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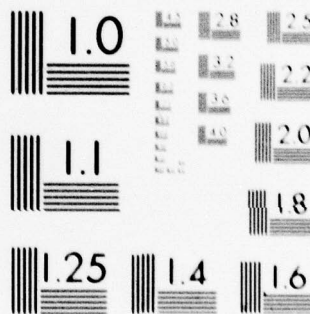
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SOVIET LEADERSHIP POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP VIEWS
ON THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE

M. M. Jones

A Rand Note
prepared for the
United States Air Force

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER N-1210-AF ✓	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER (9)
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Soviet Leadership Politics And Leadership Views On The Use of Military Force.		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Interim rpt.
6. AUTHOR(s) W. M. Jones		7. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) F49620-77-C-0023 ✓		9. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
10. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS The Rand Corporation 1700 Main Street Santa Monica, CA 90401		11. REPORT DATE Jul 1979
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Management Group (AF/RDQM) Directorate of Operational Requirements Hq USAF, Washington, D.C. 20330		12. NUMBER OF PAGES 24
12. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office) 12/36		13. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
13. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited 14/RAND/N-1210-AF		14a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) No Restrictions		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Military Planning Political Science Soviet Union Leadership Communism		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) See Reverse Side		

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↓ The Soviet military doctrinal writings concerning war initiation emphasize the value of preemptive attacks in force carried through to the complete defeat of the enemy. The question is, "Would this military doctrine agree with the desires of their political leadership as they contemplated the imminent initiation of a war?" An examination of the histories of the various Soviet political leaders reveals a recurrent pattern. A dominant leader is replaced by a small group of collegial successors which, in turn, devolves into an intense competition ending only when one competitor has clearly established dominance. In the dominant leader phase, and in the early days of the collegial competition phase, the aspirants to the top position attempt to enhance their power by building and maintaining a coterie of protégés, at their opponents' expense. ↗ Once the competition flares into direct conflict, the ultimate winner has preemptively attacked his opponents and their coterie, and carried through until the opponents are eliminated as a future threat. Assuming that the Soviet leaders would view the imminent prospect of a major super-power war as being directly analogous to the ultimate top level political power struggle, their history and experience would tend them toward preemption in force with every intension of carrying through until the enemy is eliminated as a future threat.

24 pages (W.M.J.)

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PREFACE

This note explores the views of the Soviet leadership concerning the peacetime and wartime utility of Soviet military forces and speculates on their views about the objectives, strategies, and tactics that would apply if they should commit their forces to a major combat campaign. It draws an analogy between how Soviet leaders view their struggles to reach top positions in the Soviet governmental-party system and how the Soviet Union conducts its foreign affairs. The analogy is illustrated by Stalin's, Khrushchev's, and Brezhnev's patterns of actions as they acquired and later used their national power positions and the pattern of Russian activities in the international arena that each subsequently directed. The author concludes that current Soviet bureaucratic governmental and party structure has quite predictably shaped Soviet leaders' thinking in the past and will continue to do so. Furthermore, this same structure will direct their patterns of operations and their assessments of international situations. This predictable leadership cast of mind is wholly compatible with the combat doctrines, postures, and practices of Soviet military forces.

This study is one of the products of the Project AIR FORCE project "Red Strategic Campaign Analysis." The objective of that project is to gain insights into how Soviet leaders might assess the strategic balance and how they might assess risks and uncertainties when faced with a potential major conflict. Other project activities include reviewing Soviet military doctrinal writings, Soviet operations research literature, aspects of Soviet exercise and training data, and U.S. intelligence projections of Soviet capabilities. Although major elements of this note will be contained in later summary reports, this note is being published separately to make the findings widely available to the defense community.

SUMMARY

National leaders tend to apply to the international scene those views, approaches, and practices that they developed and applied in the national domestic scene during their rise to the top.* The Russian system of government involves the centralized control of all important elements and functions of society by a governmental structure controlled by the Communist Party, which, in turn, is controlled by the top leaders. Lenin established the system. Stalin managed it through its initial developments in a way that both started Russia's development as a major industrial and military power and solidified his undisputed preeminent position. Khrushchev presided over its transition toward an increasingly bureaucratic structure. And Brezhnev has presided over what has become (probably) the most bureaucratized social and governmental structure in the world. Future leaders will be the products of long and successful careers in that structure and will almost certainly be powerfully influenced by that background.

* Reviewer's Comment: Carryover from domestic political competition to international competition. The notion that such a carryover exists may be "a not uncommon observation" at the anecdotal level, but I'm not aware that it has been systematically argued for even one country, let alone as a general proposition. The reader encountering it here for the first time is therefore likely to ask himself if it applies to the country he knows best, the United States. And to me the evidence for it in any multi-party country is not compelling. Since it is not essential to the argument that the proposition be generally true, I suggest that it either be limited to the USSR, or add a few reasons why it is likely to be more true there than elsewhere. One reason why it might be true for Soviet leaders is that, with the exception of Lenin, they have been provincials. They have not traveled abroad, or been forced to ponder the mentality of foreigners, until they get to the top. Thus it is conceivable that they would react like the legendary citizen of Poltava who visited St. Petersburg for the first time. When he returned home he reported to his friends that the capital had nice wide streets, and was obviously modelled on Poltava. (See "Acknowledgement", p. ix.)

