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Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy

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MAIN TRENDS IN SOVIET MILITARY POLICY

THE PROBLEM

To review significant developments in Soviet military policy and programs, and to estimate main trends in Soviet military policies over the next 5 to 10 years.

SCOPE

This estimate assesses broad trends in Soviet military policy and doctrine. It does not attempt to recapitulate existing NIEs on Soviet strategic attack, strategic air and missile defense, and general purpose forces. Our most recent detailed estimates on the size, composition, and capabilities of these principal components and the supporting elements of the Soviet military forces are as follows:

NIE 11-8-66, "Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Attack," dated 20 October 1966, TOP SECRET, RESTRICTED DATA (LIMITED DISTRIBUTION).

NIE 11-14-66, "Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces," dated 3 November 1966, SECRET.

NIE 11-3-66, "Soviet Strategic Air and Missile Defense," dated 17 November 1966, TOP SECRET.

CONCLUSIONS

A. In the past year, there has been no major change in the broad trends of Soviet military policy, which continues to place primary emphasis on strategic weapons. Outlays for defense have accelerated with the continuation of large-scale deployment of strategic missiles, both offensive and defensive, and continued research and development (R&D) on new strategic weapon systems. The Soviets are building

forces which we believe will give them, in the next year or two, greatly increased confidence that they have a retaliatory capability sufficient to assure the destruction of a significant portion of US industrial resources and population. They will probably also seek, through both strategic attack and defense programs, to improve their ability to reduce the damage the US can inflict on the USSR should deterrence fail and war in fact occur. We believe that the Soviets would not consider it feasible to achieve by the mid-1970's strategic capabilities which would permit them to launch a first strike against the US without receiving unacceptable damage in return.[1]

B. The most important issues of military policy at present center upon the strategic relationship with the US. Certain major deployment programs are either slowing or nearing completion. The Soviet leaders are probably now considering further development and deployment of strategic systems for the 1970's. For the present, we rate the chances as less than even that they would agree to any extensive program of arms control or disarmament.

C. The Soviets almost certainly believe that their strategic position relative to that of the US has improved markedly. In the next year or so they will approach numerical parity in ICBM launchers, which we believe to be their present goal. They are aware, however, of planned improvements in US strategic offensive missile forces which in their view would threaten to erode their strategic position. Possible Soviet responses could take the form of a considerable increase in the numbers of ICBM launchers, development of mobile ICBMs, a greater emphasis on ballistic missile submarines, or qualitative improvements such as the development of very accurate ICBMs, possibly equipped with multiple independent reentry vehicles (MIRVs).

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[1] Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, would substitute for the last sentence of Conclusion A the following:

"The Soviets may not consider it feasible to achieve by the mid-1970's strategic capabilities which would permit them to launch a first strike attack against the US without receiving unacceptable damage in return. On the other hand, the sustained intensity with which the USSR is pursuing its massive military R&D efforts and the pace of its strategic systems deployment suggest the Soviets could be seeking, over the long term, a combination of capabilities which could yield a credible first strike capability against the US. Even if the Soviets considered that this still would not make rational deliberate initiation of nuclear attack against the US, they might well believe that achievement of a credible first strike capability would be worth the cost in view of the strong backup this would provide for aggressive pursuit of objectives in other areas of the world."

D. The Soviets have probably concluded that if no arms control agreement is reached a US decision to deploy ABMs will soon be forthcoming, and are probably concerned lest a US ABM deployment seriously degrade their retaliatory capabilities. A US decision to deploy either heavy or light ABM defenses would probably lead the Soviets to develop and deploy penetration aids and possibly MIRVs for their ICBM force, or they might increase the size of that force. Systems designed to elude US ABM defenses, such as aerodynamic vehicles or space weapons, might be given greater emphasis. Whatever their specific responses to developments on the US side, we believe that the Soviets will hold it essential to maintain what they would consider to be an assured destruction capability.

E. We continue to believe that the Soviets will deploy ABMs in defense of areas other than Moscow, but their decision may await the availability of an improved system. In any case, given the lead-times involved, ABM defenses will probably not become operational outside the Moscow area before the early 1970's. We would expect to detect construction of such additional defenses two to three years before they became operational.[2]

F. Developments in the general purpose forces indicate a greater concern with meeting contingencies short of general war and a recognition of the possibility of postponing, limiting, or avoiding the use of nuclear weapons. In part this represents a reaction to the US and NATO strategy of flexible response, but it also represents a more general interest in broadening the range of Soviet military capabilities. Sealift and airlift have been considerably expanded. We do not believe, however, that the Soviets are developing the sea and air combat capabilities required for distant limited military action against opposition. They evidently see advantages in wars fought by proxy with

[2] Lt. Gen. Joseph F. Carroll, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., Acting Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, and Maj. Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, note that this paragraph considers the Moscow ABM system is the only ABM system currently being deployed and does not ascribe an ABM capability for the Tallinn system. They believe that the information available at present is still insufficient to estimate with confidence the full capabilities and mission of the Tallinn system. They agree that the available evidence does support a conclusion that the Tallinn sites have a defensive mission against the aerodynamic threat except against low altitude threats. However, they also believe that the system, where augmented by the Hen House type radar, has a capability against ballistic missiles over a substantial portion of the deployment area; and that the system has considerable growth potential. They therefore would evaluate its continuing development and deployment with this capability in mind.

indigenous forces rather than by their own forces, a practice which reduces both military risks and adverse political reactions. In extending their influence abroad they will continue to give economic and military aid on a large-scale, and to use political and diplomatic means.

