would be bad news for everybody, even as they prepare for precisely that contingency.

Nevertheless, there are troublesome aspects of the "Tula line" that require further explication. Although outright disinformation may not be the whole story, there is clearly more than a trace of verbal sleight of hand involved. In engineering the Tula argument, the Soviets appear to have been quite successful in blending skillful mental reservation with a decided play on the political dimension of Soviet military doctrine in an effort to persuade outsiders that a major sea change has taken place in Soviet strategy.

For one thing, the phraseology that makes up the line is too neatly homogeneous to suggest anything other than careful orchestration. Statements by senior military figures often read for all the world as though they were drafted by the same speechwriters who work for the Politburo. Furthermore, there has been an abrupt decline in significant Soviet public writing on military doctrine that appears too closely matched with the rise of the Tula line to be coincidental. Part of this, of course, may simply attest to a decline in open party-military debate as the armed forces have grown increasingly satisfied with their resource allocations and institutional stature. All the same, the sort

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obeisance to Brezhnev's stock refrain that "our strategic doctrine has a strictly defensive orientation." Yet he promptly added that "it also envisages, in the event of an attack by an aggressor ... resolute actions by the Soviet armed forces, which have full mastery of the art of waging not only defensive, but also modern offensive operations on land, in the air, and at sea." Marshal N. Ogarkov, "Guarding Peaceful Labor," *Kommunist*, No. 2, 1981, p. 86. A similar indication of military discomfort over the "defensive emphasis" theme was apparent in the following invocation of Lenin by a prominent Soviet military theoretician: "To tell us that we must wage only a defensive war when the knife continues to be raised above us ... is to repeat old phrases of petty bourgeois pacifism which long ago lost their meaning." Colonel General N. Lomov and Colonel S. Alferov, "On the Question of Soviet Military Doctrine," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 7, 1978, p. 25.

of public discourse on nuclear strategy produced by the Bondarenkos, Sidel'nikovs, Cherednichenkos, and other military commentators during the late 1960s and early 1970s has virtually vanished from the pages of *Krasnaia zvezda* and other military periodicals.[41] Those few pieces on doctrine that do appear are little more than bland bromides that lace the most noncontroversial generalities about Soviet military thought with sprinklings of key phrases from the Tula line. This has certainly made life rougher for Western analysts of Soviet strategic thought, who must now wonder what sort of doctrinal rumination may be going on beneath public scrutiny. More important, however, it suggests that an indefinite moratorium may have been imposed on any open military commentary that does not show seemly obeisance to the current propaganda line.

My own inclination is to regard the emergence of the Tula position and the concomitant demise of Soviet doctrinal writings as a result of mounting Soviet embarrassment over their own doctrinal hyperbole. After all, much of the "second wave" of U.S. research on the Soviet military during the preceding years was made up of unmistakably hard-line argumentation, whose main strength came from quoting chapter and verse from the Soviet military literature. In light of this (perhaps bolstered by Moscow's determination to keep SALT on track in the face of progressively waning American enthusiasm for detente), the traditional Soviet doctrinal stress on the primacy of the offensive, on preemption and the feasibility of victory, and so on most likely became perceived by the leadership to be a net liability. The Soviet response, in this interpretation at least, was to begin squelching loose talk in the military press in favor of emphasis on those elements of Soviet doctrine that could be squared with preferred Western images of deterrence, parity, and stability. In this connection, it was perhaps not accidental that within a year of the first articulation of the Tula line, the International Information Department of the CPSU Central Committee was formed under the leadership of Leonid Zamyatin and Valentin Falin, two accomplished public relations virtuosos if there ever were any. Although proof is hard to come by, numerous subsequent

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[41]The more significant of these writings can be found in translation in Kintner and Scott, *op. cit.*

Soviet efforts to promote the Tula line have borne suspicious earmarks pointing toward this enterprising activity's involvement. These include, among others things, a rash of unusually slick Soviet pamphleteering against U.S. portrayals of the Soviet threat;[42] the rare practice of allowing Soviet publicists to write letters and articles on nuclear issues in the Western media;[43] and the unprecedented use of high-level General Staff officers as front men to play up the Tula line in press conferences and audiences with foreign reporters.[44] All in all, the thrust of rhetoric emanating from Moscow since the advent of the Tula position has had the effect of sounding like a casebook variant of Shakespeare's lady protesting too much.

