THE SOVIET QUEST FOR MORE GLOBALLY MOBILE MILITARY POWER

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This Memorandum is a contribution to RAND's continuing program of research, undertaken for the United States Air Force, on Soviet military affairs and defense policy. The material presented herein -- some of which overlaps other writings of the author -- has been brought together under the present heading in part because of rising interest in the question of what the Soviet leaders intend to do with a growing capability to intervene in various regions of the world and in part to stimulate further attention to this topic among the author's colleagues both within The RAND Corporation and in the academic community.

SUMMARY

Under Khrushchev, whose political strategy made itself felt throughout the world, the Soviet Union took the first steps toward becoming a globally mobile military power: military aid to the Third World, the development of long-range transport aircraft, a tactical interest in amphibious and airborne landing, a steady rise in merchant shipping.

Brezhnev and Kosygin continued these developments and, in addition, undertook to transform the Navy from a mere adjunct to land power into a genuine blue-water fleet for the support of far-flung Soviet interests. Special emphasis was given to submarines, their associated missiles, and a naval air arm. Other developments related to giving mobility to her conventional military power include tank and troop landing ships, helicopter carriers, and improved airlift equipment. Today, Soviet doctrine recognizes the need to prepare for operations below the level of general nuclear war.

These efforts toward mobility are of course overshadowed by strategic improvements, but the two taken together bring Soviet military force into better line with her growing obligations and commitments. The military balance of power still favors the United States, but the disparity is lessening. It seems both prudent and in accord with history to assume that Soviet leaders may some day put their strengthened abilities to the test, in the Near East, in North Africa, in the Third World generally.
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The rather conspicuous display of a Soviet naval-amphibious presence in the Eastern Mediterranean during and subsequent to the Arab-Israeli conflict in June 1967 has had the effect in the West of dramatizing the Soviet Union's efforts to improve the mobility or "reach" of its traditionally continental military power. Although these efforts have been underway for some time, the very novelty of Soviet naval units and landing craft turning up to show the flag in a severe local conflict situation has tended to evoke the image of a Soviet Union now prepared to make its military presence similarly felt in local crisis situations that may arise in other widespread areas of the globe. Without minimizing some of the long-term implications of a Soviet effort to acquire more mobile and flexible military capacities, it seems wise to try to set this aspect of Soviet military development in an appropriate perspective, taking note both of what has been accomplished to date and what remains to be done before the Soviet Union will find itself in a position to challenge the West effectively in the domain of globally mobile military power.
Origins of a New Soviet Outlook

The beginnings of a manifest Soviet interest in acquiring a better capability to project Soviet military power beyond the continental confines of Eurasia go back to the Khrushchev era, and reflect the differing conceptions which informed Soviet foreign policy under Stalin and Khrushchev. Stalin pursued essentially a continental policy, limiting his expansionist aims to communication of areas which lay immediately around the Soviet periphery, and showing himself loath to commit the Soviet Union, except perhaps ideologically, to wider global obligations.\(^1\) His military policy in turn was correspondingly oriented largely in a continental direction.\(^2\) Under Khrushchev, by contrast, the Soviet Union was transformed into a global power, breaking out of its continental shell to assert its influence and interests in every quarter of the world. At the same time, however, Soviet military policy under Khrushchev was reshaped only by stages to support a political strategy that committed the Soviet Union to global competition against the United States. Initially, Khrushchev's military programs were oriented mainly toward creating a nuclear deterrent posture, placing chief emphasis upon building up the strategic offensive and defensive components of Soviet military power to counter the strategic nuclear forces of the United States. Only gradually toward the end of the

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\(^1\)See Vernon V. Aspaturian, "Moscow's Foreign Policy," Survey, October 1967, pp. 55-56.

\(^2\)One should note that although Stalin's military policy remained essentially continental, the technological basis for development of intercontinental weapons systems was laid down during his rule.
Khrushchev decade did it also come to be recognized that there was a need for more mobile and versatile forces, either for asserting a Soviet presence in distant areas of political contention or for possible use in local conflict situations in which it might not be expedient to invoke the threat of immediate nuclear holocaust.