G. The Soviets now describe China as a power with a policy "clearly hostile" to the USSR. They have increased their military strength in areas close to the Chinese and Mongolian borders, and are moving to strengthen the defenses of Mongolia. At present they appear to regard the Chinese as posing more of a border security problem than a major military threat, but they almost certainly see the potential threat of China as increasing over the longer term. So long as the Sino-Soviet conflict persists, Soviet military planners will have to take account of the possibility of large-scale war with China and China's emerging strategic nuclear capabilities.

H. The internal situation appears generally favorable to the continuation of a strong military effort. The present leaders seem more responsive than was Khrushchev to the opinions of the military hierarchy. Estimated military and space expenditures for 1967 represent an increase of 16 percent over 1965, a marked change from the more stable level of spending during 1962-1965. The adverse effects on the economy of large military and space programs will exert some restraining influence on military spending. We believe that military expenditures will continue to rise, but at a rate generally consonant with the growth of the Soviet economy.

I. A strong effort in military R&D will be continued despite resource allocation problems. The Soviets probably regard such an effort as imperative in order to prevent the US from gaining a technological advantage and also to gain, if possible, some advantage for themselves. But in deciding to deploy any new weapon system they would have to weigh the prospective gain against the economic costs and the capabilities of the US to counter it.

J. Soviet foreign policy will continue to be based primarily upon political and economic factors, but the military capabilities that the Soviets are developing and the military relationships that are evolving will affect their attitudes and approaches to policy. They will probably seek to gain some political or propaganda advantage from their improving military position, and may take a harder line with the US in various

crises than they have in the past. We do not believe, however, that their improved military capabilities will lead them to such aggressive courses of action as would, in their view, provoke direct military confrontation with the US. The Soviet leaders recognize that the USSR as well as the US is deterred from initiating general war, and will continue to avoid serious risk of such a war.[3]

[3] For the longer term, Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes his footnote to Conclusion A is pertinent.

DISCUSSION

I. THE BACKGROUND OF SOVIET MILITARY POLICY

1. The overriding concern of the Soviet Union, as of other countries, is national security. Beyond this, the USSR seeks greater recognition as a preeminent world power with corresponding prerogatives and seeks to expand its influence and leadership on the world scene. As taught by Communist doctrine, Soviet leaders calculate the "relation of forces" in any particular situation with regard to political, economic, and psychological as well as military factors. They value military strength as a deterrent to any attack on the Soviet Union or its allies, as a manifestation of the success and growing power of the Soviet system, and as a support for Soviet foreign policy. To serve these purposes, Soviet forces must of course be made capable of fighting effectively if war should occur. The means to be devoted to military preparedness, however, must be calculated in the context of all the demands upon Soviet resources. In short, Soviet military policy does not exist as a thing apart, but is only an aspect of the totality of Soviet policy.

2. In contrast to the fluctuations which have characterized the military policies of other powers, Soviet military policy has been remarkably stable. The military establishment has had a high priority in the allocation of national resources since the very inception of the Soviet regime. This stability can be attributed in part to such basic factors as geographic position and a sense of insecurity in a hostile world. It also reflects the historic role of the military as one of the main supports and preferred instruments of the Soviet state, from the imposition of the revolutionary regime on Russia to the communization of Eastern Europe. To some extent, stability has fostered rigidity; great military forces, once created, have tended to become vested interests. This tendency, however, has been mitigated by other forces at work in the postwar era.

3. At the close of World War II the USSR moved into the front rank of world power and directly confronted the opposing power of the US. Soviet military planners for the first time were forced to think in intercontinental as well as continental terms, a change of focus that has profoundly affected priorities within the military establishment. The building of capabilities for intercontinental attack and strategic defense has claimed an increasing share of the military effort. Moreover, the series of cold war confrontations with the US, both political and military, have revealed limitations on Soviet military power, indicating at the same time additional military requirements.

4. Another major force for change has been the rapid postwar advance of military technology, particularly in nuclear weapons, missiles, and electronics. The Soviets pushed research and development (R&D) on all aspects of the new technology (in some cases, ahead of the US), and deployed the new weapons on a large scale. Outlays for defense rose as new advanced weapon programs

were superimposed upon the large general purpose forces already in being. The Soviets were quick to grasp the importance of the new weaponry, but they were slow to adapt their forces to its revolutionary implications for warfare. Not until the early 1960's were these implications reflected in basic changes in Soviet strategy and doctrine and in force posture.

