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THE MILITARY DIMENSION IN THE MAKING OF SOVIET FOREIGN AND DEFE--ETC(U)
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(4) THE MILITARY DIMENSION IN THE MAKING OF SOVIET FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY.

(10) Thomas W. Wolfe

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THE MILITARY DIMENSION IN THE MAKING OF SOVIET FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY*

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The aim of these hearings, as I understand it, is to seek an accurate picture of the political, military, social, and economic forces at work in the Soviet Union today in terms of their influence upon the Soviet world view and upon the Soviet Union's relations with the rest of the world, particularly the United States. I hope to contribute something to one aspect of this inquiry. Specifically, this paper is intended to deal primarily with the question of how military considerations enter into the making of Soviet foreign and security policy, and how the substance of Soviet policy may be affected thereby.

Let me note at the outset, however, that military considerations are but one aspect of a seamless web of political, economic, social, and other factors that help to shape the conduct of the Soviet Union on the world scene. It will hardly be possible, therefore, to discuss the military dimensions of Soviet policy without giving some attention to other features of the internal and international environment in which the Soviet leadership finds itself operating and in which its major policy decisions are made today.

A. Assumptions About the Soviet Decisionmaking Process

Perhaps it would be useful first to say a few words about some of the basic assumptions and conceptual models which outside observers have tended to employ--either implicitly or explicitly--in analyzing the Soviet decisionmaking process. For our purposes, it may suffice to single out what appear to be the two most sharply contrasting conceptions or theoretical models of how decisions are made and policy priorities established and implemented in the Soviet system.

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*Statement before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, October 11, 1977.

The first of these constructs has a lineage going back to the model of a self-perpetuating totalitarianism that was widely employed to depict the Soviet system under Stalin during its earlier stages of forced industrial growth and consolidation of communist authority and legitimacy. This model has undergone some revision in the course of time, in recognition of the fact that as the Soviet Union has evolved into a more mature and complex industrial society there has been a partial shift from the totalitarian "command system" of the Stalinist age to a system of rule in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods which appears somewhat more responsive to pluralistic pressures from below.

However, the basic political assumption underlying this model has remained essentially unchanged during the transition from the harsh autocracy of the Stalinist period to the less rigid oligarchic rule of the present collective leadership, namely: A small leadership elite with highly centralized machinery of planning and control at its disposal is assumed to be in a position to make its own fully informed calculation of preferred policy alternatives and to dictate its decisions to all subordinate echelons of Party and government for implementation. In terms of contemporary decisionmaking theory, this model shares one of the central attributes of the so-called "rational choice" or "rational actor" paradigm, in which decisions are seen to be the result of carefully calculated choices by some unitary decisionmaking entity that selects optimum courses of action intended to maximize benefits and minimize losses in pursuit of its goals.*

When viewed through the conceptual lenses of this model, the Soviet policymaking process is seen as one in which the top political leadership is the master and never the captive of the overlapping bureaucracies over which it nominally presides, in which decisions come

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*The "rational choice" model does not, of course, apply only to centralized systems of totalitarian stripe. In fact, it has a lot in common with the classical theory of the firm--operating on a mini-max calculus according to some recognized value or utility function.

from the top down, and are the product of consensus among the ruling elite. I believe it is fair to say that a policymaking model along these lines tends to provide the standard frame of reference still employed either explicitly or implicitly by many analysts who address themselves to the explanation and prediction of Soviet political behavior.

In recent years, however, this "totalitarian-rational choice" model has come to be challenged increasingly by Western scholars looking to the concepts of comparative systems analysis and the theory of complex organizations for other models better suited to reflect what were felt by many analysts to be processes of change, diversification and interest-group politics at work within the formal structure of Soviet institutions. One finds therefore that another paradigm or model has come into wide use, differing notably in some respects from its predecessor. This contrasting model combines elements of what the literature of contemporary decisionmaking theory distinguishes as the "organizational process" and the "bureaucratic politics" models.*

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*Theoretically, the "organizational process" model holds that decisions in large organizations are less the product of rational or optimized pursuit of preferred outcomes than of largely routine procedures or SOPs for dealing with various classes of problems based on past experience, while the distinctive argument of the "bureaucratic politics" model is that decisions emerge primarily as the product of internal competition among bureaucratic actors and interest-groups, who tend to pursue values determined more by institutional or personal concerns than by some abstract calculus of national interest.

One of the first practical efforts by a Western analyst to bring out the differences between the "rational unitary actor" theory and the "organizational process" and "bureaucratic politics" models when applied to actual Soviet decisionmaking was Graham Allison's case study, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1971.

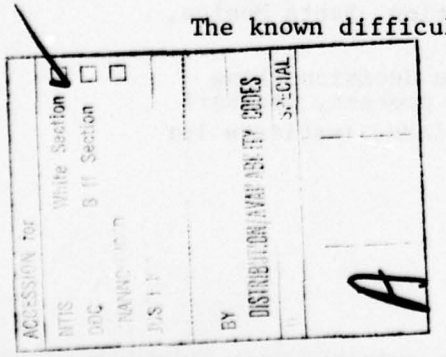
For a useful review of Western decisionmaking theory and examination of its potential application to the study of Soviet foreign policy decisionmaking, see Arnold L. Horelick, A. Ross Johnson, and John D. Steinbruner, *The Study of Soviet Foreign Policy: A Review of Decision-Theory-Related Approaches*, R-1334, The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, December 1973.

For a recent exploratory study applying various decisionmaking models to the analysis of the Soviet decisionmaking process, see Karl F. Spielmann, *Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions*, Institute for Defense Analyses, Arlington, Va., April 1977.

The basic assumption upon which this alternative interpretive approach rests in any case is that no single centralized leadership entity--even in a totalitarian society--has the time or information at its disposal to make all the important decisions for the system. Since the top leadership cannot master all the details and complexities of the issues with which it deals, it must depend on inputs of information and technical judgment flowing upward from subordinate organizations. These organizations in turn tend to operate according to their own established rules and procedures. They have their own institutional momentum, vested interests to protect, axes to grind, constituencies to please, traditional claims on the budget, commitments to programs already laid down, and so on.

As seen by this model, the various bureaucracies--as centers of partial power in the system--have a claim to be heard; the way they marshal their arguments and the skill of their advocacy can help to structure the issues presented to the top leadership, so that in a sense the policy options open to it may already be somewhat circumscribed before they become a matter of decision. Further, while this model can allow for a dominant role by the Party apparatus in the Soviet decisionmaking process, it also accommodates the contention that other bureaucracies in the system have become more vocal and active in looking out for their special interests.

Although the Soviet government is not one of formal checks and balances, when viewed in terms of this model, the proliferation of power within a large and complex bureaucratic system like that in the Soviet Union may beget potential vetoes upon policy and therefore in some sense serve as a kind of random substitute for constitutional checks upon central authority. Another implication of this model is that the Soviet bureaucratic system, because of an inherent organizational tendency to depend on standard operating procedures, discourages innovatory action that breaks with established ways of doing things. The known difficulties of introducing new technology into the Soviet



civilian economy and a seeming periodic need to import new technology from the West can be cited to buttress this point.*

Besides emphasizing the effect of bureaucratic phenomena upon Soviet policymaking, this model also views the top leadership itself as a far from homogeneous group prepared to speak with a single voice on the issues that come before it. Rather, the ruling oligarchy is presumed to have its own differing alignments of interest, and to engage in internal political maneuvering and to strike committee compromises that may tend to water down its decisions and sometimes rob them of logical consistency.

In effect, then, unlike the older "totalitarian-rational choice" model, this newer one suggests that the policies which emerge from the Soviet decisionmaking process may represent something less than the product of optimum choice among a full array of alternatives. Even what appear to be unitary high-level decisions reached for the weightiest reasons of Soviet national interest may on occasion represent the cumulative result of many smaller and sometimes conflicting actions--as well as failures to act--at various levels of the bureaucratic system.

Needless to say, one ought to be wary of attempts to fit actual Soviet behavior into any given abstract model, or to explain Soviet priorities and decisions in terms of any single set of determinants--economic, strategic, ideological, historical, bureaucratic, or whatever. Neither of the illustrative models of the Soviet decisionmaking process sketched above may accurately convey the shape of Soviet reality, but it does seem to make some difference whether one's judgments are informed primarily by the first or the second of these conceptions.

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*For an argument that periodic transfusions of selected Western technologies have been a logical or rational choice as well as a necessity for the highly bureaucratized Soviet economic system, which in effect runs best on standard operating procedures in the intervals between doses of innovation from the outside, see Raymond Vernon, "Apparatchiks and Entrepreneurs: US-Soviet Economic Relations," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1974, pp. 253-255.

In the first case, the tendency may be to oversimplify the situation, to see the Soviet Union as a highly controlled society in which all decisions come down from the top and must therefore be directed toward some logically explicable purpose or intention in line with the professed philosophy of the top leadership. In the second instance, the tendency may be to read more into the interplay of elite politics and bureaucratic phenomena as a sign that the Soviet Union is well on the way to becoming a pluralist society than the situation actually warrants.*

In both cases, the laudable objective of trying to understand the workings of the Soviet system essentially on its own terms can be frustrated by the common difficulty of viewing that system through the lenses of one's own political culture. Perhaps the problem of what is popularly called "mirror imaging"--the tendency to project American institutional habits, interests and values onto the Soviet scene--is somewhat more pronounced in the case of the second model, if only because the bureaucratic and pluralistic trends emphasized by this model seem superficially at least to resemble aspects of the Western political experience.