Several continuing undercurrents in Soviet policy make it particularly hard to swallow Moscow's claims of late that its "old" military doctrine has been invalidated by recent changes in the strategic environment. For one thing, concurrent writings in the

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[42]In addition to *Whence the Threat to Peace* noted above, see also *The Threat to Europe* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981). The latter document repeats all the choicest quotables from Brezhnev, Ustinov, and Ogarkov and shrugs off the more disturbing themes of the Soviet military literature as the product of "military theorists devoted not to doctrine or military policy but to particular aspects of combat" which "necessarily envisages the training of soldiers for various actions on the field of battle" (p. 10). Yet this is precisely the point. Soviet statements that disavow "aggressive" intent or "counting on" nuclear victory refer exclusively to *premeditated* nuclear war--which no serious Western analyst has accused the Soviets of planning to begin with. They say nothing, however, that would deny Soviet planning (and associated force development) for massive preemption in any crisis in which the Soviets were convinced that deterrence was about to fail.

[43]Among many examples that could be cited, see Radomir Bogdanov and Lev Semeiko, "Soviet Military Might: A Soviet View," *Fortune*, February 26, 1979, pp. 46-48; Henry Trofimenko, *Changing Attitudes Toward Deterrence*, ACIS Working Paper No. 25 (Los Angeles: Center for International and Strategic Affairs, UCLA, July 1980); Nikolai Chervov, "A Soviet View on Nuclear War," Letter to the Editor, *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 1982; and Vitaly Zhurkin, "A Soviet View: MX Is a First-Strike Weapon," *San Jose Mercury News*, May 1, 1983.

[44]Among the most notable of these has been Lieutenant General Nikolai Chervov, who has been so voluble in public discourse on nuclear matters in recent years that one is inclined to suspect that serving as a General Staff spokesman for the Tula line is his full-time occupation. In this regard, Malcolm Mackintosh has speculated puckishly that the Soviets may have been compelled to "invent" Chervov as a means of adding military credibility to their antinuclear propaganda posturing.

military-technical domain (insofar as they have continued to address nuclear policy issues) have shown little deviation from the time-worn axioms of Soviet doctrine as far as operational matters are concerned. Second, military figures who have waxed so eloquently at one level about the centrality of the Tula principles in Soviet foreign policy have repeatedly given voice in other contexts to the continued primacy of all the Clausewitzian notions that have long made up Soviet military strategy. Third, even those Soviet pamphlets for external consumption that have expressly sought to promulgate the Tula message have exercised great care to avoid using formulations that would expressly contradict the classic teachings of Soviet military doctrine. Last, and by far most revealing, there have been no indications whatever in observable Soviet R&D policy, force modernization, or day-to-day operations and training that would suggest any fundamental departure from the basic policy guidance that has governed Soviet force development since the Soviet buildup first got under way two decades ago.

The Soviet no-first-use declaration likewise entails less than meets the eye at first glance. Although it has an impressive ring of magnanimity and lays a tough diplomatic challenge at the doorstep of the United States, it is not incompatible with Soviet military doctrine when examined in an operational context. Indeed, it makes sense on military as well as political grounds. Two circumstances make it cost-free for the Soviets to embrace a no-first-use pledge. The first is the presence of parity in central systems, which has largely decoupled the U.S. intercontinental nuclear force from its erstwhile role in guaranteeing NATO escalation dominance in any European conflict. The other is the substantially improved Soviet conventional posture opposite NATO, which gives Soviet commanders a credible choice of conducting offensive operations without resorting to nuclear weapons so long as NATO shows similar forbearance. Unlike the period of the 1960s and early 1970s, when Soviet doctrine envisaged a massive combined-arms offensive in which nuclear strikes would occur conjointly with conventional operations, the Soviet armed forces today have a dual-capable posture which allows them the option of forgoing nuclear strikes at the outset of combat operations should battlefield circumstances make this feasible. So long as their conventional offensive can be counted on to

proceed according to expectations, they have no incentive to initiate nuclear operations and every reason to exercise nuclear restraint.