5. A consequence of the advance of military technology has been the lengthening of leadtimes for modern weapon programs, requiring ever earlier decisions from the political leaders and military planners. Thus a number of major decisions as to the size and composition of the Soviet military establishment in the early 1970's must already have been taken, and decisions for the period beyond are probably now under consideration. This is not to say that programs cannot be modified and force levels adjusted as the leadership's assessment of military requirements changes; the making of military policy is a continuum rather than clusters of isolated, unalterable decisions. Moreover, the Soviets have shown a certain boldness in curtailing or even abandoning programs that in their view no longer met their needs. But this is a costly business, and the Soviet leaders, facing difficult problems of resource allocation, must carefully weigh decisions to launch expensive programs to counter threats that may arise up to 10 years hence.

6. The Soviets' determination of future military requirements will be based in the first instance upon their assessment of the political and military relationship with the US and of the situation in Europe. They will, however, be increasingly concerned with the potential threat posed by a hostile China and its emerging strategic capabilities. Beyond these specific areas of concern, they will consider the general utility of military power and the mix of forces best suited to support foreign policy. Finally, in deciding how best to meet the wide range of requirements that can be foreseen and how best to provide against contingencies that cannot, the Soviet leaders will be heavily influenced by such domestic factors as the interplay of forces within the bureaucratic establishment, the opportunities opened by technology, and the constraints of economics.

II. THE STRATEGIC SETTING

7. The Soviets currently see in the US the principal obstacle to the growth of their influence in world affairs and the only significant military threat to their security. They do not expect a deliberate US attack on the USSR, believing that the US is deterred for political as well as for military reasons, and for the same reasons they are deterred from attacking the US. Indeed, their consistent policy has been to avoid situations which carried any serious risk of nuclear war. But if general nuclear war is in their view inadmissible as a deliberate act of policy, they are nonetheless keenly aware of the political and psychological disadvantages of the position of inferiority in strategic weapons that they have occupied for the past 20 years.

8. With the growth of Soviet offensive and defensive forces during recent years the Soviet position has improved markedly. In numbers of intercontinental

delivery vehicles the US remains much the stronger, but completion of current Soviet deployment programs in the next year or so will significantly reduce the US numerical advantage and in the number of ICBM launchers the Soviets will approach parity with the US. Completion of present ICBM deployment programs will give the Soviets much greater confidence in their ability to deter the US by virtue of their capability to inflict mass destruction on the US even if they are attacked first. Moreover, the Soviet leaders may see an opportunity approaching to achieve a more substantial improvement in their strategic relationship with the US, presumably with a view to translating such a position into political advantage. They must recognize, however, that as they move to alter this relationship the risk increases that the US will act to match or overmatch their efforts; the end result might be a new surge of competitive arming which they almost certainly would wish to avoid.

The Soviet View of the US Posture

9. The Soviet leaders bring to any consideration of the US a basic attitude of suspicion and distrust. In assessing the current US political and military posture—a set of policies, actions, and attitudes—they undoubtedly find elements which in their view range from the conciliatory to the downright hostile, indications of both strength and weakness. Which aspects of US policy will have the most influence on the formulation of Soviet military policy will depend upon the strength of the signals as they are received and understood in Moscow.

10. The Soviets are aware that US deployment of strategic missiles is leveling off, giving them an opportunity to match or even surpass the US in numbers of ICBM launchers. They probably believe that attainment of numerical parity would not provoke a US reaction. Such parity would have political and psychological advantages, but it would not alter the basic situation of mutual deterrence. It would in fact leave the USSR still inferior in heavy bombers and submarine-launched missiles. Moreover, the Soviets probably realize that even this improvement in their position might be short-lived.

11. For the longer term, the US has announced programs for qualitative improvements in its strategic missile forces which from a Soviet point of view would threaten to erode the USSR's strategic position. The US is developing more advanced missiles for deployment in the 1970's which will incorporate better accuracy, multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles (RVs), and penetration aids. If these programs are carried to completion, the Soviets will face a US missile force equipped with several thousand RVs which can be designed either for maximum effect against hard targets, thus threatening the Soviet ICBM force, or to saturate and overcome ABM defenses. The Soviets have responded to previous improvements in US strategic offensive forces with heightened efforts to improve their own strategic offensive and defensive forces, and might do so again. But they might find in their present strategic situation and their future outlook incentives for arms control that would permit a relaxation of effort.

12. It is too early to assess the Soviets' view of the US arms control initiatives made early this year. Initially they almost certainly viewed with suspicion the idea of a freeze on ABM deployment, a strategic area in which they held a clear lead, and US readiness to discuss other strategic missiles as well. Some Soviet leaders may see the US position as an indication of weakness caused by the economic drain of the war in Vietnam. Most of them, however, probably recognize that, even with the Vietnam war, the US economy can more easily sustain an intensification of the arms race than can the Soviet economy.

13. The Soviet leaders are aware that the US could begin ABM deployment at any time, and have undoubtedly followed the discussion of this subject in the US. They have probably concluded that, if no arms control agreement on this subject is reached, a US decision to deploy will soon be forthcoming. Because it would be a major new program with potential impact on the strategic situation, the US decision would tend to lend weight to interests in the USSR which press for larger military programs.