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The history of Soviet leadership shows a fairly consistent pattern. The demise of a clearly predominant leader is followed by a struggle for power between rival coalitions, which is followed by a struggle for predominance among the winning coalition members, which is followed by one person's clear victory. (Khrushchev's ouster by a coalition of his "lieutenants" was anomalous in that they did not wait for his demise.) Stalin, in the post-Lenin phase, parlayed the skills and ruthlessness of an experienced conspirator from a position of relative weakness into one of great personal power, slaying or exiling his erstwhile colleagues in the process. Although Stalinist Russia did develop a powerful military force, it never had enough power to attack the United States and the West, its former allies. But its actions did combine the secretiveness, retention of gains, and attempts to gain more (modulated by the cautious avoidance of a major conflict) characteristic of a successful conspirator.

Khrushchev, with his limited bureaucratic experience, took over and expanded Stalin's power base in the regional committee secretariats using a system of patronage (rewards and punishments) to relegate his former coalition colleagues to insignificant positions. (Significantly, getting rid of his competitors this nonlethal way was followed by a change in Marxist-Leninist doctrine. An alternative to the cataclysmic war between capitalism and communism was possible. Russia's future industrial and military development would eventually lead the western nations to accept secondary world positions without a duel to the death.)

Khrushchev's lack of bureaucratic experience was evident in his frequent reorganizations, his setting of impossible goals, and his impossible demands on the system and its people. These (and his moves to reduce the size of the Soviet military) led to such general dissatisfaction in the party (his power base) that the Brezhnev-Podgorny-Kosygin coalition could successfully move to oust him. It was Khrushchevian Russia that overextended itself by triggering a confrontation with the United States in 1962; that confrontation was resolved by a humiliating backdown reminiscent of the unproficient bureaucrat.

The Brezhnev coalition, following the ouster of Khrushchev, displayed its sensitivities to bureaucratic power base development by reversing many of Khrushchev's disorganizing policies and restored the military to a favored position. Brezhnev has apparently found it appropriate to move slowly in his acquisition of a predominant position over Kosygin and Podgorny; he was willing to live and let live as long as he had the obvious power to control the system. He has continued to cultivate his extensive coterie of protégés; but even as his departure from power approaches, he has avoided designating a successor, a move that would immediately make the nominee a powerful competitor.

Brezhnev's Russia has acted on the international scene in a way markedly reminiscent of the domestic power situation in the early post-Khrushchev days. It has pursued an especially active program of acquiring, supporting, and defending clients. It has consistently attempted to prevent the loss of controlling influence wherever it is already established and indicated a strong desire to punish any "defecting" client. It has settled for a kind of détente with the United States and the West but clearly interprets the détente period as being one in which it must continue to try to outdo the United States in building up a network of clients and to improve its military capabilities in relation to those of the West (and China).

This pattern reflects an attempt to force competitors into accepting an ineffectual position without recourse to major combat. However, the size, character, and posture of the Soviet (and Warsaw Pact) military forces clearly indicate that the USSR does not discount the possibility of cataclysmic war. Soviet military doctrinal writings, their force exercises and force characteristics, clearly indicate how the military would prefer to fight such a war (if they must) and what their preferred objectives would be: surprise preemptive attack, in force, using all available arms against the enemy's forces, command centers, supply points, and communications links; an offensive campaign that denies the enemy the initiative and continues until military victory is achieved.

But does this doctrinal pattern of operations and objectives coincide with those of current and future Russian political leaders

who are not without considerable influence? To explore this question, one must look at those periods in the history of the top level Soviet leadership power struggles that are analogous to the breakdown of détente and the initiation of major combat. The analogous situations are those periods of factional power struggles (factions headed by major contenders) that follow the departure of a predominant Soviet leader. And here we find a remarkably similar pattern of operations and objectives: The best defense is a good offense, and the best offense is initiated by a preemptive surprise attack designed to disrupt and destroy the opponent's power base, a campaign whose objective must be the annihilation of the opponent as a serious competitor, short and long term. Lesser objectives are unthinkable. However, there is nothing in the current or future leadership backgrounds that would lead the Soviets ever to consider the possibility of mutual annihilation--severe damage to Russia, yes; but anything worse, no.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Without in any way imputing to her complete concurrence with all the conclusions developed in this essay, I must express my great debt and my even greater appreciation to Nancy Nimitz, who reviewed this paper before publication. Some of her critical points are so well taken and stated that, rather than attempting to incorporate them in the final draft, I have included them as attributed footnotes.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Evaluations of the Soviets' views of their military forces, of the preferred peacetime military posture, and of the strategy, tactics, and objectives of combat operations are based on various source materials. Their political doctrine, their military doctrinal writings, their peacetime military posture and training, and the histories of their past military commitments all provide some insights into the way they view their forces and the way they might use them in a future combat situation.

One important question is not resolved by even the most thorough study of Soviet military force characteristics, postures, exercises, and doctrine, and that is the question of the compatibility between Soviet military postures and operations practices and the objectives of the Soviet political leader in a future confrontation or conflict. Would the campaign objectives assumed by the military in preparing their plans, and therefore their combat strategy and tactics, be compatible with and support those future political leaders as they face the prospects of a major military campaign? If the answer to this question is "yes" (or probably yes), the projections of their probable combat patterns can be treated with some confidence for U.S. and alliance defensive posture planning. If the answer is "no" (or probably not), the confidence associated with such predictions must necessarily be questionable or low.

Predicting the attitudes of future Soviet political leaders in one or more projected future political-military confrontations or conflict situations, or even in peacetime, is obviously a difficult task and one that may lead to important errors. If we cannot predict who will be the top level Soviet leaders in the future, and if we cannot confidently foresee the international political and military conditions, how can we predict their attitudes? Of course, with certainty, we cannot.