But, as we have been cautioned by the authors of a recent perceptive study, any good working model of the Soviet decisionmaking process must take account of the fact that latent bureaucratic pluralism in the Soviet Union is still strongly tempered by state controls and other pressures for conformity inherent in the Soviet system and Russian political tradition.** These authors therefore recommend what might be called a "controlled-pluralism" model--one that provides room for some measure of institutional and functional pluralism and internal conflict, while also recognizing the limits imposed by

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*For a trenchant statement that argues this point, see William E. Odom, "A Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics," *World Politics*, July 1976, pp. 542-567.

**Kenneth A. Meyers and Dimitri Simes, *Soviet Decision Making, Strategic Policy, and SALT*, Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, December 1974, pp. 8-11.

conformist features of the Soviet setting.* Such a model, it seems to me, may strike the right balance between the two theoretical examples we have been discussing here.

B. Anatomy of the Soviet Decisionmaking System

With that, let me turn from theoretical constructs to a description of the structure or anatomy of the Soviet decisionmaking system as it can be observed from the outside, focusing especially on the places in the structure where military and foreign policy matters intersect with economic and other considerations.

For structural purposes, I have prepared what is sometimes known as a "wiring" or "plumbing" diagram--showing most of the formal and informal organs of Party and government known to be involved in one way or another in the making of Soviet foreign and defense policy. This diagram will be found on the following page. Along with describing its organizational structure, I will offer some comment on how the system may operate. In this connection, let me observe that even if we can reconstruct the anatomy of the Soviet decisionmaking system fairly accurately, this does not necessarily tell us how the system really works. Another way of saying this is that with a given organizational structure, different decisionmaking paths may be followed in specific cases to produce the output or end-product of policy and action that one is able to observe.

The organizational structure depicted in the diagram is arranged to show Party and governmental entities at three hierarchical levels: (1) The top leadership level, or summit of the policy pyramid; (2) an intermediate level that is not part of the formal structure, but at which important mediating bodies operate at the interface between the top leadership and the ministerial bureaucracies; and (3) the ministries themselves and other such government agencies as State Committees, GOSPLAN and the Academy of Sciences.**

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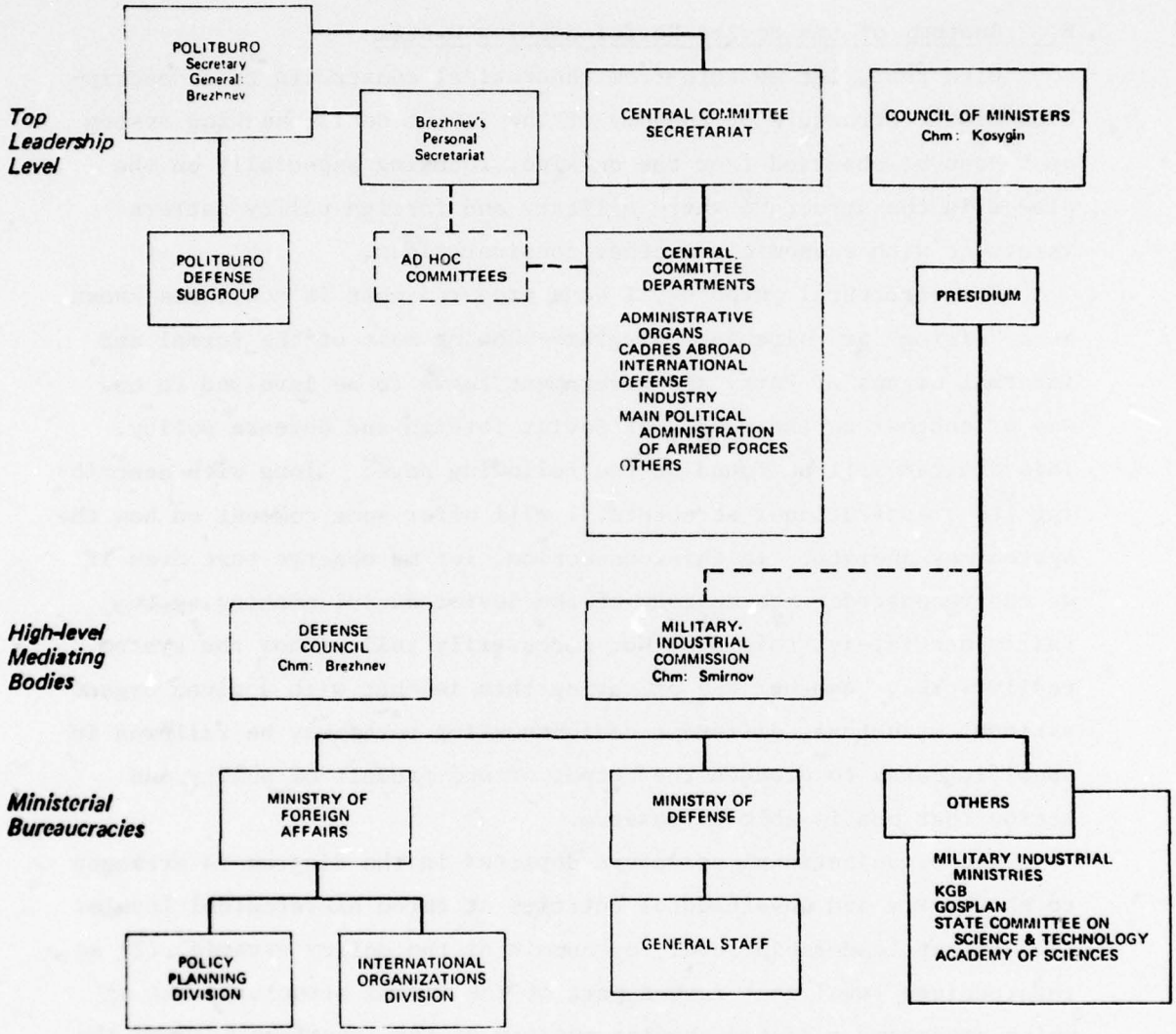
*Ibid., p. 11. See also Dimitri K. Simes, *Détente and Conflict: Soviet Foreign Policy 1972-1977*, Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, 1977, pp. 46-49.

**The discussion which follows draws heavily on the author's own recent study, *The SALT Experience: Its Impact on U.S. and Soviet Strategic Policy and Decisionmaking*, R-1686-PR, The Rand Corporation, September 1975, pp. 23-49, as well as on other sources as noted.

ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE MAKING OF SOVIET FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY



(1) The Top Leadership Level

The Politburo. In the Soviet Union the final power of decision on all matters of policy rests with the Party Politburo. Resolutions of the Central Committee, directives of the Council of Ministers, and decrees of the Supreme Soviet are all essentially decided in advance by the Politburo, among whose members (at this writing, 14 full and 8 candidate members), Secretary General Leonid I. Brezhnev is clearly primus inter pares. The bylaws under which the Politburo operates are unknown, but it is the view of many observers, reinforced by a rare public revelation by Brezhnev himself, that most policy issues are settled by consensus.* If consensus cannot be reached, formally equal power to vote on final decisions is apparently shared by the 14 full members of the Politburo. This prerogative is seldom exercised, however, according to Brezhnev, who has indicated that a small subgroup or committee of Politburo members is usually charged with resolving a disputed issue.**

The existence of such subgroups as a working device within the Politburo has long been assumed by expert observers, for the complexity of the modern industrial state and the centralization of the Soviet political system impose such an enormous burden of decisionmaking on the Politburo that it would probably become quickly bogged down without an internal division of labor and appropriate staffing.

Among the Politburo subgroups is believed to be one that concerns itself with defense and national security issues. Headed by Brezhnev, this group may include A. N. Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers; A. P. Kirilenko, a Party secretary and close supporter of

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*Brezhnev's comments on Politburo operations were made to a group of Western news correspondents in Moscow in June 1973, on the eve of his visit to the United States. See Theodore Shabad, "Brezhnev, Who Ought to Know, Explains Politburo," *New York Times*, June 15, 1973. For well-informed accounts of Politburo policymaking procedures, see: Vladimir Petrov, "Formation of Soviet Policy," *Orbis*, Fall 1973, pp. 827-831; Matthew P. Gallagher and Karl F. Spielmann, Jr., *Soviet Decision-Making for Defense*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1972, pp. 28-33.

**_New York Times_, June 15, 1973.

Brezhnev; and M. A. Suslov, a senior Party figure in the fields of foreign policy and ideology.* Marshal D. F. Ustinov, who became Minister of Defense in April 1976 after the death of Marshal A. A. Grechko, and who is now a full member of the Politburo, may also sit with the defense subgroup.

Although the Politburo evidently retains the ultimate authority to reject recommendations of its subgroups, it is believed that it generally defers to the judgment of subgroup members on matters in which they have a degree of expertise. Since Brezhnev apparently has the right to nominate the membership of the subgroups,** this would tend to enhance his control over Politburo decisions, although at the same time Brezhnev appears to have put stress on a process of consultation and sharing of responsibility for major decisions with other Politburo members. This, as some observers have pointed out, may be not only a bow to collective leadership, but also a matter of elementary precaution on Brezhnev's part.***

The Politburo itself apparently has no administrative or staff structure of its own, but of course the staffing through which it receives inputs of information is an important part of the organizational picture at the top leadership level. There are at least two partly distinct and partly overlapping staffs of Party functionaries that support Brezhnev and the Politburo, and which have some hand in the staff processing of foreign policy and defense matters.