14. The Soviets would be concerned lest a US ABM deployment seriously degrade their assured destruction capabilities. From the Soviet point of view, either light or heavy US ABM defenses would threaten eventually to erode the deterrent power of their strategic attack forces. This is because ABM programs are damage-limiting in nature—that is, they are designed to protect the population and property in major cities which are the prime targets of retaliation—and because even a small program, once initiated, could lead to a larger one. The Soviets would consider it essential to respond by improving their strategic attack forces to the extent required to maintain what they would consider to be an assured destruction capability.

15. The Soviet reaction would probably be much the same to the more austere US ABM programs that have been discussed—for example, a defense against a possible Chinese threat in the mid-1970's, or a defense of US ICBM forces. Their military responses, however, might be tempered by the lesser impact of these programs on their retaliatory capabilities.

16. The Soviets are also concerned that below the strategic nuclear level US military power embraces a range of military capabilities and options, both nuclear and conventional, that the USSR cannot match except on its periphery. These have enabled the US to project its military power in support of policy overseas, and to intervene or threaten intervention in situations that might otherwise have been turned to Soviet advantage. The Soviets have undoubtedly seen the US intervention in Vietnam in this light.

17. Soviet concern with the war in Vietnam is overwhelmingly political: how to render aid to an embattled fraternal state, as is politically imperative in the context of the Sino-Soviet struggle for Communist leadership, without becoming involved in a direct military confrontation with the US. There are, nevertheless, significant military implications. The Soviet military leaders are aware that the war has produced significant qualitative improvements in US field forces; invaluable experience has been gained and new equipment and

techniques have been tested under combat conditions. For their part, it has presented them with difficult problems such as their inability to prevent the bombing of the North and the risk that the US may mine or blockade North Vietnamese ports. Moreover, as the result of the buildup caused by the war, the US now has, for the first time since World War II, about as many men under arms as the USSR. Even though these developments present no direct threat to the USSR, they probably tend to reinforce the advocates of large general purpose forces in the Soviet military establishment.

NATO and the Warsaw Pact

18. While Soviet interest and political engagement outside Europe has expanded greatly since the end of World War II, Europe remains an area of primary concern. Soviet European policy is directed to the reduction or elimination of American influence in Europe, the isolation and containment of West Germany, and the weakening or destruction of the Atlantic alliance. A measure of Soviet concern is to be found in the massive forces deployed against Europe, which together make up the major part of the USSR's military establishment. The influence of tradition remains strong, particularly in the large ground forces, but the USSR's posture and its strategy have also been affected by developments within NATO.

19. The efforts of the US to reorient NATO planning and capabilities to a flexible response strategy have evidently been among the considerations which have caused the Soviets to give more attention to contingencies short of general war. Authoritative Soviet military writings have continued to emphasize the requirements of general nuclear war, but the view held by Khrushchev that any limited war between nuclear powers must inevitably escalate into general war no longer prevails. In its place the view is advanced that the Soviet armed forces should be prepared to meet all kinds of emergencies up to and including large-scale conventional conflicts and limited nuclear wars. [redacted] These developments obviously carry implications for Soviet force structure and contingency planning. They also indicate recognition of the possibility of postponing, limiting, or avoiding the introduction of nuclear weapons in modern war.

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

20. The Soviets almost certainly consider the recent trends in Western Europe as favorable. The withdrawal of French military forces from NATO, the disruption of the elaborate NATO infrastructure, and the general weakening of the alliance have not only reduced the military threat to the USSR, but have offered political opportunities as well. On the whole, however, they have tended to move cautiously. The Soviets have apparently learned that any assertion of militancy from the East has historically elicited a corresponding reaction in the West, and they have continued to encourage the general relaxation of tension between the two camps.

21. It is possible that the Soviets, in response to reductions in NATO forces, will come to see advantages in reducing their own forces in the forward area.[4] They may also conclude that these reductions, together with the withdrawal of French forces and the denial of French territory to NATO, reduce the capability of NATO to wage conventional warfare, thus shortening any nonnuclear phase in a clash with Warsaw Pact forces and pushing NATO back toward a "tripwire" strategy. At a minimum, such a conclusion would lead the Soviets to reexamine the concept of flexible response, and it might lead them to increase their tactical nuclear capabilities in the forward area. But if the situation in NATO is changing the Soviets' view of their military requirements in Europe, such change has not yet affected the structure or disposition of their forces.

22. It is a paradox of the past few years that while the USSR's East European allies have increasingly asserted their national independence, the USSR has significantly strengthened their military capabilities. Although the Soviets are apparently relying on the East European armed forces to perform important military tasks in the event of war in Europe, their policy has been based in large part on political considerations. The Warsaw Pact has served and will probably continue to serve as a convenient framework within which the USSR can work to limit tendencies to independence among its East European allies. But the Soviets now face a new assertiveness on the part of these allies and a new, more imaginative effort by the Western states to play on the national interests which this assertiveness reflects.

23. The USSR is apparently prepared to accept some diversity within the Pact and to adjust its policy objectives to this reality. In the past two years it has tolerated repeated instances of Rumanian noncooperation in Pact military activities or even in expressions of Pact political solidarity. Bulgaria has continued to be reliable, and Hungary is playing a larger part in Warsaw Pact affairs. But the Soviets are evidently putting their main reliance on the "northern tier" states (Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia), whose interests, because of their geographical position and a common fear of West Germany, coincide more closely with the interests of the USSR.