National leaders tend to address their nations' international problems and foreign affairs with much the same views and the same

(or analogous) approaches to problem solving that they had adopted and applied successfully in their domestic careers. When they arrive at the peak of their domestic career possibilities and assume the responsibilities for managing the nation's international affairs, successful, mature men are most unlikely to change the approaches and patterns of operations that brought them their previous successes. If we can identify the patterns followed by the past and current Soviet leaders in their successful domestic career progressions, we can examine USSR foreign affairs operations patterns to see if, indeed, they seem to have been guided by their leaders' characteristic operational patterns, directly or in appropriate analogues. If we can describe the Soviet governmental system and the pattern of operations the future leaders must follow to get to the top, we can postulate with considerable confidence the attitudes and approaches those future leaders will bring to bear on Soviet foreign affairs and the political and military strategies and objectives that would guide their operations in major confrontations and conflict.

The agreement between the Soviet leadership views concerning appropriate military strategy and tactics in major military campaigns, so inferred, and the combat doctrine of the Soviet military forces is the main point of this analysis.

II. THE CAREER FIELD FOR ASPIRANT USSR LEADERS

The Soviet governmental structure is marked by three outstanding characteristics: centralization of planning and control, the dominance of the Communist Party over all important operations of the formal governmental structure, and the central control of the Party itself from the top.

The formal governmental structure is headed by a Prime Minister who is elected by and acts as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers consists of the heads of all national level ministries. It also elects a President, a ceremonial position of no significant power. And because the USSR is a socialist nation, the national level ministries direct and supervise all important activities in the nation--defense, foreign affairs, culture, security, agriculture, heavy and light industry, etc. Each ministry has direct connections with its subordinate counterparts in the various republics and autonomous regions. The republics and regions have their own Council of Ministers (equivalents) headed by a Chairman.

The system functions with the national level supra-ministerial agencies (in Moscow) establishing the goals and planning, with the ministries coordinating and monitoring the activities of the functional and regional subordinate components, all under the direction and guidance of the Party. The whole system is a complex hierarchical arrangement of superiors and subordinates; there is an intricate coordinating process in planning and controlling the entire apparatus; the major incentive is to please one's superiors (or at least avoid their displeasure), to conform to the plan, even at the expense of efficiency; and responsibility for errors or unsolved problems must be transferred to someone else, usually subordinates.

Most indicative of the bureaucratic nature is "rank consciousness" of personnel, and patronage links. Party membership is important, even essential, for an aspirant to a top level position; but it is equally important to have a powerful patron who can and does exert his

influence to assign his protégés to career stepping stones, who can and does protect his loyal protégés from bureaucratic attacks, who permits his immediate subordinates to function as subpatrons, building their own net of loyal protégés. "Rank-consciousness," therefore, involves not only a general recognition of who occupies a superior governmental party position but also who enjoys the support and protection of the more powerful patron.¹

The party organization, with its cells and committees in every important governmental and functional organization at every level, is the major power system, establishing the goals and plans, monitoring the execution, watching for and reporting ineptitude or malfeasance in government officials' performance of their functions, watching for and reporting counterparty activities, continuously propagandizing the citizenry with assertions of the infallible correctness of party doctrine and policies, the glories of the Marxist-Leninist system, conducting training courses for new members and potential cadres, etc. Loyalty to the Party is demanded of all its members. In practice that means unquestioning compliance with the Party's policies and directives as enunciated and promulgated by the top Moscow leadership. In theory, and to some extent in practice, new policies under consideration can be freely debated (until the Moscow decision is announced) and errors in interpretation of party policies can be publicly denounced. But such debates or denunciations must be conducted with considerable caution. A policy alternative that seems to be under consideration may, in fact, be already adopted (but as yet unannounced) or the contingent policy has the (as yet unannounced) unconditional support of one or more of the top leaders. In the party bureaucracy, to be known to have advocated a policy that was subsequently not adopted (or vice versa) is not a prescription for advancement. Denunciation of a colleague's interpretations of enunciated party policy can itself be interpreted as a criticism of the policy and the policymakers, which can easily destroy a career.

¹ All Bureaucracies induce rank consciousness in their personnel, but the Soviet governmental and party bureaucracy, operating in the highly authoritarian Russian culture, has this in an extreme form.

A successful career in the Soviet Party system entails a pattern of successive assignments to increasingly important mental-functional positions, a history of consistently successful accomplishments of the managerial tasks (or successfully counterfeited successes) in those positions. Success is achieving prescribed goals without causing trouble for superiors, showing disloyalty to the Party, or disregarding its enunciated policies. Managerial decisions concerning economic, industrial, or functional operations and governmental decisions at all levels including ministerial levels cannot be made without due consideration of their probable subsequent effects on the Party's control and on intraparty politics, the power positions of competitive patron-protégé cliques.

This kind of system is almost certain to produce top level leaders who combine certain characteristics in an extreme form. They will be ambitious, competitive, devious, secretive, intelligent, politically sensitive (in bureaucratic politics), self-confident, hard working, interested in the details of a wide array of problems and programs, demanding of their subordinates, ruthless, vigilant in dealing with competitors, constantly looking for opportunities to increase personal power, and incapable of conceding any power once acquired.

They will have learned to delegate authority to subordinates but demand that delegated authority be used only in a way and for purposes they approve, constantly checking to assure such loyalty and unhesitatingly ready to recapture and redelegate and severely punishing or destroying the offender if a subordinate proves inept or disloyal, using fear to control subordinates and restrain competitors.¹

Not all Soviet governmental and party officials at all levels have these characteristics. Far from it. The vast majority are deficient in some or all, are satisfied, or are resigned to conserving their current positions and avoiding dangerous confrontations and conflicts. But this majority does not produce the top leaders. Only a very small percentage who combine the necessary characteristics and

¹ Soviet leaders prefer being feared to being liked; but in the Russian authoritarian culture, fear does not automatically generate dislike.

the ability to develop them have any chance at all of getting to the top. These are the political elite of the USSR and, quite naturally, they show elitist attitudes in their dealings with subordinates and colleague-competitors.