Indeed, there is logical ground to believe that Soviet commanders are now prepared to countenance a certain number of demonstrative nuclear strikes launched by NATO out of desperation without replying in kind, so long as those attacks remain symbolic and do not threaten militarily significant consequences. It is this capacity to accept at least a token NATO crossing of the nuclear threshold without blinking that enables the Soviets to get by with their unilateral no-first-use pledge. As Stephen Meyer has noted, Soviet leaders may be prepared to concede NATO the option of nuclear "first use" in the literal sense, but they clearly retain their determination to land the first *decisive* nuclear blow in any situation where the Soviet Union would risk defeat by doing less.[45]

None of this is intended to suggest that Soviet doctrine is not amenable to change under the influence of evolving military technology and strategic circumstances. It is only to argue that the various themes that make up the "Tula line" involve less a shift in Soviet doctrine per se than simply a new and imaginative departure in the particular emphases the leadership has lately chosen to play to. When Soviet officials express such seemingly "moderate" notions as the importance of preventing nuclear war and stress the dire consequences that would befall any country that started one, they are merely underscoring the political dimension of Soviet doctrine, whose primary concern is deterrence. Likewise, when military figures reiterate the time-worn premises of Soviet doctrine regarding the imperatives of war-waging, they are neither indicating resistance to the prevailing line nor clinging to outmoded axioms, but simply addressing the operational

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[45]There have been occasional intimations in Soviet doctrinal writing that in some circumstances Soviet commanders might forgo responding with nuclear weapons to an isolated enemy battlefield nuclear strike. There are also indications that this option has figured in Soviet training exercises. In all events, as Meyer has pointed out, "it is not the first nuclear use per se that is of concern to Soviet military planners, so much as the first decisive use of nuclear weapons in the theater." *Soviet Theater Nuclear Forces, Part I: Development of Doctrine and Objectives*, Adelphi Papers No. 187 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1983), p. 28.

side of Soviet doctrine, whose primary concern is what to do when deterrence fails.[46] Both strains of rhetoric are part and parcel of a common strategic conception. If anything, their articulation in tandem attests mainly to an improvement in the adroitness of Soviet sloganeering. Any argument that they amount to more than that requires evidence that has yet to be presented.

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[46]Such imputation of a split between so-called "unilateralists" and "diplomacists" in the Soviet defense debate is the only unpersuasive part of an otherwise excellent treatment of the Tula issue by Dan L. Strode and Rebecca V. Strode, "Diplomacy and Defense in Soviet National Security Policy," *International Security*, Fall 1983, pp. 91-116.

V. NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

There seems to be a mounting sense in some quarters that Soviet military research has begun to grow stale, with available materials exhausted, no new "discoveries" waiting to be made, and analysts largely reduced to rehashing old data and old arguments. In one respect, at least, there may be some merit to this lament. Where official attitudes regarding the most overarching issues of Soviet security are concerned, we probably know about as much as we are going to learn from currently available sources. True, there will always be contention over the meaning of our knowledge, if only because the Soviet military challenge is not just an academic matter but a policy issue as well. Nevertheless, there is much to be said for the claim that as far as the big issues are concerned, the Soviet political-military literature has pretty well been mined to exhaustion. Of course, we must continue to monitor that material for secular trends that may imply real evolution in military thought over time.[1] But short of a major breakthrough in the availability and quality of data on Soviet strategic thinking, little more is likely to be gained by any further rehearsing of all the tiresome arguments over whether the Soviets believe in "mutual assured destruction," "think they could fight and win a nuclear war," and so on. Insofar as most specialists appear in closer accord on the elements of Soviet strategic policy than one finds in the broader national security debate, perhaps future work on such matters might be more constructively spent in efforts to communicate a balanced portrayal of Soviet military developments to responsible officials and opinion elites rather than in continued intramural squabbling over recondite points of interpretation.

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[1]A less appreciated but equally important value of Soviet military writing is its capacity to help us better understand the present by reshaping our conception of the past. In particular, retrospective study of events in light of more recent evidence (or vice versa) allows us to compare and cross-check data over time and thus arrive at a richer portrait of reality than might otherwise be possible. I am indebted to Marshall Shulman and John Steinbruner for this point.