A good deal more was required, however, than mere recognition of the need to improve Soviet military capabilities for support of foreign policy interests in various parts of the world. In the first place, the Soviet Union lagged far behind the West in many pertinent elements of maritime-air-logistic capability, raising the question whether she could marshal the very large resources necessary to narrow the gap. In the second place, as the internal policy dialogue of the Khrushchev period testified, the conceptual framework for development of globally mobile forces fitted for intervention in distant local conflicts was far from complete. Although a few Soviet military theorists managed to establish the point by the early sixties that preparation for local and limited wars had been neglected, they failed to come up with an explicit body of doctrine for the employment of Soviet forces in such wars. In part, no doubt, this was due to lack of requisite capabilities upon which an appropriate doctrine might be erected, creating in a sense, a circular problem. But failure to formulate a full-fledged doctrine of limited war or a Soviet counterpart of "flexible response" could also be attributed to such nuclear-age constraints as those reflected in Khrushchev's frequently-voiced view that limited wars to which the nuclear powers might become a party posed great, if not "inevitable," danger of
escalation to global nuclear war, and that therefore the only safe course was to confine Soviet efforts to indirect support of small wars of the "national-liberation" variety.\(^3\)

Despite the various constraints of resources, geography and doctrine which stood in the way, however, the Khrushchev period did produce evidence that the Soviet Union, traditionally a continental military power, was making gradual though uneven progress toward the kind of global political-military maneuverability that would be needed should the USSR wish to project its military presence into areas of the world well beyond the periphery of the Soviet bloc. To mention a few relevant developments, there was first the initiation in 1955 of Soviet military aid programs to a number of "third world" countries outside the Soviet bloc. Among other things, the deployment of Soviet equipment and training mission personnel to recipient countries in diverse areas of the world meant that potential logistical bases were being created against a time when political developments might permit their use. These aid programs also gave Soviet professional cadres useful opportunities for studying the operations of military forces, even if not their own, in varied geographic and climatic settings from the Middle East to Indonesia. In Cuba, elements of the Soviet Union's own forces (missile troops and protective tank-infantry formations) were dispatched abroad, gaining on-the-job experience, as it were, in such relevant

\(^3\) For an examination of Soviet doctrinal positions on limited war in the Khrushchev period, see the author's Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, pp. 118-129.
problems as planning for overseas movement, logistics support, and communications.

Other trends more directly related to Soviet sea-air lift and combat-landing capabilities appeared toward the end of the Khrushchev period. Beginning in the early sixties, for example, increased attention was given to the study of amphibious landing operations, along with development and procurement of amphibious landing materiel. In the summer of 1964, Soviet marine forces (naval infantry) were reactivated and put through special landing exercises with a good deal of attendant publicity. Although these forces remained relatively modest in size, estimated by 1965 at around 3,000 to 4,000 men distributed among the several Soviet territorial fleets, their conspicuous rehabilitation at a time when local crises were intensifying in various parts of the world from Tonkin Gulf to Cyprus suggested that the Soviet Union may have been seeking to demonstrate its potential for special landing operations of the type that might occur in conflict situations overseas. An interest in long-range airlift capability, a past Soviet shortcoming, also was indicated.

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5 See, for example, Krasnaia zvezda, July 24, August 22, 1964.

by programs to develop such large transport aircraft as the AN-22, and in the military literature of the early sixties it was pointed out that airborne landing operations in conjunction with amphibious operations would take on increasing significance in the future.

Meanwhile, the Khrushchev decade saw a steady rise in Soviet merchant ship tonnage, built in both Soviet and foreign shipyards, sometimes on terms that apparently amounted to foreign subsidy of the Soviet effort. This construction program brought Soviet merchant shipping up from about 1.5 million deadweight tons in 1959 to nearly 6 million by the end of 1964; if continued at the rate of around a million tons annually which had been reached by the time Khrushchev left the scene, it promises to make...

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8 See, for example, Rear Admiral D. A. Tuz, "The Role of Amphibious Landing Operations in Missile-Nuclear War," Morskoj sbornik (Naval Collection), No. 6, June 1964, pp. 26-27. It should be noted that this and other Soviet discussions of landing and reinforcement operations in the early sixties were generally set in the context of a major war, rather than distant local wars.