The Sino-Soviet Dispute

24. The Soviets now describe China as a power with a policy "clearly hostile" to the USSR. Since early 1963 they have gradually increased military strength in areas close to the Chinese and Mongolian borders (by about 40,000 combat troops and about 2,000 border guards), and they are moving to strengthen the defenses of Mongolia. The Soviets have also sharply increased military intelligence collection against China, [redacted] The measures taken to date, however, indicate that at present they regard the Chi-

1.5(c)
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[4] For a discussion of the Soviet attitude toward mutual reductions in Europe, see SNIE 4-1-67, "Implications of a Mutual Reduction of US and Soviet Forces in Europe," dated 6 July 1967, SECRET.

nese as posing more of a border security problem than a major military threat. We believe that they will continue gradually to augment their conventional forces in the border areas.

25. The Soviet leaders almost certainly see the potential threat of China as increasing over the longer term. Events of the Cultural Revolution have injected elements of irrationality and unpredictability into the already hostile policy of China, adding to Soviet uneasiness and uncertainty. The Soviets clearly hope that Mao will be supplanted by a more rational, conservative regime, but they must recognize the possibility that his successors may be even more extremist than he. So long as the Sino-Soviet conflict persists, Soviet military planners will have to take account of the possibility of large-scale war with China and China's emerging strategic nuclear capabilities.

Support of Foreign Policy

26. The Soviets have learned that even great military power does not automatically translate into political gain. Nuclear strategic forces are an obvious prerequisite for great power status, and great power confrontations take place against the backdrop of mutual deterrence. But indispensable as Soviet strategic forces are in the political and military relationship with the US, they are less directly useful for most foreign policy purposes than are the conventional military adjuncts of traditional diplomacy. These include at the lower level such time-honored moves as the military demonstration, establishing a military presence, and showing the flag, and, at the upper extreme, large-scale intervention.

27. The USSR has shown over the past several years an increasing concern with its position and prerogatives as a great power, and a sensitivity that probably goes back to its status in the interwar years as an international pariah. Its proffer of good offices, which led to the Tashkent Conference, was an example of this concern. The Soviets have used Moscow parades as demonstrations of their military power, and over the past several years have built up a naval presence in the Mediterranean. We believe that the USSR will continue to assert coequal status with the US as a force in international affairs, and that this consideration will have a growing influence on future Soviet military policy.

28. In the postwar era Soviet military forces have been directly used in support of policy only in Eastern Europe, except for the brief adventure with missiles in Cuba. Elsewhere the Soviets have sought to extend their influence by large-scale programs of economic and military assistance, and by encouraging subversion and revolution or "wars of national liberation," particularly in the former colonial areas of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. By furnishing substantial supplies of weapons to selected countries and providing training for personnel, they have created a number of client states dependent upon the USSR for continuing support of their military establishments, and demanding always more advanced and costly weapon systems. The USSR itself, however, lacks capabilities for distant limited military action against the opposition of a major military power. It apparently sees advantages in wars fought by proxy

with indigenous forces rather than by its own forces, a practice which reduces both military risks and adverse political reactions.

III. MILITARY POLICY AND NATIONAL POLITY

29. The military policy of the USSR, like that of other states, is made up of a series of compromises that emerge from the policymaking process in response to particular challenges and requirements. Soviet policy is likely, therefore, to reflect the strategic situation only imperfectly and incompletely, and to offer only partial solutions to the problems it poses. This is true, in large measure, because neither the USSR nor any other state has the resources to meet all foreseeable military requirements and to provide against all possible contingencies. This disparity, however, is also in part the result of subjective judgments as to choices and priorities—the result of the policymaking process itself and of the interplay of forces within it.

Political-Military Relations

30. The internal political situation appears generally favorable to the continuation of a strong military policy. The present Soviet leaders seem more responsive than was Khrushchev to opinions of the various specialized interest groups including the military hierarchy. Moreover, the traditional Soviet concern with security and the very size of the military establishment enhance the importance of the high command's influence in top level deliberations on basic decisions. We do not believe, however, that any single group outside of the party apparatus plays a predominant role in determining Soviet national policy.

31. Over the next few years, we doubt that Soviet military policy will be characterized by the boldness and the striking initiatives which reflected Khrushchev's style and approach to problems. Strong, innovating leadership seems to be lacking among both civilian and military leaders. The older generation of Soviet military leaders continues to dominate the high command. Marshal Grechko, appointed to succeed the deceased Malinovskiy as Minister of Defense, was the logical successor; his reputation indicates that he is likely to support the official establishment, defending both governmental policy and the institutional interests that he represents. A considerable number of promotions and retirements will probably be announced in connection with the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, resulting in an infusion of younger blood into the superannuated high command, but not, we believe, in any decided change in its basically conservative orientation. These new leaders will undoubtedly be handpicked by the old guard on the basis of past reliability and conformity.