Beyond this, the time is now upon us to begin integrating our increasingly broad knowledge and probing more deeply into the various norms, practices, and processes that constitute the critical link between Soviet military concepts and reality. In other words, while continuing to pay attention to what the Soviets say, we need to look more carefully at how they behave as well. Examples of issue areas that might profit from closer examination in this regard include the political role of the Soviet High Command in shaping Soviet military and other national priorities; the evolving character of the Soviet military planning and budgeting process; changing patterns of Soviet military organization; and R&D and acquisition processes, with particular emphasis on how operational requirements get set, how interservice conflicts are adjudicated, and how quality vs. quantity considerations are likely to be accommodated in coming years as Soviet weapons, like our own, grow steadily more expensive and demanding to maintain. Another topic of growing importance involves the question of how the ongoing generational shift in the Soviet leadership may affect future Soviet defense programs and behavior. These and related issue areas represent widely varying degrees of "researchability," but all are worthy of more sustained and penetrating inquiry.

Perhaps the most pressing challenge before Western analysts is the need to understand better how Soviet weapons and concepts would most likely be brought to bear in combat. Any study of Soviet doctrine and hardware, no matter how detailed, that ignores the diverse elements of human prowess that largely govern their practical effectiveness will inevitably end up distorting our resultant image of the "threat." Careful research into Soviet operational style is especially important because it continues to receive such inadequate attention from those who would stand to gain from it the most, namely, the U.S. national security community. With rare exceptions, the overwhelming tendency of the intelligence community is to think of the threat in purely technical rather than operational terms. (This is not just the fault of intelligence professionals, but also of operators and policymakers who continuously press the intelligence community for threat appraisals expressed in the simplest terms possible.) This problem exists in part

because it is easier to count forces and assess their capabilities than it is to acquire solid insight into the employment repertoires that lie behind them. It also reflects an unfortunate tendency on the part of the threat assessment community to ignore most factors bearing on Soviet strength that do not lend themselves to precise quantification. The late Herbert Goldhamer neatly described this pernicious tendency: "The belief that the enemy is like oneself may derive from certain assumptions concerning the uniformity of military practices arising from a common international technology and military culture. This reduces incentives to study some aspects of the enemy and encourages the tendency to impute to him interests, attitudes, and behavior similar to oneself. Emphasis on the technical aspects of military culture may provide incentives to discover whether other nations have developed a new or superior weapon or invented other technical innovations, but may discourage the observation and perception of nuances in the enemy's tactical and doctrinal preferences ... that will influence both his military intentions and his military behavior...."[2] The net result is an image of enemy capability largely uninformed by any consideration of those factors that will largely govern the extent to which his raw indices of power can be translated into military leverage.

Progress toward correcting this imbalance can begin through a more concerted effort to use our existing knowledge of Soviet military organization and practice as a point of departure for exploring Soviet macrocompetence and probable approaches toward "putting it all together" in the combat arena. Unlike Soviet political-military doctrine, which remains fairly well fixed in its content and character, this is an area of great dynamism and ferment in Soviet military affairs. Although there may have been little modification over time in the way Soviet leaders view war in the aggregate, there is ample evidence of recent Soviet effort to take advantage of their expanded force posture by broadening their options and fine-tuning their employment concepts so as to lend real teeth to Soviet operational art. One example can be seen in the recent reorganization of the Soviet Air Force aimed at imparting

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[2]Herbert Goldhamer, *Reality and Belief in Military Affairs: A First Draft* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-2448-NA, February 1979), pp. 22-23.

greater flexibility to Soviet fighter and C3 assets.[3] Another is the reemergence of the Operational Maneuver Group as a means for enhancing the mobility and shock power of Soviet ground formations.[4] The progressive modernization of Soviet tactical air concepts since the late 1960s, which now allows both independent campaigns against "theater-strategic" targets and closer integration of Soviet airpower with the operational requirements of theater commanders, constitutes a third area where the Soviets have begun to acquire added force leverage through the development of more sophisticated approaches to planning and operations.[5]

Another fruitful avenue of research concerns evolving Soviet tactics, not only for theater war but in all categories of force employment. It is commonly noted that the Soviets rely extensively on preplanning and are burdened by numerous rigidities that stem from their heavy emphasis on strict top-down military management and troop control.[6] Although there is much truth to this notion, it may warrant reexamination in coming years as the Soviets strive to diversify their employment concepts and allow room for greater adaptability at lower command levels.