9 East Germany, whose shipyards constitute one of the major foreign sources of merchant tonnage for the USSR, reportedly was put under pressure by Moscow to deliver ships at 30 per cent below prevailing world prices. See Marshall I. Goldman, Soviet Foreign Aid, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., New York, 1967, p. 9.
the Soviet Union one of the world's two or three leading
maritime powers well within the next decade. Moreover, the activities of the Soviet Union's growing fleet of oceangoing fishing trawlers and its oceanographic program also marked an extension of Soviet maritime interests to wider areas of the world. In a military sense, it can be said that the maritime program fostered during the Khrushchev regime both improved Soviet ability to take on global military responsibilities and posed new problems of no small dimensions.

On the one hand, it certainly gave the Soviet Union's sealift capacity a much-needed boost, whether for wartime transport purposes or for support of peacetime ventures of one sort or another, including the use of trawlers for surveillance purposes in foreign waters. Inclusion in the merchant ship program of vessels especially configured for military cargo, such as the large-hatch ships used to convey missile equipment to Cuba, proved that military as well as economic criteria had been borne in mind. On the other hand, a commensurate program to provide naval means adequate for the protection of Soviet sealift in distant oceans was not realized under Khrushchev, perhaps because he felt the task lay beyond the resources available to him. For the future, therefore, a broad question left essentially unresolved by Khrushchev was whether Soviet expenditure on a large merchant fleet would also demand massive buildup of

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blue-water naval forces to protect this investment -- a raison d'Être for naval power hitherto lacking in Soviet history.\textsuperscript{11}

Naval Policy Innovations Under the Brezhnev-Kosygin Regime

Under Khrushchev's successors, there have been further significant developments in several fields relating both to Soviet naval forces and to the mobility of Soviet conventional military power in general. With regard to the former, the policies of the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime have carried further the process of transforming the Soviet navy from its traditional role as a mere adjunct to Soviet land power into an instrument for global support of Soviet interests, but at the same time there has been no massive new construction program of the kind necessary to create balanced naval forces in the Western sense. Primary emphasis has continued to fall upon strengthening the undersea fleet of about 400 submarines, both for strategic delivery of sub-launched missiles and for interdiction of seaborne supply lines. According to Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, head of the Soviet navy, the submarine fleet and the naval air arm (a land-based force of some 850 aircraft) have been given "the leading place" in the buildup of Soviet naval power.\textsuperscript{12} The surface forces, including some 20

\textsuperscript{11} For relevant comment on this point, see the author's review of The Russians at Sea: A History of the Russian Navy, in The Russian Review, October 1966, pp. 414-416.

cruisers, more than 100 destroyers, and a fleet of several hundred fast patrol boats, have received a lower priority, although some of these units have been modernized to fire surface-to-surface and antiaircraft missiles. In the maritime field, on the other hand, the steady growth of the Soviet merchant fleet has continued, reaching a level of around 10 million tons by August 1967, according to the Soviet official in charge.

Although the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime has held back from undertaking a massive program of balanced naval expansion, several noteworthy innovations and departures from past practice have occurred during its tenure. Since the advent of the new regime, for example, Soviet submarines have regularly conducted patrols in distant ocean areas, including a much-publicized round-the-world cruise in 1966 by Soviet nuclear-powered submarines. As pointed out in April 1966 by Paul Nitze, then U.S. Secretary of the Navy, demonstration of a Soviet capacity for blue-water operations has not been confined to the submarine fleet: "They are also developing the capability for high seas operations away from their confined home waters, replenishing at sea, as our navies long ago found advantageous."

Soviet naval authorities themselves have had occasion to speak with obvious satisfaction of the trends which

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14 V. Bakaev, "Reform and Management," Pravda, August 1, 1967.

have culminated in the Soviet navy's breaking out of its traditional confinement to closed seas around the Soviet littoral. Speeches marking the observance of Soviet Navy Day in July 1967 were particularly notable for frequent sounding the theme that Soviet sea power had extended its reach to "remote areas of the world's oceans previously considered a zone of supremacy of the fleets of imperialist powers," and that its mission henceforth was to include "constantly cruising and patrolling wherever required in defense of the state interests of the Soviet Union."  

Although a certain pride of service may to some extent color such utterances by various Soviet admirals, they nevertheless reflect a recognition of the changing role of Soviet sea power which is without precedent in earlier Soviet history. Certainly, the notion that the Soviet navy has the task of looking after the worldwide "state interests" of the USSR is new to the Soviet political vocabulary. The increasing incidence of harassment-type encounters at sea between Soviet and U.S. naval units in the past year or so seems to reflect this new conception of the Soviet navy's role.  