Before we explore the world views and typical behavior patterns of these men, we must translate their bureaucratic background "writ large" to the international arena. To do so requires a brief recounting of the history of the Party and its recurrent leadership and policy changes since it came to power in Russia. Past and current leaders know this history well. They lived it. Future leaders, of course, will not have experienced the early periods, but they will have "lived" the periods since World War II. Party history (however biased in recurrent rewriting) is an important subject in the party educational system. And the same can be said of the effects of cataclysmic historic events. They induce a cast of mind and a view of the current and future situation that influences public and leadership attitudes long after the participants have left the scene.¹

¹Witness the persistence for 100 years or more of the peculiar practices and social attitudes induced in the American south by the Civil War and the subsequent reconstruction period.

III. THE INHERITED POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE SOVIET LEADERS

The object in this section is to sketch the patterns of Soviet leadership from the Lenin era to the present that produced the various leadership arrangements, to parallel this with a description of developments within the USSR that affected the various leadership styles, and to suggest that the leaders over that period have tended to apply to the international scene the same or clearly analogous patterns that they were following in the party arena.

One of the outstanding features of the Soviet governmental and party structures is their high degree of centralized control. Lenin coined the term "democratic centralism," which meant that the regional and ministerial party committees were expected to conform completely to the policies and directives of the Central Committee (and thus to the policies and directives of the First Secretary). Lenin developed the system to assure party control. Stalin perfected the system to assure his personal control. Khrushchev adopted the Stalin system and adapted it to the task of enhancing his personal power, and Brezhnev found it expedient to eliminate some of Khrushchev's adaptations.

But this is far from the complete story. With the Central Committee nominally electing (and ejecting) the various first secretaries, and with its membership (nominally elected) drawn from the regional committees and ministries (and the former source has traditionally been the majority), the man at the top who can develop a network of protégés in these subordinate points can control the Party and, therefore, the nation. Lenin achieved this (mostly) by the influence of his great prestige. Representatives of the regional committees at party congresses or on the central committee proved likely to accede to his wishes. Stalin exploited his position to insure that the first secretaries of the regional committees were his men.¹ Khrushchev, in

¹ Although the regional first secretaries are (according to the constitution) supposed to be elected by the regional committee, Stalin repeatedly and unhesitatingly dictated who was to be elected, even

effect, inherited Stalin's control of party personnel assignments to the regional committees and used it (although without the Stalinesque purge procedures to insure compliance) to develop his personal power in relation to his central committee colleagues. Subsequently, however, Khrushchev seriously eroded his own power base of regional first secretaries by dividing the committees into two--agriculture and all else--and by placing constant demands and pressures on them for impossible achievements. This created great and general dissatisfactions and made it possible for his "lieutenants" to oust him. Brezhnev (and his colleagues) quickly thereafter solidified their positions by directing the reversion of the regional committees to their pre-Khrushchev unitary form and by reinstating many of the pre-Khrushchev era regional committee first secretaries.

The basic pattern (although there have been variations in detail) has been a Soviet party leadership clearly centralized in the hands of one man, followed by a coalition of two or three successors who divide the various top leadership roles among themselves, followed by a power struggle among these erstwhile colleagues; and one man ends up achieving dominance. In every case, the unitary successor to the small group leadership phase has been the man who had the power to assign party cadre to important regional and central positions (and the power to remove them) and used that power in his own interest. He was the person who could build a network of loyal protégés, rewarding them with career advancement possibilities and replacing them if they proved disloyal or inept. He was the man who could erode his opponents' power bases by removing, dispersing, or coopting their protégés.

So far as the aspirant leaders in the system are concerned, during the period of one-man leadership, they must avoid displeasing the current leader, they must persistently but cautiously develop their own networks of reliable protégés, they must be constantly sensitive to the developing power relationships above them and between themselves

sending his "nominee" from other regions or from his coterie of supporters in Moscow. And he made these nominations stick by ruthlessly eliminating dissenters.

and their competitive colleagues. They know that when the top leader goes, a temporary coalition will form for the purpose of assuming power. But they also know that the successful coalition is likely (if not certain) to break down into a power struggle among the erstwhile coalition colleagues. The possession of power (in the form of important, well-located, and loyal protégés and the political skills and ruthlessness to use them) is essential to success in both the coalition-forming phase and the post-coalition power struggle.

But this is still not the full story of the three phase Soviet power politics "game" over the six decades covered. Stalin was a highly skilled power acquirer, a skilled coalition builder, a skilled intracoalition bargainer for position, and a ruthless attacker of his former partners. He found it expedient to physically destroy many of his defeated competitors. Khrushchev proved skillful in coalition formation with Molotov and Malenkov. The latter appeared for a time to be the most likely next leader. That coalition quickly eliminated Beria, their obvious and most dangerous competitor for Stalin's mantle. But in his subsequent moves against Malenkov and Molotov, Khrushchev's demonstrated skill and power led his two opponents (after a struggle) to accept relegation to remote, nonpower positions. Khrushchev found it unnecessary to destroy them. Much the same proved true upon Khrushchev's ouster by the Brezhnev-Kosygin-Podgorny coalition. His destruction of his power base made it possible for the coalition simply to force his retirement.

