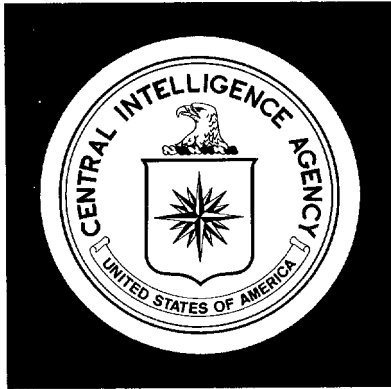


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*The Likelihood of Sino-Soviet Hostilities:
A Progress Report on a Quantitative Project*

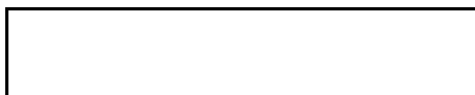
DIA review(s) completed.

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12 October 1976



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
OFFICE OF POLITICAL RESEARCH

Progress Report No. 18

12 October 1976

THE LIKELIHOOD OF SINO-SOVIET HOSTILITIES

This project consists of two quantitative approaches to Sino-Soviet relations. A team of analysts, drawn from various components of the CIA and concerned with different aspects of Chinese and Soviet affairs, examines on a continuing basis evidence on the possibility of one or another level of Sino-Soviet hostilities. The analysts' latest numerical assessments of the likelihood of such hostilities, calculated according to the Bayesian formula of probabilities, are presented in the bar graph on page 2. Below this, a second graph shows the movement of the group's assessments over the past few months. The second part of this project is a chart of overall Sino-Soviet tensions, based upon subjective evaluations by the participants. Progress reports will be published on a periodic basis by the Office of Political Research.

PRINCIPAL TRENDS:

Since Mao's death on 9 September, there has been no strong evidence of preparations for imminent hostilities by either side. **The probabilities of hostilities within the next six months (next page) remain quite low.** The current level of tension has fallen slightly, despite the uncertain succession in China; this is mainly due to an apparent Soviet interest in pursuing the possibility of improved relations.

In addition to the regular scenarios of hostilities reported in this project, various scenarios of improved Sino-Soviet relations are being assessed **on an experimental basis.** Initial results, based on the events of the past month, indicate a slight Soviet willingness to improve relations and a clear Chinese aversion to any type of improvement, especially in party-to-party relations. Future issues of this publication will attempt to follow the probability of improved relations also.

NOTE—Comments on these reports will be welcomed by [redacted]
[redacted] the Office of Political Research, who is coordinating this project.