Perhaps the most striking example of the Soviet navy's departure from past practice has been the establishment of what appears to be a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean, dramatized, as noted earlier, by the conspicuous display of Soviet naval units in Mediterranean waters during and since the Arab-Israeli conflict of June  

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1967. Actually, the Soviet Union began the gradual establishment of a modest naval presence in the Mediterranean as early as 1964, with regular submarine patrols and the appearance of other vessels during the Cyprus crisis. However, it was only after Brezhnev demanded withdrawal of the U.S. 6th Fleet in April 1967, on the eve of the Arab-Israeli confrontation, that the dispatch of additional Soviet naval units to the Eastern Mediterranean attracted widespread attention.

The inclusion of a few tank and troop landing ships in the augmented Soviet force of some 30 to 40 combat and auxiliary vessels captured particular notice, since it was seemingly meant to convey the impression that the Soviet Union was prepared to intervene with local landing parties if necessary. This demonstrative gesture, it may be noted, was not matched by any other signs of a Soviet willingness to become militarily involved in the Arab-Israeli fighting; indeed, at the height of the

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19 Interestingly enough, it was only after the appearance of Soviet tank landing ships during the Arab-Israeli crisis that photos of these vessels, which are relatively new to the Soviet navy, began to be published in the Soviet press. For example, Admiral Gorshkov's article in the July 1967 issue of Soviet Military Review included a picture of a tank landing operation, although the same article in another publication six months earlier (see footnote 11 above) did not.
six-day war, Soviet diplomacy seemed bent upon avoiding a possible military confrontation with the West. Although the activities of the Soviet Mediterranean force since the June hostilities have not gone beyond the demonstrative level, and although the force itself is clearly inadequate to challenge the 6th Fleet, Soviet spokesmen have contended that its presence has played "a decisive role in frustrating the adventurous plans of the Israeli aggressors."  

Another notable innovation in Soviet naval policy has been the decision to build helicopter carriers, two of which reportedly have been constructed.  

21 This development, recently brought to light by disclosures in the West rather than by the Soviets themselves, comes as the climax to a long and evidently frustrating internal Soviet debate over the pros and cons of adopting aircraft carriers. Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov, head of the Soviet navy in World War II, revealed in his memoirs in 1966 that proposals for carrier construction in the late thirties were vetoed by Stalin, even though professionals on the naval staff rightly considered, according to Kuznetsov, that carrier aviation would become an indispensable element.


of naval power in the next war. After World War II, the question of embarking on a carrier program arose once more, but again the decision was negative, in part evidently because catching up with the West posed too great a demand on Soviet resources, and in part, according to Admiral Gorshkov, the incumbent navy chief, because the advent of the nuclear age underscored the vulnerability of carrier forces and marked the beginning of their "irreversible decline" as the "main striking element" of modern naval power.

By electing finally to invest in helicopter carriers, the Soviets appear to have adopted a compromise that represents not a belated bid to compete with the United States in carrier aviation, but rather a strengthening of the Soviet potential for landing operations and/or antisubmarine warfare. Which of these two latter purposes may stand higher in Soviet plans for the new helicopter carriers has not yet been made clear in Soviet military literature.

Other Pertinent Military Policy Developments

Apart from the various trends in the development of Soviet naval forces noted above, the period since Khru
shchev's ouster has been marked by other developments bearing upon Soviet capacity to project military power into distant conflict situations. Airlift potential, for example, has been improved, both through technical advances such as new air landing equipment displayed at

the Moscow air show in July 1967,\textsuperscript{25} and through training emphasis on airborne operations and airlift reinforcement in connection with several Warsaw Pact field exercises. In a doctrinal sense, there has been a further tendency to embrace the view -- advanced only by occasional military theorists toward the end of the Khrushchev period -- that Soviet forces should be better prepared for a wide range of military operations below the level of general nuclear war.\textsuperscript{26} In a practical sense, meanwhile, the conflict in Southeast Asia undoubtedly has brought home to the Soviets many new lessons in the conduct of local war, even though Soviet forces have not been directly involved on a formal basis.

The increasing scale of Soviet aid to North Vietnam, for example, has yielded experience in dealing with problems of logistics support, training and technical backup, as well as affording the opportunity for combat-testing of weapon systems in a limited-war theater environment. At the same time, Soviet military professionals apparently have kept an attentive eye upon the development of new U.S.