Brezhnev's Personal Secretariat. This group represents one of the two staffing bodies in question. Since about 1967, but especially

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*Another probable member of this subgroup was N. V. Podgorny until his dismissal as head of state in the spring of 1977. Podgorny also lost his Politburo membership at that time, and has since become virtually an "un-person" in Soviet political terms.

**See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 12.

***Marshall Shulman, "SALT and the Soviet Union," in Mason Willrich and John B. Rhinelander (eds.), *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, Free Press, New York, 1974, p. 114.

after 1971, and coinciding with Brezhnev's rise to preeminence within the collective leadership, this personal staff has grown in size and reportedly has assumed an increasing role in foreign and national security affairs.* Headed by G. E. Tsukanov, a long-time Brezhnev aide, the secretariat includes K. V. Rusakov, A. M. Alexandrov, and A. I. Blatov, all Party veterans with experience in international affairs, as well as a number of more junior experts such as E. M. Samoteikin. However, no military men of significant stature nor specialists in military technology and strategic analysis are known to be members of Brezhnev's secretariat.**

The extent to which Brezhnev's personal entourage may make substantive inputs to papers dealing with foreign policy and defense issues is not clear, though some analysts suggest that his staff reviews incoming materials for both form and substance, and that it may call for additional information and supporting studies.*** In any event, the secretariat, as a kind of traffic control center, doubtless has a good deal to do with deciding which papers and which officials are to get through to Brezhnev. Beyond this, according to some accounts, papers and recommendations from the Central Committee Secretariat and its departments--the traditional source of staff support for the Politburo--are now required to be routed through Brezhnev's personal secretariat.****

Central Committee Secretariat and Departments. The second source of staff backup for the Politburo, as noted above, is the Central Committee Secretariat, which in turn is served by some 24 departments, of which only five are shown in the diagram on page 8. The ten secretaries in addition to Brezhnev who comprise the secretariat

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*See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., pp. 14-17. See also Dimitri Simes and Gordon Rocca, *Soviet Decisionmaking and National Security Affairs*, Memorandum 20-km-11-1, Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, November 1973, p. 15.

**Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 30.

***See Petrov, op. cit., p. 823.

****See Simes and Rocca, op. cit., pp. 15-16; Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 16.

are powerful political figures in their own right, and six of them are also Politburo members.* Presumably those with Politburo status are in a position to bypass Brezhnev's personal secretariat and to raise issues at weekly meetings of the Politburo if they so choose. On the other hand, the point also has been made that with the heads of the Foreign and Defense Ministries and the KGB now holding full Politburo rank, this tends to short-circuit oversight of their particular agencies by the Central Committee Secretariat, and strengthens Brezhnev's own position in control of these key bureaucracies.**

Be that as it may, however, it is in the Central Committee departments, the heads of which operate under the supervision of members of the secretariat, that the bulk of the staff work immediately supporting the Politburo still appears to be accomplished. Only several of the departments whose work has varying degrees of relevance in foreign policy and national security matters need be mentioned here.

One of these, Defense Industry, headed by I. D. Serbin, is the principal staff element of the Central Committee apparatus concerned with the production aspects of weapons policy. Another is the International Department, which deals with foreign policy matters related to capitalist and third-world countries, and is said to wield more influence in the making of foreign policy than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*** It is headed by B. N. Ponomarev, who is also a secretariat member, and who may have supervisory interest over the Cadres Abroad Department. The latter is reported to have some part in developing policy positions for Soviet delegations at conferences on disarmament.****

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*In addition to Brezhnev, the six Party secretaries with Politburo status are A. P. Kirilenko, F. D. Kulakov, M. A. Suslov, B. N. Ponomarev, K. V. Chernenko, and D. F. Ustinov. The latter may no longer hold a secretarial post. See further discussion of Ustinov's case below, p. 17.

**See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 17.

***See Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 30.

****See Petrov, op. cit., p. 825.

The Department for Liaison with Ruling Communist and Workers Parties, whose present head may be either P. A. Abrasimov or K. F. Katushev,* is involved in foreign policy and security matters relating to countries under communist control. Another department, Administrative Organs, headed by I. V. Savinkin, has an area of responsibility which apparently includes matters of personnel selection and administration in the armed forces, as well as in the internal security and intelligence agencies.

A point of particular interest to this discussion is that there is no department in the Central Committee apparatus, nor any individual member of the supervisory secretariat, with responsibility for general military policy.** The Main Political Administration of the Armed Forces (MPA), headed by General of the Army A. A. Yepishev, does serve simultaneously as a Central Committee department and as an overseer of the Party-political apparatus within the Ministry of Defense. However, its concerns are primarily with the ideological orientation and political instruction of military personnel, rather than with military policy formulation or management of military forces. At the same time, though the MPA does not directly supervise the operational-technical activities of the armed forces, it doubtless has some indirect influence in these areas, since many of the Soviet military writers who promulgate the Party's line on military affairs, including military doctrine, do so through journals controlled by the MPA, such as *Communist of the Armed Forces*.

In the diagram on page 8, there is a box labelled Ad Hoc Committees, connected by dashed lines both to Brezhnev's personal secretariat and to the Central Committee departments. This reflects the fact that in addition to routine staff operations in support of the Politburo, ad hoc committees are occasionally convened to recommend solutions to knotty

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*See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 13.

**Ibid., p. 14.

issues, including probably some relating to foreign policy and defense. Some analysts have surmised that a committee of this sort might have been created to deal with issues arising out of the SALT negotiations.* The initiative for setting up such ad hoc committees may come either from the Politburo itself, Brezhnev's personal secretariat, or the Central Committee Secretariat, but in any case the committees are apparently made up of both professional staff from relevant Central Committee departments and of personnel drawn from elsewhere, including a pool of part-time experts described as the "consultative group."**

It will be noted that the full Central Committee (of some 426 full and candidate members) has not been shown in the diagram, for while it is used at its twice-annual plenary sessions to sanction decisions already made by the Politburo, it is not itself a decisionmaking or policy formulating body.*** Likewise, the Supreme Soviet, the two-chamber legislative body that gives symbolic sanction to acts of the Council of Ministers on the government side of the house, is not shown.

Council of Ministers. This, the remaining organization at the top leadership level depicted on the diagram, is headed by Chairman A. N. Kosygin. Although the Council of Ministers is an important institution for executing Politburo decisions and for supervising the day-to-day running of the bureaucratic machinery of the Soviet state, it does not appear to function as a deliberative or decisionmaking body on new issues of policy. To be sure, as government executives in charge of the ministerial bureaucracies, the members of the Council of Ministers can certainly influence both the way in which policy issues reach the deliberative-decisionmaking level in the Politburo, and the way in which the policies adopted are carried out.

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*Gallagher and Spielmann, op. cit., pp. 29-30. See also Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 32.

**Petrov, op. cit., p. 830.

***On certain occasions, when tensions within the Politburo have spilled over, as during Khrushchev's repulse of the so-called "anti-Party group" in 1957, plenums of the Central Committee have in fact taken on the power of final arbiter which they possess in theory.

Where foreign and military affairs are concerned, however, such influence probably makes itself felt more at the ministry level than in the Council of Ministers itself. So far as one can tell, neither the full Council, numbering some 70 members, nor its presidium of 12 men, is directly engaged institutionally in the formulation of foreign and national security policy.

(2) High-Level Mediating Bodies

Just below the Politburo apex of the Soviet decisionmaking system and above the ministerial level are two somewhat enigmatic bodies that do not show up in the formally constituted organizational structure, but which play significant roles in the formation of national security policy. Both operate at the interface between the top political leadership and the ministerial bureaucracies, and appear to perform mediating and coordinating functions that the formal Party-government machinery is not fitted to handle expeditiously.

The Defense Council. One of these bodies, whose lineage can be traced back to the Council of Labor and Defense of Lenin's day and the Defense Commission which operated under Stalin in the 1930s, today goes by the name of Defense Council.* Khrushchev chaired this body in his day, as does Brezhnev now. At the present stage of its evolution, the Defense Council apparently brings together selected members of the Politburo--probably the members of Brezhnev's previously mentioned defense subgroup--together with senior officers of the military high command and representatives of other Party and state agencies, depending on the subject matter.**

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*For references to the evolution of this institution, see, among others: Gallagher and Spielmann, op. cit., p. 18; John Erickson, *Soviet Military Power*, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, London, 1971, p. 14; David Mark, in *The Military Budget and National Economic Priorities*, Part III, the Joint Economic Committee, 91st Congress, June 1969, p. 956; Malcolm Mackintosh, "The Soviet Military Influence on Foreign Policy," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1973, p. 3; Raymond L. Garthoff, "SALT and the Soviet Military," *Problems of Communism*, January-February 1975, p. 29; Harriet Fast Scott, "The Soviet High Command," *Air Force Magazine*, March 1977, pp. 52-53.

**See Harriet Scott, in *Air Force Magazine*, March 1977, p. 53.

Little is known about the mandate of the Defense Council or the procedures under which it operates. In peacetime, it appears to provide a setting in which the political and military leaderships can interact on a broad variety of defense policy issues, rather than to concern itself with day-to-day managerial functions.* In wartime, the Defense Council presumably would be transformed into a body similar to the State Committee of Defense, or GKO, of World War II.

Given Brezhnev's reputed proclivity for consensus decisionmaking, one might suppose that he would use the peacetime Defense Council as a forum in which to mediate any differences between the political and military sides of the house, and to rally the latter behind the policy recommendations of his Politburo subgroup before placing them on the agenda of the full Politburo for final decisions.