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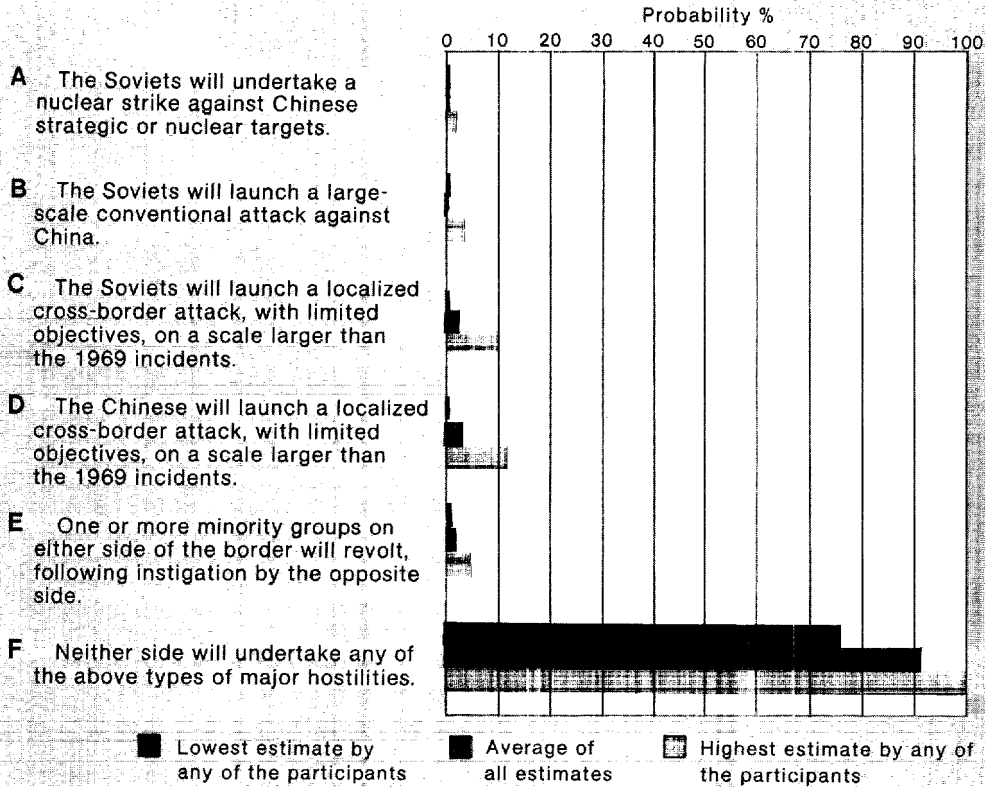
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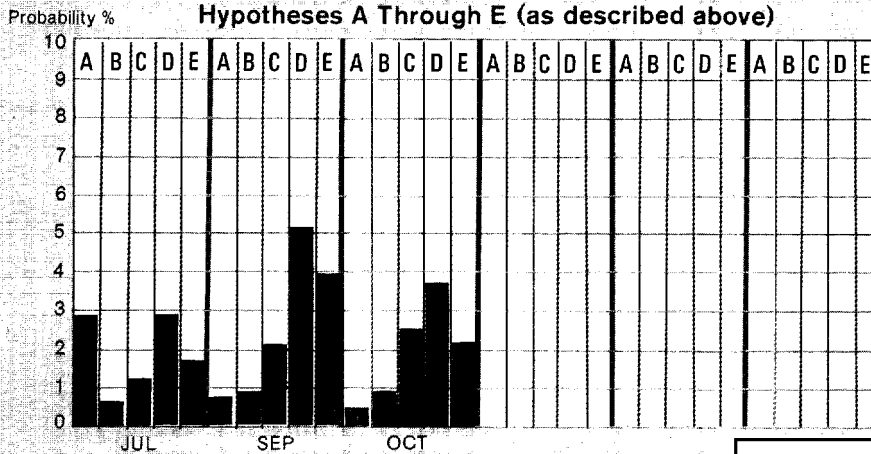
A Bayesian Analysis of the Likelihood of Sino-Soviet Hostilities

Before 1 April 1977

Current Status of the Assessment -- as of 6 October



A Time Chart Showing the Movement of the Group's Averages for Hypotheses A Through E (as described above)



NOTE: For the assessments from June 1974 thru July 1976 see OPR 501-5, 11 Dec. 1974, OPR 501-9, 22 May 1975, and PR76-10055, 2 July 1976.

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ITEMS OF EVIDENCE CONSIDERED IN THE REVISION OF 6 OCTOBER:

1. The message of condolence sent by the CPSU to the Chinese on the occasion of Mao's death was rejected. A spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry was quoted as saying that the message was unacceptable because the Soviet and Chinese Parties do not have formal relations. Messages from Poland Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany were also rejected. A government message sent by Hungary was accepted. Later, the messages sent by the French and Italian Communist Parties were also rejected because, as the spokesman said, the Chinese Party Central Committee had decided to refuse any message from "revisionist" parties. Virulent anti-Soviet propaganda continued. (Hong Kong AFP through FBIS, 14 and 15 September, [redacted])