32. At present, political-military relations within the leadership are characterized by a reasonably peaceful coexistence. A potential source of discord, however, is to be found in the natural conflict between the totalitarian impulses of the Communist Party, which cause it to suspect any other center of power, and the professional impulses of the military establishment. In the past, clashes between these opposing impulses have primarily concerned such problems as

questions of loyalty and party indoctrination. Today, problems arising out of this dichotomy are more likely to concern matters of military policy. Moreover, as decisions on military matters come to depend more and more on expert technical knowledge, the influence of those who command this knowledge, the technically trained officers, is bound to grow. How to utilize this knowledge without becoming captive to it, and how to insure the continued dominance of political considerations in military matters of vital significance to the nation, have evidently become questions of some concern for the Soviet leadership.

33. In contrast with the situation in the early 1960's, when Khrushchev's strong innovating leadership provoked public clashes with his military leaders, there have been few signs of controversy over military policy under the current regime. We believe, however, that this relative harmony reflects the general satisfaction of the military leadership with current policy rather than any fundamental relaxation of political-military tensions. On several occasions over the past year there have been indications that the military has sought to influence policy decisions. In the fall of 1966, for example, at a time when the annual economic plan was presumably being prepared for approval, the military press took a strong stand on the need for heavy military allocations. More recently, the military have probably been concerned lest the proposed discussions between the US and the Soviet Union on the curtailment of strategic weapons deployments might lead the Soviet Government to postpone or discontinue measures for ABM defense. We believe that the Soviet military has been pressing the Soviet leadership to continue a strong ABM policy.

34. Some elements within the military are dissatisfied with the present arrangements for the exercise of supreme authority over the Soviet armed forces, which is probably now exercised by the Politburo as a whole, or at least a committee of the Politburo. A number of articles have linked the emergence of rocket and nuclear weapons and the consequently enhanced importance of surprise to the need for a formal, permanent command authority which could function in time of peace as well as war and which would have the power to initiate retaliatory action in case of attack. We doubt, however, that there will be any significant change from the present command arrangements so long as the Soviet political leadership continues to function as a collective.

Economic Considerations [5]

35. The problem of resource allocation—the balancing of claims from all sectors of the society—is fundamental in the making of Soviet military policy. The Soviet leaders recognize, as Khrushchev did, that the large and growing outlays for military and space programs have been a major factor in the poor overall performance of the Soviet economy and its relatively slow growth rate in recent years. Where he sought dramatic solutions, however, they have temporized by assigning high priorities to a variety of competing claimants. This has meant

[5] For a fuller discussion of general Soviet economic policy, see NIE 11-5-67, "Soviet Economic Problems and Prospects," dated 25 May 1967, SECRET.

in military policy that they have supported both the buildup of strategic forces and a continuation of large outlays for general purpose forces.

36. We estimate Soviet expenditures for military and space programs in 1967 at some 20 billion rubles. Of this total, we believe that about 30 percent goes to the strategic attack and strategic defense forces combined, nearly 30 percent to the general purpose forces, more than 25 percent to military R&D and the space program, and 15 percent to command and general support. Outlays for the military and space programs have been rising for the past two years. The estimated expenditures for 1967 represent an increase of about 16 percent over those for 1965, a marked change from the more stable level of spending during 1962-1965. The current expansion of the strategic attack and defense forces and the rising costs of military R&D and the space program are responsible for this increase; spending for the general purpose forces has been relatively stable for several years.

37. The principal effect of the expanding military and space programs lies in their increasing demands for the scarce, high-quality resources needed to sustain economic growth. The machine building industry, for example, bears the brunt of production of advanced weapons systems; it also faces heavy civilian demand for advanced production equipment, which in turn requires advanced production technology, electronic components, special metals, and machining skills. In another critical area, R&D efforts are urgently required by Soviet industry and agriculture, but military and space programs continue to draw off the best scientific manpower and the bulk of the budget for R&D.

38. Our knowledge of military programs currently underway suggests that military expenditures will continue to rise, but at a slower rate than that of the last two years. If their growth rate does not exceed the rate of growth in national output (which we have estimated at 4 to 6 percent a year through 1970), the economy will also be able to provide increasing support to the large-scale agricultural investment program, to the modernization of industry, and to the various consumer programs. The Soviet economy could, of course, support a much greater expansion in the military effort, but at a cost to important civilian programs that the leaders would probably be reluctant to pay.

Military Research and Development[*]

39. Military R&D has been and will continue to be one of the highest priority undertakings in the USSR. The Soviets regard such an effort as imperative in order to prevent the US from gaining a technological advantage, to gain, if possible, some advantage for themselves, and to strengthen the technological base of Soviet power. Most Soviet military R&D is directed toward the qualitative improvement of existing kinds of weapon systems, but we believe that much is also devoted to the investigation of a broad range of new and advanced technologies having potential military applications.

[*] For a fuller discussion of this subject see, NIE 11-67, "Soviet Military Research and Development," dated 1 June 1967, TOP SECRET.