It would seem to be a reasonable conjecture that in addition to serving as an instrument through which Brezhnev and his Politburo colleagues can line up substantive support on defense and arms control issues from the military high command, the Defense Council also serves in turn as the body in which the military leadership finds its best opportunity to present a unified military position on important issues to the political leadership. What happens if a disputed issue goes unresolved here is an intriguing question which, given present knowledge of the inner politics of the Soviet elite, unfortunately cannot be answered.

Military-Industrial Commission. The second body shown at the mediating interface between the top political leadership and the ministerial bureaucracies is the Military-Industrial Commission. Like the Defense Council, this body apparently has antecedents that go back many years, but its existence began to receive attention in Western literature on

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*Gallagher and Spielmann, op. cit., p. 19. Some analysts have suggested, however, that the Defense Council may also serve as the formal medium through which the Ministry of Defense receives its directives from the Politburo. See Mackintosh, in *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1973, p. 4.

Soviet organization only in the past half-dozen years.* The Military-Industrial Commission (its Russian acronym is VPK) is chaired by L. V. Smirnov, a deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, and is nominally subordinate to that body. In practice, Smirnov appears to have been closely associated with and probably answered to D. F. Ustinov, when the latter served as overlord of Soviet defense production and research, in his capacity as the Party Secretariat (and Politburo) member with responsibility for these areas. Since Ustinov became Minister of Defense in April 1976 and acquired the rank of marshal,** it has not been clear whether he has retained his secretarial role as overseer of defense production, or whether this role has been assumed by someone else, possibly Ya. P. Ryabov, a Central Committee secretary.***

In any event, the VPK provides a forum for handling matters involving the various ministries that make up what is known as the defense-industry sector of the Soviet economy.**** The VPK's membership has never been announced, but it is logical to suppose that the principal members are the heads of the eight major industrial ministries of the defense sector, together with participants from such agencies as the State Planning Committee (GOSPLAN), and the Ministry of Defense.

The functions of the VPK are thought to include the coordination of defense research and production activities that cut across individual

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*See, for example: Andrew Sheren, "Structure and Organization of Defense-Related Industries," in *Economic Performance and the Military Burden in the Soviet Union*, Joint Economic Committee, Washington, 1970, p. 124; David Holloway, *Technology, Management, and the Soviet Military Establishment*, Adelphi Paper No. 76, Institute for Strategic Studies, London, April 1971, pp. 6, 38; Garthoff, in *Problems of Communism*, January-February 1975, p. 24.

**Ustinov was given the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union in July 1976, two months after the same rank had been conferred on Brezhnev.

***See Spielmann, *Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions*, p. 64.

****See Sheren, op. cit., p. 123; Karl F. Spielmann, "Defense Industrialists in the USSR," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1976, pp. 58-61.

ministerial lines. Some observers believe that this group under Smirnov determines whether existing technologies are adequate to support a given program, and that it helps to distribute resources among programs as needed, but that its charter does not include establishing the relative priority of one major program versus another--a matter dealt with higher up at the Defense Council or Politburo level.* Whatever the VPK's present charter may be, it seems evident that Smirnov himself plays an important role in the weapons policy picture, if judging only from the "considerable measure of authority" he is said to have displayed in high-level SALT negotiations with Henry Kissinger in May 1972 and mid-1974.**

(3) The Ministerial Bureaucracies

At this level, the two principal ministries involved in foreign affairs and defense policy matters are, of course, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Andrei A. Gromyko, and the Ministry of Defense, now headed by Marshal Dmitri F. Ustinov. Both men, in addition to their ministerial roles, are voting members of the Politburo, a situation that breaks with customary Soviet practice of the past couple of decades,*** but one which doubtless allows these men to speak with greater authority in the councils of the top leadership than if they merely represented their respective ministerial bureaucracies.

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*Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 20.

**See Shulman, in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, p. 113; John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1973, p. 251. See also transcript of Kissinger's press conference at the Intourist Hotel, Moscow, May 27, 1972, in *Military Implications of the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems and the Interim Agreement on Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*, Hearing Before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 82nd Congress, Washington, D.C., 1972, p. 110.

***In Gromyko's case, he had served as Foreign Minister for 16 years before being elevated to the Politburo in the spring of 1973. Ustinov was already a full Politburo member and Central Committee secretary before succeeding the late Marshal Grechko as Minister of Defense in April 1976. However, prior to Grechko's entry into the Politburo at the same time as Gromyko, professional soldiers serving as Ministers of Defense--with the exception of Marshal G. K. Zhukov's brief tenure in the Politburo in 1956-57--had not enjoyed Politburo status.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although Gromyko's personal stature has grown greatly from the days when Khrushchev could rather crudely joke about ordering him to sit on a cake of ice, most observers agree that this ministry's role continues to lie primarily in the realm of implementing, rather than formulating, Soviet foreign policy. The MFA does have a division charged with foreign policy planning, as well as a Collegium of senior diplomatic officials which is prepared to furnish advice on foreign policy matters. However, recommendations from both of these bodies apparently are rarely sought at the level of the Politburo and Central Committee departments, which tend to task the Foreign Ministry with preparation of reports containing information and analyses, rather than policy recommendations.*

In the field of arms control, the Foreign Ministry has a disarmament section which deals with SALT and other disarmament activities. Staffed by arms control specialists, this section probably comes closer to approximating its American counterpart, ACDA, than any other organization on the Soviet side, although it is a good deal smaller than ACDA. While the principal SALT inputs of the Foreign Ministry have been thought to be largely limited to the diplomatic and political aspects of the negotiations,** and not to involve dealing with strategic and technical hardware issues,*** Gromyko's personal role in SALT again appears to have grown to the point that next to Brezhnev, he has become the most authoritative spokesman for the Soviet SALT position within the top leadership.

The Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. Although there is no question about the Party's control over the military as an institution, and although the military aspects of Soviet policy are integrated with political, economic and other relevant considerations at the top leadership level and through the mediating bodies that have been described, the military establishment now presided over by Marshal Ustinov

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*Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 19.

**The Soviet SALT delegation is headed by a senior diplomatic official, Deputy Foreign Minister V. S. Semenov.

***Shulman, in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, p. 111; Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, pp. 37-38.

does appear to enjoy a large measure of autonomy and authority in strategic and operational matters.*

Unlike the U.S. Defense Department, the Soviet Ministry of Defense has no layer of civilian officials with statutory authority over the uniformed military. In the Soviet Ministry of Defense, the top level of authority consists of Marshal Ustinov and 12 uniformed deputy ministers, three of whom are first deputy ministers. One of the latter, Marshal N. V. Ogarkov, is also Chief of the General Staff.**

Though formally an agency of the Ministry of Defense, the General Staff is institutionally powerful in its own right, and as the central organ of the military high command, it has direct controlling links with the main staffs of the various service branches, military districts, and operational forces. Through its Main Operations Directorate, one of its three major components,*** the General Staff directs military operations, develops strategic concepts, targeting and war plans, and helps formulate general military policy.****

Traditionally, there has been a muted rivalry between the Ministry of Defense, which though not run by civilian appointees, represents the interface of the military establishment with political authority, and the General Staff, which regards itself as the real seat of military professionalism and leadership in the USSR, and is a somewhat larger organization than the Ministry itself. Moreover, one of the enunciated tasks of the General Staff is to ensure "coordinated actions" by all

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*Meyers and Simes, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

**The other two first deputy ministers are Marshal V. G. Kulikov, who was replaced as Chief of the General Staff by Ogarkov in January 1977 and is now Commander-in-Chief of Warsaw Pact Forces, and General S. L. Sokolov, a 66-year old army officer whose exact responsibilities are not known, even though he has held the post for the last ten years.

***The other two main directorates deal with logistics and procurement, and technology and R&D. Other General Staff components are concerned with intelligence, communications, and so on.

****Gallagher and Spielmann, op. cit., p. 39. For useful background on the Soviet General Staff, see also William J. Spahr, "The Soviet Military Decision-Making Process," paper delivered at Fifth National Convention, American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Dallas, Texas, March 15, 1972, pp. 14-22.

defense entities, including "the main and central administrations of the Ministry of Defense,"* which would seem to suggest that the latter should march to the cadence set by the General Staff.

However, there is a third overlapping institution in the military high command which may in effect serve to mediate any latent rivalries between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. This is a collegial institution called the Main Military Council, probably chaired by Minister of Defense Ustinov, with membership including Chief of the General Staff, Ogarkov, the other "first" deputy defense ministers, the head of the Main Political Administration, and the top service commanders. It is not known whether Brezhnev, as a nominal Marshal of the Soviet Union and putative supreme commander of the armed forces, takes part in the deliberations of this body. If its function is primarily to advise the Minister of Defense and to iron out a unified military position on issues to be carried forward to the Defense Council or Politburo level, then Brezhnev might enter the picture only at those levels. On the other hand, if the peacetime Main Military Council would in wartime become the counterpart of the World War II Stavka--or Headquarters of the Supreme High Command--as some students of the subject think would be the case,** then perhaps Brezhnev might participate occasionally on a peacetime training basis, so to speak.

Both the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff have an interest in arms control, and have made organizational arrangements for dealing with it.*** In the case of SALT, the bulk of the preparation of substantive Soviet positions at the ministry level apparently has been

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*Cited by Harriet Scott, in *Air Force Magazine*, March 1977, p. 55. This General Staff responsibility for coordinated action extends also to Civil Defense USSR.