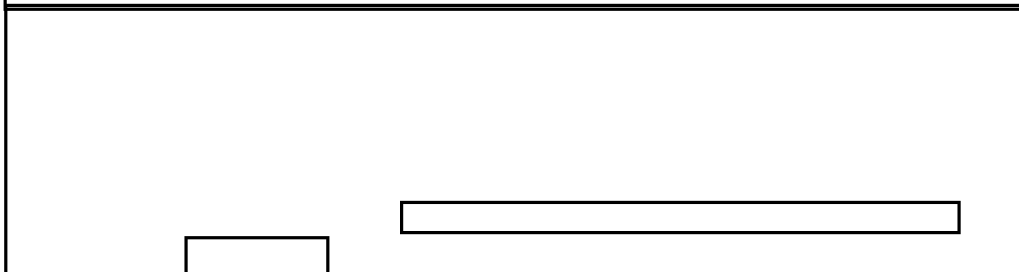
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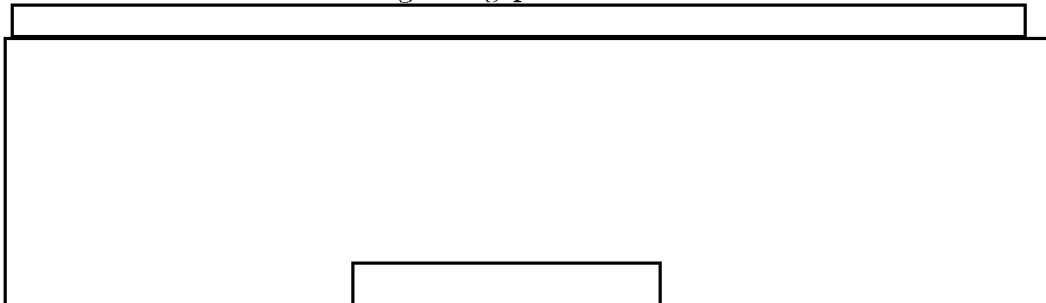
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4. The Soviets are building strong points near the Sino-Soviet border on [redacted]

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5. There has been a marked shift in Soviet propaganda on China since Mao's death. There has been a complete halt to direct attacks, and the Soviets are instead replaying material recalling the halcyon days of cooperation in the 1950s. They seem to be targeting their broadcasts to all elements who may figure in the succession struggle, and they are citing previous Chinese statements about the value of Soviet aid to China. (FBIS, 10-30 September, [redacted])

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6. In late September, following his 23-day tour of China, former US Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger told Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying that

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[Redacted]

China's defenses against the USSR are weak. During and after visits to areas of the Sino-Soviet border, he expressed his concern at the Chinese emphasis on the use of the militia rather than regular forces to contain a Soviet attack. He also expressed his view that China lacked weapons capable of stopping modern Soviet tanks and high-flying Soviet planes. (Schlesinger saw rifles and bazookas, whose shells would merely bounce off the latest Soviet tanks, and anti-aircraft practice against plane-pulled balloons at an altitude far below where Soviet planes would fly.) He and his party expressed concern that Chinese weapons would inflict only small damage on Soviet forces attempting to slice off a piece of China. Yeh reportedly thanked him for his remarks. (Washington Post, 29 September, [Redacted])

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7. The two sides continue to dispute the location of the main navigation channel in the vicinity of Knyazhevskoye (Ta-t'ung) Island [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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9. In line with Soviet efforts to improve their air defense capabilities in the Far East, APVO regiments at Khabarovsk/Blagodatnoye and Uglovoye Northwest may have begun re-equipping with MIG-23 FLOGGER-Bs. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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10. Hua Kuo-feng's eulogy for Mao on 18 September reaffirmed Peking's view of the Soviet Union as China's most dangerous adversary. Routine Chinese media commentary on foreign affairs since Mao's death has underlined Peking's anti-Soviet bias by harshly attacking policies of the "Brezhnev clique." (FBIS, September, [Redacted])

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11. PLA Deputy Chief of Staff Wu Hsiu-chuan stated that there have been no serious incidents along the border since 1969, a relatively rare claim. This is in line with Soviet statements, but Chou En-lai once claimed more than 200 recent incidents. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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14. A Soviet official stated [Redacted] that the death of Mao would not result in a significant improvement in Sino-Soviet relations in the foreseeable future. He said that the parties are so far apart on basic issues, and the negative regard for China has so permeated the CPSU, that at least 20 years is likely to pass before any major change in relations occurs. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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17. Soviet Ambassador Tolstikov, cutting short his vacation to the USSR, returned to Peking on 11 September and headed a small Soviet embassy delegation which paid last respects to Mao on 13 September. His haste to return was such that he came on a Chinese civil airlines flight. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