40. With the rapid technological advance of the postwar era, there has been a great expansion in the funds, personnel, and facilities devoted to military R&D and the space program. We estimate that between 1950 and 1966 expenditures for these purposes increased tenfold. It is impossible to make a precise comparison of US and Soviet expenditures; our analysis suggests that if Soviet military R&D and space programs at their present levels were purchased in the US, they would generate an approximate annual expenditure more than three-fourths the amount of US outlays for the same purposes. And the Soviet effort rests on a considerably smaller economic base.

41. Soviet advanced research in fields applicable to military developments is probably now about equal to that of the West. Despite excellent theoretical work, however, Soviet military hardware frequently has not reflected the most advanced state-of-the-art in the USSR. In large part, this can be attributed to a conservative design philosophy which emphasizes proven technology and favors rugged, relatively simple equipment. In part, however, this Soviet choice may have been forced by deficiencies in manufacturing and fabrication techniques. Soviet production technology generally lags behind that of the US, although the Soviets are taking steps to correct these deficiencies.

42. It is almost certain that the Soviets have some type of R&D underway in every important field of military technology. The Soviets will continue to press their search for new technologies and systems that offer the prospect of improving their strategic situation. We see no areas at present where Soviet technology is significantly ahead of that of the US. Considering the size and quality of the Soviet R&D effort, however, it is possible that the USSR could move ahead of the US in some particular field of strategic importance. The Soviet leaders would certainly seek to exploit any significant technological advance for political and military advantage, but in deciding to deploy any new weapon system they would have to weigh the prospective gain against the economic costs and the capabilities of the US to counter it.

IV. PROBABLE TRENDS IN FORCE POSTURE

43. Considering military requirements as probably seen by the Soviets, the capabilities of the economy, and the present influence of the military, we think it unlikely that there will be any significant relaxation of the Soviet military effort. On the other hand, the Soviets probably see no major requirements of such urgency as to justify large new programs that would seriously retard economic growth and development. We believe, therefore, that the Soviets will continue a strong military effort that will increase at a rate consonant with the growth of the economy.

44. We have weighed the important possibility of a Soviet attempt to acquire a combination of offensive and defensive forces which would permit a first strike sufficient to limit damage to the Soviet Union to acceptable proportions. Considering the number, hardness, and reaction times of targets to be struck in such an attack, and the likelihood that many would escape destruction, such a

Soviet effort would require a large, highly sophisticated missile force, widespread and effective air and missile defenses, and an effective antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capability. Given the technological and economic magnitude of such an enormous task, and the probability that the US would detect and match or overmatch the Soviet exertion, we believe that the Soviets would not consider it feasible to achieve by the mid-1970's strategic capabilities which would permit them to launch a first strike against the US without receiving unacceptable damage in return.[7]

45. The Soviets will continue to face difficult choices in the allocation of resources among the major force components and even within those components. In many cases, the Soviet decision will depend upon US decisions as to its forces which in turn await evidence of Soviet decisions that are yet to be made. For example, future Soviet ICBM programs will be influenced in part by the numbers and types of MIRVs programed for the US Minuteman and Poseidon force, which will depend primarily on the nature and scope of Soviet ABM deployment. In considering future trends in the Soviet force posture, we have attempted to take account of this interaction. We have also assumed that there will be no arms control agreement in the period under consideration.

Forces for Intercontinental Attack

46. In development and deployment programs of forces for intercontinental attack, it is clear that the Soviets are giving primary emphasis to the ICBM force. We believe that the ICBM force now building is intended to provide a large assured retaliatory capability against US population and industrial resources, rather than a first-strike, counterforce capability. The Soviets are continuing to improve their missile submarine fleet, and will probably bring a new class of ballistic missile submarine into service next year; the buildup of this force, however, has been very slow. The heavy bomber force will probably continue gradually to decrease through attrition and retirement of older models; we do not believe that the Soviets now plan to replace them with a follow-on heavy bomber. However, the priorities evident in the development of these forces may change in response to developments in US forces.[8]

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[7] For view of Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, see his footnote to Conclusion A.

[8] Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes this paragraph seriously underestimates the threat to the US from manned aircraft. He would delete the penultimate sentence and substitute the following:

"The heavy and medium bombers of LRA remain an important part of Soviet intercontinental attack forces. The degree of future Soviet reliance on bombers will depend largely on the numbers and types of other strategic systems deployed and on Soviet wartime objectives, but they will probably continue to rely on a mixed force of bombers and missiles. Although the numbers of medium bombers will probably decline somewhat, continued production of medium bombers, the maintenance of the current heavy bomber force level, and the probable introduction of new heavy and medium bombers will enable the Soviets to retain their significant intercontinental aircraft attack capability."