The subsequent intracoalition power struggle (if one can properly call it that) has seen Podgorny retired from the position of President, Brezhnev's acquisition of that position as well as the position of General Secretary (a title clearly indicating his control of all important areas, rather than the nominally weaker position implied by his preceding title of First Secretary). Kosygin, to date, has retained his position as Prime Minister, a position of considerable prestige but distinctly less powerful than Brezhnev's. One feature common to this history of recurrent top level power struggles is that whether the losers were sent to the wall, to Siberia, to retirement, or to inconsequential positions, or whether they were allowed to stay on as a figurehead, the

victor pursued his attacks until his opponents were driven into a position from which they could never mount a serious counterattack.

The situation in the Soviet Union and in the world at large has been constantly changing over the six decades, and Soviet leaders have reacted to, and sometimes caused, those changes.¹ Individual leaders or aspirants to power have gained or lost as a function of their successes and failures in adapting to developments. And as any serious observer of bureaucracy would expect, the semantics of domestic Soviet power politics emphasize the "proper" assessment of the situation (national and international), the correct actions to take, and the criticisms of competitors' errors. Every argument, debate, and criticism levied has its important component of effects on intraparty power relations. This component is so important that it determines the factional assessments propounded, the alternative moves advocated, the move selected, and the nature of the criticisms levied if the move proves ill-advised or ineffectually made.²

After the revolution, Lenin needed time to solidify the Party's position and get the Russian economy and governmental machinery under party control and into operation. He was therefore willing to advocate and accept a humiliating peace treaty with Germany.

¹Reviewer's comment: Will the characteristics of Soviet domestic political competition change? It's a tough question. The way to deal with it would be to say it is irrelevant, because the future the paper is concerned with is so short (5 years? 10 years?) that occupants of the top spot will already have been conditioned by the domestic practices described. The next easiest way would be to say the question is unanswerable, because change in its early stages is unclear if not invisible to outsiders. Past experience does suggest, however, that visible change is precipitated by a shift in leadership, and since that isn't too far off, a third alternative is to speculate on possible directions of change. I'm passing on to the writer a pamphlet, written by a former insider, that addresses this subject. (Détente after Brezhnev: The Domestic Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy, Alexander Yanov (1977), Policy Papers in International Affairs, Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley. Library of Congress Card No. 77-620014.)

²Every experienced bureaucrat knows that bureaucratic debates must be couched in the language of doctrine, external situation assessments, and the correct organizational arrangements and responses, and never in terms of the true dominant motivation--the improvement of the advocate's bureaucratic position.

Between the wars, Stalin pushed persistently for the rapid development of heavy industry at the expense of agriculture and the standard of living of the populace at large. As the war clouds gathered, he was willing to form a coalition with Nazi Germany and Japan at the expense of Poland and the Baltic states to buy time to develop Russia's military forces for the war he believed to be inevitable. When Hitler ruptured the coalition by his Barbarossa assault, Stalin was willing to form a coalition with the Western powers. He ultimately broke his coalition with Japan and joined in on the final assault on it.¹ The alliance proved unstable, outlasting the war by only a short period, as Russia gave no evidence of willingness to relinquish control over the territories their troops occupied at the end of the war.

The postwar Stalin years saw forced draft efforts to reconstruct and rebuild basic (heavy) industry at the expense of improvements in living standards, housing, and agriculture. Other events included the establishment of Moscow-oriented governments in Eastern Europe, and the Korean war.

The Khrushchev years saw the condemnation of the Stalin cult of the individual by Khrushchev at the 20th Party Congress, the subsequent rewriting of Marxist/Leninist doctrine, asserting that war with capitalist imperialism was not historically inevitable and that Communism could win by demonstrating superior economic and social capabilities (a doctrine change that has not been refuted by his successors), the suppression of the Hungarian revolution, the break with Maoist China, the confrontation with the United States precipitated by the Soviet deployment of nuclear missiles to Castro Cuba, and the development of a major strategic nuclear force. Domestically, the developmental emphasis shifted somewhat toward consumer goals (housing, and improvements in agriculture). Significantly, large numbers of graduates were beginning to appear from technical schools and universities.

¹ A major U.S. objective at Potsdam was to get the USSR into the war against Japan.

During the Brezhnev years the Soviets have increased their military manpower (and improved their equipment), have developed a powerful navy capable of distant operations, and have completed their strategic nuclear force deployment (combined with an active program of continuous qualitative improvements). Other events have included SALT I and the initiation of SALT II, the Czechoslovakian Spring and its brutal suppression by military force, the promulgation of the Brezhnev doctrine (as yet not refuted), détente, an increasingly active Soviet involvement in Africa (including their sponsoring of Cuban and East European participation), the rejection of linkages between détente and their human rights positions with their actions in Africa and South Asia, moves to more closely integrate Soviet and Eastern European economies and industries, the threatened military intervention at the end of the 1973 Middle East war, and an increasingly apparent inclination to claim Russia's right to influence world events.

On the domestic scene, the Brezhnev years have seen the development of some pressure from the well-educated sector for more and better consumer goods (as they become generally aware of the better lives of their foreign counterparts even in Eastern Europe),¹ the slowdown in Soviet economic growth as the availability of surplus labor (by their system standards) in the agricultural sector dries up, the continuing attempts to solve the problems of managing an increasingly complex industrial system without relinquishing central planning and direction (which would be counter-doctrinal, counter-traditional, counter to the interests of the extensive control bureaucracy and potentially counter to party control). The usual and probably partly correct interpretation of the Soviets' move to détente, their repeated expressed desire to import western technology and to have an acceptable SALT agreement, are based on this perceived need to expedite the development of modern consumer goods to satisfy growing domestic demands and to exploit their Siberian oil and other resources.

¹The quality of Russian life has definitely improved over the recent years, but there is some evidence that "the appetite grows with the eating."