18. General Gankovsky, Deputy Chief of Moscow's team at the border talks, returned to Peking. It is not clear whether he had been on vacation and whether his return is an attempt to test the waters. The Yugoslav press said he had been absent from Peking for six months. (AFP Tanug, 27 September, [Redacted])

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19. The Soviet Political Counselor in Tokyo told a US embassy officer that the alternatives facing the Chinese have been neither war nor an alliance with the Soviets, but rather limited rapprochement or continuation of hostility short of war. He thinks limited rapprochement is possible after the Chinese leadership sorts itself out, but assesses the chance of this as less than 50-50.

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[Redacted]

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21. MFA, [Redacted] Soviet that there are at least 12 different groups in the Chinese leadership, one of which favors better relations with the USSR. He said, however, that that group is too weak and too small and is distrusted by the others. Especially suspect are those of the group educated in the USSR. Therefore, there is no prospect for an immediate improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. He concluded that there would be a period of chaos following Mao's death, after which the Shanghai radicals would most likely gain the upper hand. [Redacted]

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22. A Soviet sinologist and former member of the Soviet-Chinese border talks team told US embassy officers on 21 September that regardless of the Chinese leadership outcome, he did not expect any significant improvement in relations in the near future. He said that whoever succeeds to power cannot escape the pervasive intellectual shaping of the ancient Chinese thought patterns. The Chinese, he said, operate from a historical perspective of Chinese "centrism" which will not change and which will continue to make any change in the Chinese attitude toward the Soviet Union difficult. [Redacted]

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23. [Redacted] stated that it was his conclusion that the USSR would intervene in China if the occasion presented itself, and that the Chinese leadership shared the same view. The Soviets would be pleased if some faction, either in the provinces or nationwide, called for their assistance. [Redacted]

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24. [Redacted] Brezhnev reportedly expressed concern about the possibility of US arms sales to China. He doubted this would happen, but said that any military aid would be dangerous. It would increase Chinese confidence, which might lead to new border incidents or possibly even a local war, "which the USSR fear greatly." [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

26. Figures supplied by the USSR in Peking for the first half of 1976 suggest that there will be an increase in Sino-Soviet trade in 1976. There was a considerable dropoff last year. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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ANALYTIC TECHNIQUES USED IN THIS PROJECT:

The graphs on page 2 show the range and average of analysts' estimates of the likelihood of hostilities; the Bayesian method of calculation is used. This method, as applied here, systematizes a series of appraisals of incoming intelligence made independently by individual analysts. Every participant weighs each new piece of relevant data in terms of the hypotheses shown, which, for the purpose of this exercise, are considered to be mutually exclusive. Simple mathematical calculations, applying the new evidence to the analysts' previous estimates, then yield updated estimates, which serve as the basis for the chart.

The chart on page 7 is an ongoing measurement of the level of Sino-Soviet tensions. It is not a Bayesian analysis: no specific hypotheses are posed and no mathematical calculations are made on the basis of prior estimates. Instead, at the start and at bimonthly intervals, each of the participants selects a position on the scale of 0 to 100 to represent his best judgment of the current general state of tensions between Moscow and Peking. (The points 10 and 70 have been designated as reference points, as explained on the chart.) Small shifts from the analysts' initial positions may not prove to be meaningful, but abrupt or sustained movement in the lines will be significant.

The measurement of the degree of general tension should be considered as complementary to—but independent of—the estimates of the likelihood of hostilities. Taken together, the two approaches ensure continuing examination of the probabilities of conflict and of the overall state of relations between the USSR and China.

The items of new evidence considered each period are identified by the participants themselves, consolidated by OPR, and then resubmitted to all the analysts for their evaluations—both in terms of the Bayes hypotheses and as factors bearing on the general state of tension.

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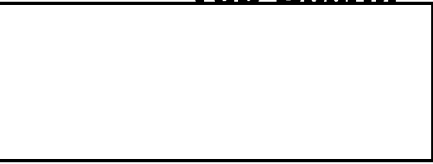
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