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[3]According to one report, the purpose of this reorganization has been to enhance the efficiency of Soviet airpower use through, among other things, "the formation of a new air command; the relegation of the Soviet strategic bomber force to the status of a numbered air force; the disbandment of all numbered air armies in the Soviet Union; the formation of four new air armies in their place; closer integration between Frontal Aviation helicopters and Army forces; and the merger of functions of Air Defense, Army, and Air Force units." David C. Isby, "Soviet Air Forces Recast; Air Units in Poland and Hungary Are Disbanded," *Defense Week*, July 25, 1983, p. 4. See also Mark L. Urban, "Major Reorganization of the Soviet Air Forces," *International Defense Review*, June 1983.

[4]See C. N. Donnelly, "The Soviet Operational Maneuver Group: A New Challenge for NATO," *International Defense Review*, September 1982, pp. 1177-1186.

[5]See Tommy L. Whitton, "The Changing Role of Airpower in Soviet Combined Arms Doctrine," paper prepared for the 14th annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, October 15, 1982.

[6]Presumably on good evidence, former USAF Chief of Staff General Lew Allen observed in this regard that "the Soviets are fairly predictable, doctrinaire, very determined in their approach to things, very strong in a hierarchical sense of how to do things, with less initiative given to people...." Interview in *Armed Forces Journal*, February 1979, p. 28.

Third, there is much to be learned from looking more attentively at Soviet training and exercise data regarding the extent of congruency between what the Soviets preach and what they practice. Also of interest are the sort of problems and shortcomings Soviet officers routinely complain about in the professional literature. There is a rich body of useful (and largely unexploited) material bearing on this question that has been tapped by Nathan Leites to good effect but still offers great latitude for systematic analysis by others.[7] Typical of the issues that figure in such Soviet commentary are the persistent lack of adequate realism in Soviet training, excessive reliance on stereotyped routines that run the risk of being upset by operational surprise, and insufficient crosstalk among various Soviet forces whose integration would be essential for any successful Soviet combined-arms operation. Such information by itself offers little of predictive value about future Soviet performance. All the same, it can broaden our knowledge about the extent to which the Soviets are aware of their own deficiencies and thereby contribute, at least indirectly, to a better appreciation of overall Soviet combat proficiency.

Even more instructive insight may be gained through careful sifting of episodes in which the Soviets have had direct occasion to use military force, whether in forward deployments (like the Cuban crisis and in Ethiopia and Angola) or in circumstances in which shots have actually been fired (Afghanistan and the recent downing of KAL 007). Short of war, these sorts of occurrences represent something of a laboratory for studying Soviet military performance. Although such events are usually less than satisfactory in the amount of helpful data they reveal, they nevertheless provide occasional windows into some aspects of Soviet operational style.

Related insights of this nature can be gained by exploring the way the Soviets have extracted operational "lessons" from their various military involvements. On the one hand, there have been negative instances in which the Soviets have refused for understandable reasons

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[7]Nathan Leites, *Soviet Style in War* (New York: Crane, Russak and Co., 1983). See also Herbert Goldhamer, *The Soviet Soldier: Soviet Military Management at the Troop Level* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1975).

to "learn" from gratuitous advice volunteered by the United States, as they did with some disdain throughout the SALT process in response to U.S. efforts to steer the USSR toward the logic of mutual assured vulnerability.[8] But there are also cases in which the Soviets have clearly profited from reflection on past events, especially those in which either they or their clients have had their fingers burned. The World War II experience, for example, continues to be a major source of inspiration and guidance for Soviet military planning.[9] The "never again" syndrome that emerged from Moscow's humiliation in the Cuban crisis likewise remains alive and well and accounts for much of the motivation behind the Soviet force buildup that has ensued without interruption in subsequent years.[10] Shortly after Israel demolished the

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[8]A typical example was former ACDA Director Paul Warnke's discomfiture over what he termed the "primitive aspects of Soviet nuclear doctrine" and his suggestion that "we ought to be trying to educate them into the real world of nuclear weapons"--notwithstanding more than a decade of truculent Soviet refusal to go along with such efforts. "The Real Paul Warnke," *The New Republic*, March 26, 1977, p. 23. Trying to persuade the Soviets of the superiority of U.S. deterrence theory has been pungently likened by Leo Labedz to "an effort to teach vegetarianism to tigers by correspondence course." "The Illusions of SALT," *Commentary*, September 29, 1979.