Paralleling these domestic and civil economic developments and problems has been the commitment of a significant and increasing proportion of manpower and funds to arms production to maintain and improve the technical military capabilities of their military forces and to support arms transfers to selected clients. Although there can be no doubt that major armament and equipment programs, fund allocations, and schedules are made at very high governmental and party levels, it is equally clear that within these broad guidelines, the military as a customer group is one of the few (and certainly the largest) customer groups that can enforce their quality and schedule demands on the producers. This arrangement permits the military to press for and get the best available (in the USSR) technology and supports an active program of technological research and development in armaments. It also reflects the longstanding and continuing priority the Russian leadership place on maintaining strong, diverse, and well-equipped military forces.¹

¹This special priority on arms production also supports their arms transfer programs to client states and client factions within Third World nations where leadership is being contested; these programs are an important element of their foreign affairs.

IV. POWER POLITICS IN THE SOVIET SYSTEM AND ITS TRANSLATION
TO THEIR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Any derivation of likely current Soviet views about the role of their military forces in dealing with international problems and opportunities based on the effects of their domestic and political history, culture, and experiences must be speculative. To impute a strong carryover influence from these practices to future international action decisions by future Soviet leaders is even more so. But such guided speculations can be useful, especially when there has apparently been a fairly strong connection in the past.

The framework upon which such speculations are to be based is deliberately terse to define domestic situations analogous to the international situations the Soviet Union has faced in the past as well as those they might face in the future. Soviet leaders past, present, and future are probably highly competitive in both the domestic and the international arenas.

The Soviet domestic political scene has tended to cycle through three phases: a dominant leader phase in which one man is in control; a coalition leadership phase in which a few cooperative collegials share the leadership functions; and a competitive phase between the erstwhile colleagues terminated by the attainment of dominance by one of the competitors.

The Soviet Union appears to view (and operate accordingly) the world scene as being analogous to the second of these phases: the small, group-shared leadership phase with the United States and (to a lesser degree) China as the major "collegial" competitors.

The apparently cooperative situation in the shared leadership phase in domestic Soviet politics is actually highly competitive; but the competition is carefully subdued, with none of the major contenders for the ultimate predominant role wishing to provoke a major head-to-head competition until victory is nearly assured. (Any participant in this tacit competition foolish enough to believe that the situation

is truly cooperative certainly places himself in a most vulnerable position.)

In its international initiatives, the Soviet Union from WW II to date has actively engaged in supporting participants involved in situations that could lead--and often has led--to events counter to U.S. interests; the USSR has been persistently competitive in the international arena. But with the possible exception of the Brezhnev threat to deploy Soviet military forces to the Middle East in 1973, the USSR has rather cautiously avoided deliberate and direct confrontation with the United States.¹

The two-track bureaucratic tactics involved in the Soviet cooperative-competitive leadership phase are: (1) the acquisition and retention of a network of protégés (at the expense of competitor patrons) and (2) the development of a physical (potentially lethal) capability to dispose of one's major opponents (and their protégés). Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev succeeded in developing, maintaining, and using extensive and influential protégé cliques. Stalin and Khrushchev also developed a means of physically eliminating competitors, and they used it. It is not clear whether Brezhnev holds the lethal alternative over his colleagues.²

¹Contrary to some assessments, the Soviet deployment of military forces and subsequently missiles to Cuba in 1962 was not intended to provoke a direct public confrontation with the United States. Most available evidence suggests that Khrushchev mistakenly believed the United States would not make a major public issue of it.

²One might guess that most of Brezhnev's coterie would be reluctant to test this. The high priority for resources given the Soviet military under Brezhnev would seem to assure him of military support in an ultimate test with rivals.

Reviewer's comment: Although the Soviet military have in the past been drawn into domestic political competition (notably in 1953, and to a much lesser extent in 1957), this doesn't mean that they have or even aspire to an independent role in determining who gets the No. 1 position in the party. Army support in 1953 was necessary because Beria had a nasty little army of his own. But ordinarily communists, like democrats and republicans, believe that an army should know its place, and that place is not to meddle in political decisions about domestic matters. In other words, I am certain that however keen the rivalry among contenders for the No. 1 spot, none of them is inclined to seek army support by outbidding his competitors in promises of more missiles,

The persistent power accretion and retention process entails the exercise of patronage. Protégés are acquired when a leader supports ambitious subordinates in their lower level competitive power struggles and protects them when they are threatened. This process often entails the coopting of a rival's protégés. The power retention process involves persistent patron attention to preclude rivals' coopting of one's protégés and entails rewards and punishments, continued career support to loyal protégés (but not so much that they become unreliably independent), and withdrawal of support from and even purging of defecting protégés.

Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev all succeeded in gaining control of the Party's personnel management processes and used it to build a power network of protégés.¹ In this process, success feeds on success and failure feeds on failure. The more reliably dependent and strategically placed protégés a patron acquires, the more attractive he becomes to potential protégés and the more dangerous it becomes to defect. The loss of unreliable protégés who go unpunished because they are protected by rival patrons makes the losing patron less attractive to potential protégés and less capable of punishing defectors.

The period in Russia spanned by Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev has been accelerating (with occasional setbacks) activities by the USSR to acquire and retain client states. The acquisition process entails (mainly) arms support to one or another nation or

bigger ships, or what have you; it is against his own long-term interests. I believe some readers might draw a different inference from this footnote. Perhaps a stronger reason for the high priority given the military under Brezhnev is that by the early 1960s the Russians were falling even further behind in strategic nuclear capabilities; any prudent leader, including Brezhnev's colleagues, would have considered it desirable to reduce the disparity.