**Ibid., p. 54.

***An office identified as a "section" in the Ministry of Defense has arms control responsibilities, while in the General Staff the drafting of substantive positions is thought likely to take place within the Main Operations Directorate. See Shulman, in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, p. 110; Gallagher and Spielmann, op. cit., p. 39.

carried out within the military establishment.* There has also been strong military representation on the Soviet negotiating delegation from the beginning of SALT, including Nikolai Ogarkov, then a general-colonel and now a marshal and Chief of the General Staff.**

Reportedly, the SALT negotiations, at least during their earlier years, gave evidence of a rather high degree of compartmentalization between Soviet military and foreign affairs personnel. The latter--including the head of the Soviet delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov--displayed a weak knowledge of Soviet strategic forces and weapons systems, often making it necessary for the U.S. side to supply such data itself to advance the work of negotiation.*** Presumably, this situation also reflected a rather poor lateral transfer of SALT-related technical and strategic information between the military and foreign affairs bureaucracies in Moscow.

To some degree, compartmentalization between the military and foreign affairs establishments in Moscow may have been alleviated by

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*Testimony to this effect occasionally has come from Soviet visitors to the U.S. For example, a department head from one of the academic research institutes of the USSR Academy of Sciences, when asked in 1973 whether his institute made direct contributions to SALT planning, replied: "We do not work on the development of a strategic arms limitation plan. That is Marshal Grechko's province." See Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 40.

**In addition to Ogarkov, other high-ranking officers from the General Staff who have served on the Soviet SALT delegation include Generals N. N. Alekseyev, I. I. Beletsky, and K. A. Trusov. The former is now a deputy minister of defense in charge of weapons development.

***See Shulman, in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, p. 115. See also Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, pp. 55-56, 142. Newhouse describes the reaction of N. V. Ogarkov, then a General and the senior Soviet military representative, to Americans' supplying relevant information to Foreign Ministry personnel on the Soviet delegation: 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."

Some observers attribute the attitude displayed by Ogarkov to the desire of Soviet military leaders to protect and preserve a privileged position in the Soviet decisionmaking process. See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 30.

what some observers believe was the setting up of a jointly staffed ad hoc SALT group at the ministerial level to provide better coordination and support of negotiations at this level.* Furthermore, it would seem likely that the internal process of working out Soviet positions, together with the give-and-take between Soviet negotiators and their American counterparts over the past eight years of SALT, may have at least familiarized Soviet foreign affairs functionaries with a body of strategic lore that earlier had been almost exclusively the province of the military. Presumably, a pool of more strategically literate civilian personnel might thus contribute to diluting the monopoly of the military over strategic thought and planning in the Soviet Union.

Other Ministries and State Agencies that contribute in some measure to the making of Soviet foreign and defense policy include the eight military-industrial ministries that comprise the previously mentioned defense-industry sector of the Soviet economy,** as well as the Committee of State Security (KGB), the State Planning Committee (GOSPLAN), the State Committee on Science and Technology, and the Academy of Sciences, along with some of its subordinate research institutes.

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*Garthoff, in *Problems of Communism*, January-February 1975, p. 29; Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, p. 39.

**See above, p. 17. Sheren, op. cit., p. 123, identifies the eight industrial ministries of the defense sector as follows (the Russian abbreviation of the ministry's name, as well as the name of the minister, are given in parentheses): Defense Industry (MOP, S. A. Zverev); Aviation Industry (MAP, P. V. Dementev); Shipbuilding Industry (MSP, M. V. Yegorov); Electronics Industry (MEP, A. I. Shokin); Radio Industry (MR, P. S. Pleshakov); General Machine Building (MOM, S. A. Afanasev); Medium Machine Building (MSM, E. P. Slavskii); Machine Building (MM, V. V. Bakhirev). An additional ministry dealing with production of communications equipment may have been added to the defense sector within the last couple of years. Other ministries that contribute to military production include Instrument Making, Automation Equipment, and Control Systems (K. N. Rudnev); Tractor and Agricultural Machine Building (I. F. Sinitsyn); Chemical Industry (L. A. Kostandov); and Automotive Industry (A. M. Tarasov).

In the case of the military-industrial ministries, influence upon Soviet defense policy is exerted through a web of organizational, economic and political relationships too intricate to be traced without far more detailed attention than is possible here. But several points can be briefly made.

First, the defense industry bureaucracy is notable for its continuity, both organizationally and in terms of key personnel. Since the late 1930s when a separate cluster of defense industries and their supporting R&D institutions was established, these industries have tended to keep their centralized or "vertical" organizational structure intact throughout various industrial shakeups, including the economic decentralization of the 1957-65 period. As a result, though growth and change have occurred in the defense sector, basic enterprise groupings and lines of ministerial authority have remained relatively more stable than in other economic sectors. As for personnel, essentially the same set of major executives has administered the defense-related industries for many years; the collective experience of the eight incumbent ministers named on page 23, for example, totals around 250 years, so one may assume these are men who know their way around within the Soviet bureaucratic world and how to manipulate it to serve their institutional interests.*

A second notable feature of the defense industry sector is its symbiotic relationship with the military establishment. In the Soviet Union, not only production of military goods, but the bulk of military R&D is carried out in institutions under the jurisdiction of the defense-related industrial ministries.** At the upper levels of the military establishment and the defense industries, the close link

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*See Thomas W. Wolfe, "Soviet Interests in SALT," in William R. Kintner and Robert W. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (eds.), *SALT: Implications for Arms Control in the 1970s*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973, p. 37.

**Scientific research institutes (NII), general design buros (OKB), and some plant facilities for experimental production comprise the R&D network within the defense industry sector, with cross ties at all levels with military representatives of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff. See Sheren, loc. cit., pp. 30, 35; William T. Lee, "The 'Politico-Military-Industrial Complex' of the USSR," *Journal of International*

between military requirements and their fulfillment by the R&D and production programs of the defense industry sector apparently has led to a mutual interest in preserving arrangements which have not only helped to maintain favorable budgetary shares for both parties, but which--despite problems in certain cases--have on the whole enabled the Soviet Union to compete successfully against the West in the field of military technology.

This community of interest has operated at sub-levels of the interlocking military-industrial bureaucracies also. A network of ties has emerged between weapons design-production groups in industry and their immediate customers in the military establishment. One result is the formation of what might be called informal subgroup "alliances" devoted to promoting particular weapons categories, for example, between working elements of the Ministry of General Machine Building, which is believed to be responsible for design and production of strategic ballistic missiles, and military representatives of the Strategic Rocket Forces. Similar alliances might be expected between subgroups in the Air Forces and Aviation Industry, the Ground Forces and the Ministry of Defense Industry, and so on. The Ministry of Defense Industry, incidentally, is the oldest of the various defense industries, and has traditionally been the chief producer of conventional ground weapons.

However, one should not leave the impression that the weapons decision process in the Soviet Union is wide open to the play of pluralistic pressures upon the top leadership from such competing interest groups. As several analysts have noted, limits are placed upon the potential pluralistic tendencies of military-defense industry subgroups not only by the centralized structure of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff which mitigates, though probably does not eliminate inter-service and intra-service rivalries over weapons

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Affairs, No. 1, 1972, pp. 74-76; David Holloway, "Technology and Political Decision in Soviet Armaments Policy," *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, p. 260.

choices, but also by the close oversight of the defense industrial establishment through such "supervisors" as Smirnov of the Military-Industrial Commission and Serbin of the Central Committee apparatus.*

The KGB, headed by Politburo member Yu. V. Andropov, who has both a background in foreign affairs and a military rank,** can be presumed to have some influence on the formulation of foreign and national security policy, although its role is understandably not spelled out in Soviet sources. One avenue of KGB influence is through the kinds of information it supplies. Together with the GRU, the intelligence organ of the General Staff, it gathers information abroad and processes it into finished intelligence, although which of the two agencies is charged with preparing final assessments for the top leadership is not clear. The KGB's responsibilities also extend to keeping tabs on the conduct of Soviet officials, and to maintaining secure communications lines with Soviet representatives all over the world, activities which probably give it at least indirect influence upon the shaping of policy decisions. In the view of some observers, the KGB under Andropov is today more responsive to Brezhnev and his personal secretariat than to the Politburo as a whole.***

The State Planning Committee, or GOSPLAN, headed by N. K. Baibakov, makes a substantial contribution to Soviet defense policymaking,

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*See Spielmann, *Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions*, pp. 57-69 and "Defense Industrialists in the USSR," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1976, pp. 54-55; Holloway, in *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, p. 272.

**Andropov, whose post as head of the secret police includes nominal command of KGB security troops, has the rank of General of the Army, as does the man in charge of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), N. A. Shchelokov. The KGB's "border troops" are estimated to number about 175,000, about the same as the "internal troops" of the MVD. See *The Military Balance: 1976-1977*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, September 1976, p. 10.

***Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 18.

especially as a prime source of advice for the top leadership--along with the State Committee for Material and Technical Supply under V. E. Dymshits--with regard both to resources required and those available to support civilian and military production programs, respectively.

Integration of defense program planning with the overall five-year economic plan cycle in the Soviet Union is thought to be accomplished by preparing a parallel five-year defense plan, subject like the overall economic plan, to annual and mid-term modifications. GOSPLAN's First Deputy Chairman, V. M. Ryabikov, who held the rank of general-colonel on active duty and came from the Soviet pool of experienced defense-industry managers, was formerly believed to be the official most closely concerned with military resource allocation questions,* and hence probably the person in GOSPLAN with immediate supervision over the plan-integration process. Who may exercise this function today is not known.