\textsuperscript{25} The show included a demonstration landing of several types of missiles and self-propelled guns from AN-22 and AN-12 transports. See "Soviets Demonstrate Vertical Envelopment Capability with AN-22 Heavy Transport," Aviation Week & Space Technology, August 14, 1967, pp. 52-53.

\textsuperscript{26} For an examination of the more explicit doctrinal attention given during the post-Khrushchev period to problems of nonnuclear warfare in various potential theaters of conflict, see the author's "Soviet Military Policy at the Fifty Year Mark," \textit{Current History}, October 1967, pp. 214-216.
technology and techniques as applied to the war in Southeast Asia; indeed, judging from the Soviet military press, there seems to be some concern lest Soviet military thought and practice fail to keep pace with innovations spurred by the American effort in Vietnam.\(^{27}\) The over-all effect of the war in helping to boost U.S. defense expenditures has also had an impact upon the Soviet Union, whose leaders have found it expedient to make successive increases in the Soviet military budget.\(^ {28}\)

The upward trend of Soviet military outlays under the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime can not be attributed solely, of course, to the effects of the deepening conflict in Southeast Asia. Steps to bolster the Soviet strategic posture, probably growing out of a reappraisal of the USSR's strategic position vis-à-vis the United States in the wake of the Cuban crisis of 1962, doubtless account for a large share of the heavier military outlays under the present regime. These steps have included a pronounced buildup of Soviet ICBM forces, the development of some sort of orbital or "fractional" orbital delivery system, and the

\(^{27}\) The bulk of Soviet military commentary on the war has emphasized the difficulties encountered by U.S. forces, but occasional accounts of new tactics, such as the widespread employment of airmobile units, have seemed to imply a professional Soviet awareness that the U.S. has moved ahead in such fields.

\(^{28}\) The Brezhnev-Kosygin regime's first military budget, for 1965, was 12.8 billion rubles. Since then, the figure has risen each year: 1966 -- 13.4; 1967 -- 14.5; 1968 -- 16.7 billion rubles. These, of course, are the publicly-announced military budgets, and do not take into account additional sums for defense purposes generally thought to be buried in other parts of the state budget.
concurrent deployment of antiballistic missile (ABM) defenses. If nothing else, the large investment devoted to strengthening the Soviet strategic delivery and defense forces seems to testify to the determination of the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime to erase the image of a Soviet Union strategically inferior to its major adversary.

Although it is not the intent of this discussion to deal at length with the strategic force aspects of Soviet military policy, it should be noted that the efforts of the incumbent regime to strengthen the Soviet strategic posture tend to overshadow in scope and priority what we have been describing as its parallel attempt to improve the reach and mobility of Soviet general purpose forces. When taken together, however, these complementary trends represent a process through which the Soviet Union seems to be striving to bring its military posture into better line with its growing global obligations and commitments. Indeed, it may be supposed that the Soviet leadership is hopeful that its military policies will help to bring about a major change in the familiar situation of the past two decades in which the United States enjoyed not only marked strategic superiority over the Soviet Union, but also went virtually unchallenged in its capacity to intervene locally in troubled situations around the globe.

Some Questions for the Future

What are the prospects that Soviet hopes for a favorable shift in the military balance may be met, and how would Soviet conduct upon the international scene be affected if this should occur? Certainly, these can be reckoned among the more crucial questions of the next decade. With due regard for the contingent and precarious nature of any assumptions about the future military balance and its consequences, let us consider these questions briefly in the final portion of this discussion.