¹Even after attaining a position of unchallenged permanence, Stalin and Brezhnev continued to use this control. Khrushchev, by breaking up the party regional committees and harassing them with impossible demands and frequent changes, alienated this important element and made it possible for his lieutenants to depose him. His reduction of the resource priorities to the Soviet Army deprived him of the ultimate lethal deterrent to this palace revolution.

faction involved in a confrontation or conflict.¹ The arms support provided North Korea in its attack on South Korea, the arms support to the Arabs in their recurrent conflicts with Israel, armament support to Cuba, and the comparable support to North Vietnam in its attack on South Vietnam are all cases in point. Under Brezhnev, Russian arms support (and sometimes even surrogate combat force support) in Africa, in the Middle East, and in Vietnam in its invasion of Cambodia and later in its defense against Chinese attack represents a continuation of this client acquisition process. The steady buildup of their strategic nuclear, theater, and power projection forces (relative to the United States and its allies and to the People's Republic of China) has provided the USSR with the confidence required to make this acceleration an acceptable risk.

This is not to suggest that the USSR is always successful in "buying" or retaining clients. Foreign nations (and even factions) are inherently more independence minded than Russian bureaucratic protégés. The split with China in 1958 was a major loss. The massive arms transfer to Indonesia did not keep that client from defecting. Major arms (and economic and industrial development aid) never brought India into the status of a reliable Soviet client. Egypt, under Sadat, defected from client status. In spite of major Soviet support, Iraq has never been a completely reliable client. Even Rumania, whose status is more that of a satellite than client, has recently proved to be disturbingly independent.²

¹Financial and industrial development assistance has often been part of the package, but the limitations of the Soviet economy and industrial technology have made this somewhat secondary to the arms supply "carrot." Russia's large conventional arms production industry has proved to be quite cost effective in this international client acquiring role. The investment of a few billion rubles worth of armaments "bought" Ethiopia, for example. It remains to be seen how costly it will be to retain this client (and how successful the USSR will prove in doing so).

²Apparently, as a general rule, the arms supply "carrot" is not completely effective, even in the short term, when the client can afford to buy arms elsewhere.

The shared leadership phase of Soviet domestic party and national control with its persistent but submerged power accretion competition has proved to be unstable and transient. The post-Lenin shared leadership phases ended with major head-to-head confrontation and power struggles. Stalin used both his carefully developed protégé network and the purge, the prison, and even the executioner to eliminate his rivals. The Malenkov-Molotov-Khrushchev combine followed the same pattern in eliminating Beria after Stalin's death. Khrushchev's control of the lethal alternative and his skillful manipulative destruction of Malenkov's and Molotov's power base in the central ministerial bureaucracy by partial decentralization to the regions where his power base lay made it unnecessary for him to destroy them. After attempting resistance, they accepted the inevitable and were relegated to inconsequential remote positions. Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny did not have to destroy Khrushchev after they overthrew and ousted him.

So far, Brezhnev seems to have gained such control that he can tolerate Kosygin's remaining in a semi-figurehead position. Kosygin has been rendered impotent by Brezhnev's carefully developed and maintained protégé network in the Party and, for that matter, in the army.

The Soviet Union under Brezhnev appears to view the world situation as being one in which their major opponent to world political dominance is the United States; détente in no way precludes their efforts to acquire more and more clients and thereby slowly weaken the United States. Détente will not preclude their continuing to expand their relative military advantages (and acquire the "lethal alternative"). They hope the situation will continue until the United States is so weakened and isolated by the loss of international support and so cowed by Soviet military capabilities that it will, without major resistance, accept the position of an ineffectual actor on the world political scene.

The Soviet Union presumably recognizes that the United States and its alliance structure may refuse to accept Soviet preeminence (and a resulting inconsequential U.S. and Western European position

on the world political scene) without a desperate and violent resistance. They must recognize that their increasing initiative in the third world at the expense of U.S. and European interests may trigger a violent U.S. reaction that would escalate to major conflict in which they would be deeply involved. It is their perception of this possibility and the pattern of military combat operations it would demand of their military forces that is the main point of this analysis.

Insights into how the Soviet leaders would view the prospects of a major war initiation into their likely political objective at such a time, and the pattern of combat military operations that they would find appropriate, can be inferred from a reexamination of Soviet political history when brutal, even lethal "war" broke out among the top level contenders for power.

The most relevant periods are: (1) After the death of Lenin his successors locked in a progressively more brutal struggle that ended with the exile of Trotsky and his subsequent assassination; (2) immediately following Stalin's death the immediate execution of Beria eliminated the only power competitor to the Malenkov-Molotov-Khrushchev group; and (3) at the end of this triumvirate "détente" Khrushchev terminated the Molotov and Malenkov careers by dispatching them to remote, inconsequential positions. The outstanding features of these periods were: (1) a clear recognition (by the ultimately victorious competitors at least) that a war to the death (literally or figuratively) was imminent and (2) prior agreements or commitments no longer applied.¹ In other words, the situation was recognized as a battle only one side could win, and it would be the height of folly to allow residual feelings of intercollegial loyalty, sympathy, morality, or prior constraining commitments to inhibit any actions necessary to insure the elimination of the opponents as a threat.

One can infer that the Soviet leaders would view the actual or imminent and unavoidable initiation of major war as a situation that

¹Reviewer's comment: There is one binding rule: Discredit the man, not the Party.

can only end with one side completely victorious and that any self-imposed limitations on the operations of their military combat forces would be unthinkable folly. (And certainly published Soviet military doctrinal writings can be so interpreted.)