The State Committee on Science and Technology, headed by V. A. Kirillin, has a broad charter covering the improvement of the national research effort. However, the extent to which it may have some institutionalized role in Soviet military policymaking is not clear. It is generally thought that Kirillin's organization does not have authority over the R&D effort in the fields of defense, space and atomic energy, but that these areas fall primarily within the purview of the Military-Industrial Commission under Smirnov and the weapons technology management nexus under Deputy Minister of Defense Alekseyev.** The Central Committee's Department on Science and Educational Institutions, headed by S. P. Trapeznikov, evidently has some oversight role with regard to scientific research institutions, but does not appear to steer R&D policy as such.

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*See Holloway, in *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, p. 260; Spielmann, *Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions*, pp. 54-56; Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 26.

**Cf. Holloway, in *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, pp. 259-260. Some observers suggest that Brezhnev has shown a personal interest in using Kirillin's committee to improve his own ties with the scientific community, which presumably could strengthen the committee's standing. See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 22.

Finally, in this probably incomplete catalogue of organizational contributors to Soviet foreign and defense policymaking, we come to the USSR Academy of Sciences and some of the research institutes that nominally operate under its wing. The Academy itself, whose long Russian tradition gives it a certain claim to professional autonomy not enjoyed by most Soviet institutions, apparently plays little direct role in policy matters, but a rather significant impact may be exerted by its members upon both military and foreign policy issues. One channel of influence is through personal contacts of senior scientists, who have been invited periodically to high policy councils as consultants in their own fields of competence.* In the past, scientists given access to the top leadership generally were expected to provide individual professional advice, and not to represent the view of a "scientific lobby" or to voice political judgments; more recently, at least some members of the Soviet scientific community may have acquired a broader advisory role.** The practice of bringing in scientific experts as consultants or sometimes staff members in the Central Committee apparatus reportedly also has increased in recent years.***

Among the research institutes under the USSR Academy of Sciences which produce studies in the fields of foreign affairs, defense and arms control are the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, directed by N. N. Inozemtsev, and the newer Institute of the USA and Canada, directed by G. A. Arbatov. Since the late sixties, both of these institutes have established departments to deal with

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*Khrushchev's frequent invitations to prominent scientists to discuss the military implications of their work were a case in point. See *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, Little Brown & Co., New York, 1974, pp. 58-71.

**Cf. Shulman, in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, p. 111.

***Most of the experts thus drawn into the Central Committee apparatus are said to be from the social and political sciences rather than the "hard" sciences. See Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 21.

military-political aspects of international relations, headed in each instance by former General Staff officers with academic degrees.* A number of other retired or brevetted military officers also joined the staffs of the two institutes, and in most cases apparently have maintained their contacts with the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense.

Some of the work of these institutes focusing on arms control questions and strategic, economic, and social trends abroad appears in their monthly journals and other Soviet publications, though the institutes also are presumed to conduct other unpublished studies commissioned by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, as well as by Brezhnev's personal secretariat and the Central Committee apparatus, especially its International Department.**

The largely unknown factor is how much weight the work of these institutes may have in the actual framing of Soviet foreign and military policy. Since neither of the institutes ostensibly is authorized or asked to analyze Soviet strategic, economic and other problems, their inputs to policymaking presumably lie mainly in how they interpret developments abroad--which may differ somewhat from the interpretations provided by the regular Soviet intelligence organizations. Some outside observers feel that institute researchers probably have had a substantial impact on policymaking by providing an alternative transmission belt for information between the United States and the Soviet Union; others have the impression that the interaction between institute researchers and official policymakers has not been very close.*** It is generally thought, on the other hand, that the directors of the two institutes may have considerably more influence than their research

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*The original chairman of the Division of Military-Political Problems of International Relations in Inozemtsev's institute was Colonel V. M. Kulish, while the chairman of the Division on Military Aspects of Foreign Policy at Arbatov's institute was Colonel V. V. Larionov. Both men, well known by their writings outside the USSR, have since been replaced.

**Cf. Meyers and Simes, op. cit., p. 35.

***Ibid., pp. 34-38; Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, pp. 48-49.

staffs by virtue of their Party standing,* and in the case of Arbatov in particular--reputed access to Brezhnev's ear.

C. Influence of Military Considerations on Soviet Policy

Having sketched the overall institutional framework within which Soviet foreign and defense policy is made, it is time to turn now to some other questions bearing on our central subject: the influence of military considerations on Soviet policy.

The Nature of Soviet Civil-Military Relations

One set of questions over which there has been perennial speculation in the West centers on whether there is a frequent cleavage of views between Soviet political and military leaders as to what the country's interests are, and the extent to which the political side of the house defers to military judgment. I think it is fair to say that for some time, the prevailing assumption among Western students of Soviet civil-military relations has been that there are basic institutional differences that make for conflict over policy issues.** In some cases where this dichotomous "conflict" model has been used, the political leadership has been pictured as generally coming out on top, while in others it has been asserted that the Soviet marshals have grown so powerful that they are able to call the tune on a wide range of security and foreign policy matters.

Today, however, another school challenges the conflict model, arguing that there is no meaningful dichotomy growing out of institutional or other differences between the Soviet political and military leaderships. Some expositors of this view hold that Soviet leaders in

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*Both Inozemtsev and Arbatov are candidate members of the Central Committee, which gives them positions of moderate but scarcely high prestige in terms of the Party hierarchy.

**One of the more widely cited studies reflecting this viewpoint is Roman Kolkowicz's *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, Princeton University Press, 1967.

and out of uniform share essentially the same value system, within which the military leaders have traditionally been and continue to be compliant executors of policies framed by the Party,* while others see the situation as one in which the political leaders, though possessing the prerogative of final decision, often delegate a large share of their authority to the military in a kind of cooperative partnership.**

In my own opinion, as I have stated elsewhere,*** institutionally seated interests do appear to alter somewhat the perspective from which the political and military leaders, respectively, view national security problems. But rather than a sharp dichotomy between the two groups, there seems to be what amounts to a division of labor between them, with the political leadership tending to leave the professional details of security planning, as Kosygin once put it, "to the marshals," while reserving to itself the right of final decision, especially on matters involving large resources or issues of war and peace. At the same time, one might note that with civilian figures like Brezhnev and Ustinov taking on the rank and privileges of Marshal of the Soviet Union, there is a certain smudging of the boundary line between civilian and military authorities.

So far as policy conflict between the two groups is concerned, I would not think it can be ruled out, but it does seem to me that the Party and military leaderships share essentially the same goals and

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*An articulate expositor of this view is William E. Odom. See his "The Party Connection," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1973, pp. 12-26; "The Militarization of Soviet Society," ibid., September-October 1976, pp. 34-51; and "Who Controls Whom in Moscow," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1975, pp. 109-122.

**This view may be found in a paper delivered at an Airlie House conference on March 3, 1977, by Timothy J. Colton, "The Party-Military Connection: An Overview," p. 24.

***Thomas W. Wolfe, "Military Power and Soviet Policy," in William E. Griffith, ed., *The Soviet Empire: Expansion & Détente*, Lexington Books, Lexington, Mass., 1976, p. 156.

values,* and that institutional conflicts between them are probably less a factor in policy formulation than occasional struggle in the upper reaches of the Soviet leadership among elite cliques which have overlapping composition within both political and military circles. Even if one accepts this view of the policy conflict arena, however, I think it is well to bear in mind the caveat given by Dimitri Simes, namely, that internal conflict within the ruling elite is restricted by certain generally observed rules of the game--an important one being that support for competing policy positions is not to be sought from constituencies outside the elite family itself.**

Policy Leverage of the Military Establishment

Given the decisionmaking institutions and the pattern of civil-military relations described above, another appropriate question to be asked is: How does military influence on policy in fact make itself felt in the Soviet Union? Two of the mediums through which military influence makes itself felt within the policymaking system are internal leadership politics and institutional processes.

In terms of elite politics, the situation over the past decade or so might be characterized as one in which Brezhnev carefully cultivated an alliance of convenience with military leaders and defense industrialists while keeping within the rules of the game by practicing consensus decisionmaking calculated to maintain the stability of collective leadership. In return for backing of his internal power position, Brezhnev presumably lent his support in cases where it might have been needed to win Politburo approval of programs sought by the military. A rough "test" of this presumption--subject to be sure to the fallacy of misplaced causality--might be seen in the parallel rise since the mid-sixties of Brezhnev's personal political fortunes and the Soviet military budget.

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*For more on this point, see below, pp. 35-40.

**Simes, *Detente and Conflict*, p. 49. The point that rules of the game put a premium on minimizing elite conflict and maintaining the leadership coalition is also made by Dennis Ross in *Rethinking Soviet Strategic Policy: Inputs and Implications*, Center for Arms Control and International Security, Univ. of California, Los Angeles, June 1977, p. 21.

Viewed in terms of the institutional setting and processes within which Soviet defense policy is forged, a somewhat different avenue for the diffusion of military influence seems evident. Inputs of information and substantive advice from the major bureaucracies provide the basis upon which Brezhnev and the other chief actors at the top level of the policymaking system reach decisions. Where decisions on any proposal for a major new military program are called for, these inputs must answer at least three broad types of questions: (1) Do we have or can we acquire the technology necessary for it? (2) Do we have the resources to support it? (3) How important is it to our security?

As our earlier organizational discussion would indicate, the top political leadership can turn to nonmilitary bureaucracies for answers to the first two questions, or at least for a competent check on answers that might be furnished by the military-industrial bureaucracies. For example, from the Central Committee departments, from Smirnov at the Council of Ministers and the VPK, from the science and technology organizations outside the military, and from GOSPLAN, the top political leadership could be expected to receive authoritative advice on technology and resource questions.