First, with respect to the military balance, it can be said that, despite the measures taken during the past few years by the Soviet Union to improve its strategic offensive-defensive forces and the military reach of its conventional forces, the over-all balance of military power at the present time continues to favor the United States. Controversy hinges mainly on the issue whether trends at work on both sides of the equation are significantly narrowing the margin between U.S. and Soviet power. Many unpredictable variables may influence these trends over the next few years, and the precise character of the future balance will depend not only upon the continued willingness of the Soviet leaders to raise the ante in building up their forces and upon the capacity of their economy to stand the strain, but also upon whatever responsive steps the United States may choose to take, which could have the effect of cancelling out any appreciable gains achieved by the Soviet side. However, without prejudging the outcome, it seems only prudent to assume on the basis of current trends that a new correlation of forces relatively more favorable to the Soviet Union may well emerge during the next decade or so.
Should this prove to be the case, how then might Soviet behavior in world politics be affected? Obviously, any answers are bound to be speculative. To take first a somewhat optimistic alternative, it might be argued that a significant shift in the previously recognized military balance would give the Soviet leaders a new sense of security and help them overcome their ingrained suspicion of the Western world. Feeling free at last from external danger, they would, so the argument runs, feel more inclined to play a responsible status quo role in international politics. In this view, the widening maritime activities and interests of the Soviet Union would tend also toward greater economic interdependency with the rest of the world, giving the Soviet leaders a further incentive for fitting into the established international order and for maintaining world stability. Unfortunately, this alternative rests on premises of rather marked transformation in the world outlook of the Soviet ruling elite. Despite the process of societal change at work within the Soviet Union, this writer finds little grounds for concluding that the Soviet leaders are finally prepared to accept a lasting accommodation with the present world order, especially in an atmosphere of success that would tend to persuade them that history was running their way anyhow.

To take a somewhat more likely alternative, at least as this observer sees it, the Soviet leadership probably would set out to test the new power relationship, probing for such political gains as circumstances permit. This in itself may seem no more than a replaying of past Soviet performance, when the necessity of operating from an
inferior power position placed definite limits upon the risks that Soviet policy makers were willing to run. But operating from a more favorable correlation of forces, the Soviet leaders could be expected to reopen various stale-mated East-West issues and to seek fresh political advances in the third world, thus introducing new elements of turbulence into international relations. In this environment, the Soviet Union might be more disposed than not to employ its growing maritime capacity as an economic weapon to undermine the established international order, and to buttress such a policy by further buildup and deployment of naval and other mobile elements of Soviet power. A plausible example of what Soviet policy maneuvering in a specific case might seek to accomplish can be drawn from the current uneasy situation in the Middle East and North Africa, where further Soviet politico-military penetration of the area could be utilized in an attempt to outflank NATO and to put Soviet influence in a position to control the oil spigot to Western Europe.\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\)It hardly needs to be pointed out that the Soviet Union has nursed a long time ambition to establish a strategic-political foothold in the Middle East. The present leadership, aided by the leverage which the Arab-Israeli conflict has placed in Soviet hands, apparently intends to do what it can to make the area a permanent sphere of Soviet influence, as indicated among other things by Brezhnev's remarks on the subject in a July 5, 1967, speech. Pravda, July 6, 1967. For an illuminating survey of earlier Soviet strategic and political interests in the area, see John A. Armstrong, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East," paper presented at the Sixth International Conference on World Politics, Berlin, September 4-8, 1967.
Needless to say, this second and somewhat sombre image of the future remains greatly contingent upon many imponderables, not the least of which is the interaction between Soviet and Western policies, particularly those of the United States. As already noted, any substantial shift in the power equation which might tempt the Soviet leadership to undertake a more dangerous range of risks than in the past depends in part on the nature of responsive military policy decisions which rest in American hands. In another important sense also the international posture of the United States will doubtless condition greatly the prospects open to the Soviet leadership for political exploitation of Soviet military power in the decade ahead.

It is worth recalling that after the last war, with Western Europe weakened and the colonial world dissolving, the Soviet Union had some reason to expect that bright prospects lay ahead for Communist advance. As it turned out, although the Soviet Union made significant advances in Eastern Europe, it gained no ground in Western Europe and it failed to exploit successfully the dissolution of the colonial world, partly because the forces of nationalism were difficult to cope with but also partly because the policy of the United States in both Europe and the third world helped to prevent the Soviet Union from drawing either the older weakened states or very many of the wobbly new ones into the Communist orbit.

If now, more than two decades later, the United States should for some combination of reasons find it no longer fitting to carry on its so-called containment role, and should, as some voices on both sides of the Atlantic urge,
turn inward toward one form or another of neo-isolationism, then the prospects opening up before the Soviet leadership might once again appear inviting. There would surely be a particular irony in the situation should a retrenchment of American commitments abroad occur at the very time the Soviet Union was in the process of improving its capacities to intervene more effectively in the world at large, thus increasing the temptation to do so. Indeed, one might perhaps best assess the Soviet quest for more globally mobile military power as a development meant less to lay down a direct challenge to the West than to provide the Soviet leadership with broader options for moving in where U.S. power and influence may recede.