Some prevalent features of the tactics typically adopted by successful power struggles are dissimulation during the period leading up to their attacks; surprise (with dissimulation used to foster surprise); preemption when the deadly struggle is inevitable; the rapid elimination of the major opponent, if possible, and the breakup of the opponent's organization when it is not; and the persistent prosecution of the attack until the opponent is eliminated. Stalin proved to be a master of "cooperating" with one opponent while he destroyed another, or turning on his erstwhile colleagues without warning, and he certainly never rested until he had forever destroyed any competition he attacked. The Khrushchev-Malenkov-Molotov triumvirate upon Stalin's death, recognizing that a major power struggle with Beria (and his coterie) was imminent and inevitable, preempted in a most positive way by killing Beria. Khrushchev's attacks on Malenkov and Molotov, less lethal but no less effective, were marked by surprise attacks on them personally (in party councils previously "loaded" with Khrushchev supporters), and by the dispersion of their power base. Again, the attacks were pursued until Molotov and Malenkov were politically destroyed forever. In every case, the attacks were carefully planned, focused on the opponent and his henchmen, wasted no efforts on innocent bystanders or inconsequential uninvolved people, and entailed no wasted effort to explain or rationalize the actions to the Russian people before they were taken. (The victor's ex post facto explanations have to be accepted. The loser never has a chance to explain.)

The USSR, believing major war is imminent and inevitable, will probably attempt to mask their preparations, to induce confusion in enemy councils, and to delude their enemy as to their intentions. (Soviet military doctrinal writings stress the importance of secrecy in preparations and misinformation to delude and confuse the enemy.)

The Soviets have bias toward preemptive surprise attacks with no precursor warning and no a priori attempts to justify their planned actions to the world at large. (Soviet military doctrine, not surprisingly, views a good offense as being the best defense and an offense initiated by a preemptive surprise attack in force as the best offense. Naturally, the idea of alerting an enemy by verbal threats or by a priori public justifications is so ridiculous as to be ignored.)

There is probably a Soviet bias toward attacks on the enemy political and military leadership, on the communications linking them to their forces, on their means of keeping themselves informed about Soviet activities, and on the enemy forces themselves wherever located, not only those forces that immediately threaten or can resist the Soviet attack but also those forces and the military industrial infrastructures that might, in the future, be used to develop a counter-attack capability. Although attacks would be uninhibited by any concerns for collateral damage to civilian populations and nonmilitary industry, no effort would be "wasted" by direct attacks on these unthreatening target elements. (There is a Soviet military doctrinal thrust toward attack on enemy command posts, communications, and forces; attacks designed to disorganize, disrupt, and destroy. Nothing is to be found that in any way resembles destruction of cities or the killing of civilians for punitive or vindictive purposes.)¹

The Soviets view major war as being a situation in which the USSR--once committed--must and will press on to ultimate victory. Their military doctrine completely rejects such notions as limitations, possible stalemates, or mutual destruction. Soviet military doctrinal writings emphasize the essentiality of attaining victory, which is

¹Reviewer's comment: Stalin was highly skeptical of the efficacy of the Allied bombing of Germany in WW II. In his view, this was not an acceptable substitute for an attack on the ground that would engage German military resources.

not to be confused with the status quo antebellum nor with mortal wounds.¹

¹Reviewer's comment: It would be useful to remind readers that military professionals of all nations would probably subscribe to Soviet military doctrine if the nature of their societies allowed it. It is the prudent way to fight a war. It is the way American commanders try to conduct their operations after we have been drawn into major war inadvertently through small, indecisive steps, or through an adversary's surprise attack. Once you recognize that Soviet military doctrine is the preferred doctrine of most military men, you take it seriously without having to impute a special bloody-mindedness to the Russians.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The history of the Communist Party in its controlling role in the USSR has tended to follow a recurrent three phase cycle: a period in which one leader is clearly dominant, followed (upon his death or ouster) by a phase in which a few powerful colleagues share the leadership function, followed in turn by a competitive power struggle between those former colleagues that ends with one becoming clearly dominant. Competition for power is apparent in all phases. A clearly dominant leader must continue efforts to retain and even increase his dominant position. The small, group-shared leadership phase, although nominally one in which cooperation is the operative element, is actually one of masked competition. Each member of the group attempts to develop a commanding clique of reliable protégés and to gain control of the physical means of eliminating his competitors if necessary. The third phase, with its top level power struggle, can go one of two ways. The ultimately successful contender for dominance may use his protégé resources and his control of the physical means of eliminating his erstwhile colleagues to destroy them, either figuratively or literally. The recognition of this contender's capabilities may be such that his colleagues accept relegation to unimportant positions without major resistance.

A review of Soviet initiatives and involvements in the international arena since World War II and the typical patterns of their operations suggests a very close analogue to their domestic political pattern and operations over the same period. Even the Soviet attitudes appear analogous. They appear to view the world scene as if it were in the group-shared leadership phase. They have been and are highly competitive in attempts to develop and maintain a network of client states (analogues of their protégés). They have actively pursued the development of the physical capability to destroy their major competitors if necessary. They seem to view the current shared leadership phase as transient (as is its analogue in their party history). But

the phase is marked by a nominal cooperative element (détente) concurrent with an underlying competition. They can hope that the phase will end with the United States and its alliance structure (and the People's Republic of China) accepting relegation to inconsequential positions in international affairs. But they seem to recognize that the transition to phase three may be violent.

A review of the successful competitors' actions and objectives in their party top level power struggle suggests the objectives and actions they would probably pursue in a general superpower war. Secrecy in preparations, dissimulation, preemptive attack in force when major conflict is inevitable, and the prosecution of the attack until the opponents can no longer resist are all parts of their party power struggle history in this transition. By analogy one can assume similar patterns in a Soviet involvement in a major superpower general war. The published military doctrine of the Soviet military forces is completely compatible with such patterns and objectives.