But for answers to the third question, it would appear that the top leadership, in the past at least, has been able to turn for substantive advice only to the bureaucracy whose institutional interests are most at stake in defense policy issues--the military establishment itself. This situation, as noted by various observers,* has been due to the apparent lack in the policymaking structure of alternative sources of expert advice on the substantive merits of national security proposals. In the absence of overriding objections on technical or economic grounds, therefore, the system has seemed to have a bias in defense policy decisions toward the preferences of the military professionals and their close allies in the defense-industrial ministries.

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*See Wolfe, in *The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Detente*, p. 157; Ross, *Rethinking Soviet Strategic Policy*, pp. 5, 19; Holloway, in *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, p. 269; Meyers and Simes, *Soviet Decision Making, Strategic Policy, and SALT*, p. 35.

The salient question here is whether there is now emerging, within the Soviet decisionmaking system, an informed and relatively independent source of military-strategic advice and analysis upon which the political leadership could draw. A potential source of such advice has been seen in some of the research institutes under the aegis of the USSR Academy of Sciences--such as the Arbatov and Inozemtsev institutes mentioned earlier.* Certain knowledgeable scientists with an appreciation of the dynamics of weapons technology and weapons tradeoffs, such as Academician A. N. Shchukin, a prominent electronics expert and Soviet SALT delegate, likewise have been mentioned as alternative sources of expert counsel.** An increasing Soviet interest in various analytical techniques used in Western defense decisionmaking, such as cost-effectiveness and network analyses, also has been cited as likely to widen the expertise available to Soviet decisionmakers,*** though most of the use of such techniques still appears to be within the military establishment itself. In part, their employment can be attributed to the military's efforts to respond positively to admonitions for more efficient management of defense resources.****

While it does seem plausible that the Soviet military's virtual monopoly on strategic thought and substantive analysis may be gradually eroding as a result of trends like those mentioned above,***** the

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*See above, p. 28. Cf. also Meyers and Simes, op. cit., pp. 35-37. These authors take the view that the institutes have in fact gone a considerable way toward providing the political leadership with qualified expertise on strategic issues, other than that furnished by the military-industrial complex.

**Cf. Spielmann, *Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions*, p. 26; Shulman, in *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond*, p. 112.

***See Holloway, in *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, pp. 268-269.

****Ibid.

*****See also earlier comment on how the SALT experience may have helped create a pool of strategically literate personnel in the foreign affairs establishment, p. 23, above.

patchy evidence available does not in my opinion demonstrate that non-military "outsiders" have yet become free to encroach upon the traditional province of the Soviet military by advancing independent judgment on such matters as force requirements, deployments, and basic defense concepts. I would be disposed to conclude, therefore, that more as a consequence of the way the Soviet policymaking mechanism is structured, than through an internal elite struggle to enlarge its influence, the military leadership today enjoys a substantial amount of policy leverage.

Aspects of a Common Outlook Within the Policymaking Elite

Whatever the respective positions taken by the Soviet political and military leaderships on particular issues of defense policy, perhaps the most significant factor of all that gives military considerations a pervasive general influence on Soviet policymaking is the sharing of a common outlook by the political and military leadership elites in a number of broad areas bearing upon Soviet security. Some of the more relevant of these areas are briefly noted below.

(1) Both political leaders and military professionals appear to share a long-standing belief that the Soviet Union must look out for its own security, along with a reluctance to trust others to take care of it for them. This shared attitude tends to make inherently suspect attempts to construct a stable military-strategic relationship with the capitalist adversary on the basis of each side's being solicitous of the other's security concerns; it also tends to generate resistance to the kinds of arms control agreements that would involve deep inroads upon unilateral Soviet security planning.

(2) The underlying concept of security for the Soviet Union embraced by most members of the political and military elites appears to be that the Soviet Union cannot feel secure until her neighbors are no longer capable of posing any real military or political threats to her. This attitude not only has tended to give sanction to a decades-long Soviet effort to achieve a position of military dominance around

the Soviet periphery, but has endowed Soviet competition with the U.S. with a similar objective, for--as it has been pointed out--one effect of the "military-technical revolution" of the nuclear-missile age has been to bring the geopolitical and strategic frontiers of the U.S. and the USSR close together also.*

(3) The "threat-elimination" philosophy that informs the security thinking of both political and military elites in the Soviet Union is fortified by an ideological code that emphasizes the unceasing antagonism of the capitalist adversary,** who must be kept from resort to military means in an attempt to reverse the tides of history as he sees the "correlation of forces" in the world shifting irrevocably against him. With regard to the concept of "correlation of forces," the understanding shared by Soviet political and military elites appears to be that while many factors are involved--economic, political, moral and others--in the "final analysis" it is the military factor that is "decisive."***

(4) The strategic military approach thought to be best suited to discourage the adversary's resort to force is one which derives primarily from the experience, traditions and institutional preferences of the Soviet armed forces, but which a majority of the civilian leadership elite appears to endorse also. The essence of this approach is

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*See Panel 1 Rapporteur's Report, *Proceedings of the National Security Affairs Conference--1977*, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., August 1977, p. 19.

**As the author has indicated elsewhere, the notion that systemic struggle between the forces of socialism and those of capitalist "imperialism" cannot be "annulled or banned by intergovernmental agreements" runs through the extensive Soviet literature on "peaceful coexistance." See Wolfe, in *The Soviet Empire: Expansion & Détente*, p. 149.

***For Soviet exposition of these points, cf. Sh. Sanakoyev, "The World Today: The Problem of the Correlation of Forces," *International Affairs*, Moscow, November 1974, p. 42; G. Shakhnazarov, "On the Problem of the Correlation of Forces," *Kommunist*, No. 3, February 1974, pp. 77-89, and "The Victory--The World Balance of Strength--Peaceful Coexistence," *New Times*, No. 19, May 1975, pp. 4-6.

that the better the armed forces are prepared to fight and win a nuclear war, and the society to survive its effects, and the more clearly the adversary understands this, the more effectively will he be deterred.

Sometimes labelled "deterrence through denial"--that is, seeking to deny the adversary the prospect of a successful military outcome, even in the event he should seize the advantage of striking first* -- this approach stands in contrast with the American conception of deterrence through punishment, which, though conceding that the party striking first would be militarily better off, nevertheless considers that he will be deterred by the prospect of suffering widespread societal damage in retaliation. The fact that most of the Soviet political and military leaders tend to equate effective deterrence with superior war-fighting capability not only leaves them unreceptive to such American doctrines as "mutual assured destruction," but it also places before Soviet decisionmakers much more demanding force requirements than would be necessary under a mutual assured destruction rationale.**

(5) A tendency to take a more optimistic view of the outcome of a nuclear war than is customarily the habit of Western leaders seems to be exhibited by both political and military leaders in the Soviet Union. Although recognizing the destructiveness of nuclear war and the mutual interest of both sides in avoiding it, Soviet spokesmen have seldom acknowledged that the outcome would be equally disastrous for both parties. Thus, Brezhnev has said "Let all know that the Soviet Union will emerge victorious from any war with an aggressor,"*** while as a former commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, the late Marshal N. I. Krylov, once put it: "Victory in a war, should the imperialists succeed in starting it, will be on the side of socialism and all progressive mankind."****

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*See Ross, *Rethinking Soviet Strategic Policy*, pp. 10-11.

**See Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, pp. 114-115.

***_Pravda_, November 4, 1967.

****_Sovetskaia Rossiia_, August 30, 1969.

Neither these nor other declarations which imply that nuclear war would be "suicide" for the United States* but that the Soviet Union would somehow escape such a fate are necessarily to be regarded as solid evidence that Soviet man takes nuclear war more lightly than others, or that he is in fact confident of emerging the winner. However, even ritual insistence on Soviet victory does suggest a psychological reluctance to concede limits beyond which one's power cannot be translated into anything meaningful,** along with other such motives as plugging the innate superiority of the Soviet system and bolstering the morale of the armed forces.***

(6) Both civilian and military elements of the Soviet leadership, for the most part, seem to have a similar attitude toward the positive value of military power. Whether stemming from the rude experience of Russian history, from some obsessive impulse to acquire "safe margins" of power against potential threats to Soviet security, or from whatever other sources, this attitude includes the belief that overwhelming military strength pays dividends beyond deterrence alone. Among the further values ascribed to military power are its utility for gaining political objectives, for supporting an ambitious foreign policy, and for opening up opportunities for the advance of communism in the world.**** This general attitude stands in contrast with the rather widely held view among Western leaders that the increasing demands of national security programs on their resources are being accompanied by decreasing political and military payoffs.

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* Cf. G. A. Arbatov, "On Soviet-American Relations," *Kommunist*, No. 3, February 1973, p. 105.

** See Wolfe, in *The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Détente*, p. 154.

*** Ross, *Rethinking Soviet Strategic Policy*, p. 7.

**** As pointed out by Jack L. Snyder, among others, the opening up of opportunities for communism is linked with the "correlation of forces"--a large component of which is military. *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, R-2154-AF. The Rand Corporation, September 1977, p. 19.