[9]As the late Minister of Defense Marshal Grechko once noted, "many of the tactical methods which proved themselves in the last war retain their significance under present-day conditions" ("Science and the Art of Victory," *Pravda*, February 19, 1975). To cite two examples, the near-total devastation wrought upon the Red Air Force by the Luftwaffe during the opening days of Operation Barbarossa has had a commanding influence on subsequent Soviet offensive air operations planning. The Soviet campaign against Japanese forces in Manchuria toward the end of World War II has likewise been frequently cited as a prototype of possible Soviet conduct in a future theater war. For a fascinating discussion of the latter case, see John H. Despres, Lilita Dzirkals, and Barton Whaley, *Timely Lessons of History: The Manchurian Model for Soviet Strategy* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-1825-NA, July 1976). See also Lilita Dzirkals, *Lightning War in Manchuria: Soviet Military Analysis of the 1945 Far East Campaign* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, P-5589, January 1976) and Peter W. Vigor and Christopher Donnelly, "The Manchurian Campaign and Its Relevance to Modern Strategy," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1980, pp. 159-178.

[10]In the aftermath of the Cuban affair, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetzov quietly declared to U.S. presidential adviser John McCloy (in a statement later attributed to Khrushchev) that "we will not let you do this to us again." Cited in Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History* (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 496.

Egyptian and Syrian air forces on the ground in the 1967 war, the Soviets began building hardened shelters for their own tactical fighters in Europe and embarked on a new concept of offensive airpower employment substantially inspired by the Israeli example. Problems involved with applying infantry and armored tactics geared for Europe to the counterinsurgency setting of Afghanistan have apparently prompted changes in Soviet operational style so as to render Soviet forces more responsive to the demands of desert and mountain warfare.[11] Finally, while it remains unclear whether the Soviets have appreciated the full range of tactical liabilities implied by the poor showing of their Syrian clients during the 1982 Lebanon war, there is no doubt that they have at least taken initial steps to reconfigure their surface-to-air defenses as a result of what they learned from the Beka'a Valley experience.[12]

To summarize, we need to start moving beyond simple bean-counting and quotational exegesis toward increasingly integrated looks into the Soviet armed forces as they really are. All too often, we give the Soviets excessive credit for capabilities that we unduly deny ourselves--even though we possess comparable or better equipment and enjoy other advantages in the nontechnical realm that the Soviets lack. Not only is such distortion unfair to the evidence, it is also unfair to the cause of good analysis. It has the effect of undermining the case for needed Western defense improvements by painting the adversary ten feet tall--an image which many reasonable people find hard to accept.

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[11]Those units that first entered Afghanistan in December 1979 were, like all Soviet formations, primarily trained for operations involving a good road infrastructure, secure communications, and clearly defined targets. In response to the novel demands of the Afghan environment, more recent Soviet training has included additional instruction in mountain fighting, convoy security, night combat, and tactics against snipers. A persistent problem facing the Soviets has been the requirement for junior officers and senior NCOs to make prompt decisions without first consulting higher echelons. This is fundamentally alien to the traditional Soviet emphasis on centralized command and has shown little sign of being satisfactorily addressed. See Drew Middleton, "Afghan War: Soviet Learns from Rebels," *New York Times*, January 23, 1983.

[12]For additional discussion, see Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Moscow's Lessons from the 1982 Lebanon Air War* (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, R-3000-AF, September 1984).

The argument for developing a more realistic portrait of the Soviet military (with due appreciation of its weaknesses as well as strengths), however, by no means implies a license to render it three feet short in the process. There has been an unfortunate recent tendency by certain people longer on convictions than information to treat Soviet deficiencies as though there existed no compensating strengths. Such efforts to present Soviet military problem areas as a collective excuse for Western indifference to the Soviet challenge are an affront to sophisticated net assessment. In their most exaggerated forms, best exemplified by Andrew Cockburn's absurd suggestion that the Soviet armed forces can be dismissed as a joke,[13] these perversions of a job much in need of attention transcend irresponsibility and warrant nothing but contempt from serious analysts.

Appreciation of Soviet vulnerabilities will never, by itself, provide an adequate basis for Western security planning, if only because of the indeterminacy of so much of the pertinent data. In the face of this residual uncertainty, the natural tendency of defense authorities to hedge against worst cases will continue to be hard to resist. Nevertheless, such analysis can help place Soviet options and constraints into proper perspective and thereby ease our urge to overstate Soviet capabilities. Although the dangers of complacency are clear enough, exaggerations of Soviet military prowess can be equally harmful in discrediting otherwise valid arguments for a strong defense posture.

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[13]Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1983).