(7) Not only does the Soviet leadership, both civilian and military, place a positive value on a powerful military posture, but this attitude, again stemming from Russian tradition and experience, is linked with a tendency not to regard military expenditure as a social overhead cost, as is the case generally in the United States. Until the Soviet leadership comes around to treating military power as social overhead rather than an end social product, there would seem to be a rather low likelihood of the Soviet Union's becoming a consumer-oriented society intent upon reducing military expenditures in order to satisfy consumerist demands.* The more likely pressure to keep near-term military expenditures from getting out of hand in the SU might be expected to arise from the long-term need expressed by political leaders and concurred in by the military to provide for continued future development of heavy industry, without which, in Brezhnev's words, it would be "impossible to maintain our defense capability, which guarantees the country's security, at the required level."**

(8) The question of reconciling the pursuit of detente with a continuing high level of military preparedness is one which could presumably give rise to some institutionally seated frictions within the Soviet elite, such as the military leadership's not wishing to have the rationale for big defense budgets undermined by playing down the "imperialist" military threat, whilst some elements of the political leadership and the economic bureaucracy might be inclined to press for greater economic returns from detente and a less demanding defense philosophy.

It would seem, however, that even within the civilian leadership elite, an appreciation of the political and security advantages of a

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*Many observers feel that a shift of Soviet attitude in the direction of treating military power as social overhead would be a significant weathervane for real change in both Soviet foreign and domestic policy. Cf. Odom, in *Foreign Policy*, No. 19, Summer 1975, p. 113.

**Brezhnev's Accountability Report at the 24th CPSU Congress, p. 70, cited in Michael J. Deane and Mark E. Miller, "Science and Technology in Soviet Military Planning," *Strategic Review*, No. 3, Summer 1977, p. 79.

strong military posture has been little diluted by the perspectives of detente, as attested by an ongoing military buildup that has remained largely insensitive to detente relationships in the political environment. To a notable degree, Soviet military power is credited with having made detente possible in the first place, and with being necessary to keep detente on the track. Indeed, it might be said that both the political leadership and the military probably have found a rationale that suits both in the following formula, variations of which have appeared frequently in Soviet media:

> The greater the combat might and readiness of the Soviet armed forces and the armies of the fraternal socialist countries, . . . the more secure is peace on earth . . . and the broader are the opportunities for consolidating the successes of the policy of peaceful coexistence.*

D. The Prospects for Change in Soviet Security Attitudes

It is to be recognized that the shared attitudes described above are not universally held within the Soviet elite. There are varying shades of a minority outlook in many of the areas mentioned. For example, one can identify in the work of some Soviet writers associated with Arbatov's institute what Dennis Ross terms a "minority logic" on deterrence; it comes closer to the notion of founding deterrence upon mutual assured destruction than the majority logic of "deterrence through denial."**

The same group of writers could also be found saying in 1974 that war in the nuclear age was no longer a viable instrument of politics and that security could no longer be automatically ensured through further "accumulation of military hardware"*** -- heretical views which

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*I. Sidelnikov, "Peaceful Coexistence and the Peoples' Security," *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 14, 1973.

**Ross, *Rethinking Soviet Strategic Policy*, p. 17.

***G. A. Trofimenko, "USSR-USA: Peaceful Coexistence as a Norm of Mutual Relations," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiia*, No. 2, February 1974, p. 17. For other expressions of a similar viewpoint, see: M. A. Milshtein and L. S. Semeiko, "Strategic Arms Limitation: Problems

were challenged by defenders of the orthodox viewpoint from the Main Political Administration of the Armed Forces, who attacked the notion that there could be no victor in a nuclear war and warned against slowing down Soviet military preparations in a world in which the danger of war, though reduced by the shift in the correlation of forces in favor of the communist camp, still existed.*

Signs of departure from the dominant outlook on other questions likewise are to be noted. For example, there is some recognition in the Soviet Union of what has become the accepted wisdom elsewhere about the value of military power in a nuclear world: that disutilities may in some respects cancel out the utility of military force, and that each increment of military power does not necessarily yield a corresponding measure of security or political advantage. Again, it is Arbatov who, while commenting upon the diminished ability of the United States to exploit its power politically because of the increased "military might" of the Soviet Union, is also to be found generalizing to the effect that "further accumulation of military power is not accompanied by an increase in political power."**

In still other areas, the prevailing outlook is possibly being nibbled away by new notions, such as the suggestion in a Soviet study on problems connected with the efficient use of resources for defense

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and Prospects," ibid., No. 12, December 1973, pp. 3-12; G. A. Arbatov, "The Impasses of the Policy of Force," *Problemy Mira i Sotsializma*, No. 2, February 1974, pp. 41-47; G. A. Arbatov (ed.), *USA: The Scientific-Technical Revolution and Trends in Foreign Policy*, Moscow, 1974, pp. 69-70.

*Rear Admiral Professor V. Shelyag, "Two World Outlooks -- Two Views on War," *Krasnaia zvezda*, February 7, 1974; General of the Army Ye. Maltsev, "Lenin's Ideas of the Defense of Socialism," ibid., February 14, 1974. See also Colonel Ye. Ribkin, "Leninist Conception of War and the Present," *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 20, October 1973, pp. 21-28.

**Arbatov, in *Kommunist*, No. 3, February 1973, p. 104.

programs to the effect that a pricing system "of goods for military use ought to express fully the costs of live and concealed labor in their production." Only thus, the study went on, "is it possible to know the real outlays of society on the defense of the country and to compare them with other indices of economic development."* Observations like this implying that the real costs of defense in the Soviet Union are poorly understood could mark the beginning of a transition toward the idea of regarding military power as social overhead.

These various indications that homogeneity of outlook on security-related matters is by no means the unfailing rule among the Soviet elite would seem to suggest that there is room for change in some of the basic attitudes we have canvassed, and that what may today represent a minority attitude could tomorrow become the dominant one.

However, one should probably not expect rapid or dramatic change. Basic security attitudes such as those noted tend to be transformed slowly at best, and it would be surprising if it were to turn out otherwise in the Soviet case. This seems especially so in light of the Soviet political culture which puts a premium on minimizing and containing elite conflict, and would thus tend to discourage any sweeping minority challenges to the dominant security attitudes.

E. Some Implications for Soviet Policy

The above assessment has several implications for Soviet policy and the role of the USSR in world affairs which deserve mention in bringing this statement to a close.

If rapid and radical shifts in the underlying attitudes on security shared by a majority of the Soviet elite are indeed unlikely, it would seem to follow that Soviet policy too will tend to run more or less consistently in its established groove. Though one cannot predict what

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*P. V. Sokolov, ed., *Military-Economic Questions in the Political Economy Course*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1968, p. 227, cited by Holloway, in *Journal of Peace Research*, No. 4, 1974, p. 268.

precise positions Soviet decisionmakers will adopt on defense and foreign policy issues, it would seem that they may be prone to act conservatively, avoiding steps which might appear to involve substantial revision of the military posture the USSR has built at great cost, or drastic revision of the doctrines governing its use. In short, most of the changes in the policies and priorities affecting Soviet military power that the leadership may find it operatively convenient to entertain, seem likely to be more at the margin than fundamental.

Given this, the growth and modernization of Soviet military power can be expected to continue, within whatever quantitative and qualitative limits may emerge from arms control agreements in SALT or elsewhere--which up to now at least have been liberal enough to accommodate virtually all of the unilateral arms programs involved in the Soviet military buildup of the past decade or so. The point to be made here, however, is not that the Soviet leadership will necessarily prove indifferent to reaching negotiated limits on arms programs, particularly limits that inhibit important programs of potential adversaries, but that they are very apt to go on declining American proposals that would in effect call for dismantling substantial portions of the military machine they are still in the process of building.

To what uses the Kremlin may put its expanded military power in the decade or so ahead will doubtless constitute an increasingly disturbing question here and abroad. If one suggests, as we have, that established habits and attitudes are likely to remain quite persistent, then one could expect the Soviet leaders--even the newer generation that takes over when the present gerontocracy fades from the scene--to proceed with caution and to avoid outright military adventures that could evoke a dangerous response from the United States.

On the other hand, Soviet perception of risks would certainly be influenced greatly by the military balance of the day, suggesting the need for the United States and its allies--not to mention, perhaps, a

non-ally like Communist China--to maintain a military balance in the world adequate to constrain inimical uses of Soviet military power.

Obviously, a salient task for U.S. policy--and one for which no quick fixes nor instant solutions are in sight--will be precisely how to constrain a militarily powerful Soviet Union, through the use of what combination of countervailing military power, economic instruments and statecraft. Here let me venture to say that the nub of the problem for U.S. policy--the basic issue around which policy debate has and will continue to focus--is whether we can best provide incentives for "good" Soviet conduct by posing unpalatable consequences for "bad" behavior on the one hand, or by the practice of "restraint" and removal of "threats" to Soviet interests on the other. The essential argument against the first course is that it may merely convince the Russians that they are right to go on building up their power, while the argument against the second is that it may invite getting oneself pushed around. Unfortunately, there is something to both of these arguments, and that is why there is a real dilemma to be found here.

Finally, there is another question raised by the growth of Soviet military power. In a sense, the acquisition of military power is the one area of systemic competition in which the Soviet Union has made by far its best showing. Is there then an impending danger that, if their system begins to falter seriously in other areas of competition because of economic, political, ethnic and other problems, the Soviet leaders might turn to inimical uses of their military power? If so, one might almost say that the West acquires a vested interest in the viability of the Soviet system, lest--in a kind of role reversal--the Soviet elite should resort to military means to keep their system from going down the drain, which was supposed to be the role to which the capitalists would revert when they came to feel that the tides of history had turned against them. However, to offer a last word on this highly speculative question, let me say that it is probably not likely that the Soviet system will find itself in straits so extreme that such a solution of its difficulties would seem to its leaders the only way out.