47. The Soviet ICBM force with some 900 launchers operational or under construction is approaching numerical parity with the planned US force of 1,054 launchers. We believe that the Soviets see political and psychological advantages in having an ICBM force roughly the same size as that of the US and that this is the goal of their current deployment programs. New construction starts of ICBM launchers appear to be slowing, and it is possible that, in their view, the Soviets will have reached their goal when the current deployment programs are complete. We do not believe that they are seeking a substantial numerical superiority at this time, and consider that the most likely Soviet goal, at least for the present phase of deployment, falls within the previously estimated maximum of 1,200 launchers. The Soviets are continuing to develop follow-on ICBM systems and we believe that some of these will be operationally deployed. Such further deployment, however, may have little effect on the total number of launchers. It is possible that new systems will be retrofitted into older sites, and additional construction of new sites would probably be somewhat offset by the phase out of the old first and second generation ICBMs.[9]

48. The Soviets have been conducting tests that we believe relate to the development of a depressed trajectory ICBM (DICBM), a fractional orbit bombardment system (FOBS), or both. Either weapon could degrade elements of the US retaliatory capability by circumventing existing detection systems and complicate the US problem of developing effective ABM defenses. If either or both of these weapons become operational, they would probably be deployed in relatively small numbers to supplement the ICBM force. We have no evidence as to how either would be deployed: whether in hard or soft sites, whether new construction would be required, or whether retrofit into some existing sites would be feasible.

49. Improvements planned for US strategic missile forces in the 1970's will almost certainly impel the Soviets to further efforts to maintain a large, assured retaliatory capability. The incorporation of MIRVs and improved accuracy into US missiles could lead the Soviets to deploy greater numbers of ICBM launchers, possibly dispersed over wider geographic areas,[10] or to deploy ABMs in defense of some portion of their ICBM force. Alternatively, the Soviets may

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[9] Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes the Soviets will either exploit their large missile throw weight by introduction of multiple RVs or continue to expand the numbers of launchers. He would add the following to the end of the paragraph:

"If a substantial number of MIRVs are introduced with these new systems or are retrofitted to old systems, the total number of ICBMs will probably not exceed 1,200; otherwise the total probably would be significantly higher."

[10] As an example of their demonstrated capability, if they decided to step up the pace of construction starts to the level of about a year ago, the Soviets could have an ICBM force of 3,500-4,000 launchers by the mid-1970's.

choose to develop and deploy mobile ICBM launchers, or to expand and improve their ballistic missile submarine force. The Soviets may also see the need to improve the damage limiting capabilities of their force and they might do so by increasing the deployment of very accurate ICBMs, possibly equipped with MIRVs.

50. A US decision to deploy an ABM defense would probably lead the Soviets to develop and deploy penetration aids and possibly MIRVs for their ICBM force, or they might increase the size of that force. It could lead them to increase their efforts to develop a DICBM or a FOBS. The Soviets might also step up the construction of cruise missile submarines, possibly equipped with longer range missiles, for the intercontinental attack mission, and they might give new consideration to the further development of manned bombers for this role.

Forces for Strategic Attack Against Eurasia

51. We believe that the Soviets will continue to maintain massive strategic forces against Eurasia. These are now deployed primarily against Europe, an emphasis that will probably continue, but with the further development of Chinese strategic capabilities the Soviets may deploy additional strategic forces against China. We anticipate little change in the strength of the Soviet MRBM/IRBM force, but there will probably be a significant improvement in flexibility and survivability; by the mid-1970's the force will probably consist of new missile systems deployed in hard and mobile launchers. The number of medium bombers will probably decline, but this reduction will be offset to some degree by equipping some of the medium bombers in Long Range Aviation with ASMs, and possibly by the introduction of improved medium bombers.

Strategic Defense Forces

52. The Soviets give a higher priority to strategic defense than does the US, due in part to their longstanding preoccupation with defense of the homeland, but more to the great size and diversity of US strategic attack forces. For more than 10 years, they have had underway a large-scale and costly program for development of ABM defenses, and for the last five years they have been deploying such defenses around Moscow. We have no evidence that deployment of the Moscow system has begun at any other location in the USSR. We continue to believe that the Soviets will deploy ABM defenses in other areas, but their decision to do so may await the availability of an improved system. In either case, given the leadtimes involved, operational ABM defenses will probably not appear outside the Moscow area before the early 1970's. We would expect to detect

construction of such additional defenses two to three years before they became operational.[11]

53. The Soviets have steadily improved their strategic defenses against aerodynamic vehicles over the last decade by upgrading their air surveillance system and by developing and deploying both manned interceptors and SAM systems. Current systems have a formidable capability against aircraft attacking at medium and high altitudes, but are less effective against standoff weapons and have an extremely limited capability against low-altitude penetrations.[12] The extensive deployment evidently planned for the Tallinn system, which we believe to be a long-range SAM, will considerably improve capabilities against high-flying supersonic aerodynamic vehicles.[13] We cannot at present define the minimum altitude capabilities of this system; we do not believe, however, that it is the Soviet answer to the low-altitude threat. We believe that the Soviets will continue to work on the problem of low-altitude defense. We know of no new low-altitude SAM system under development, but they are now deploying an interceptor with improved low-altitude capabilities. The Soviets are also developing new all-weather fighters with improved intercept capabilities and considerably greater range than present models; one of these may now be operational.

General Purpose Forces

54. For the near term, we think the Soviets have probably determined to maintain their general purpose forces at about the present composition, though personnel strength may edge up slightly. Over the longer term, we foresee

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[11] Lt. Gen. Joseph F. Carroll, the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., Acting Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, and Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, note that this paragraph considers the Moscow ABM system is the only ABM system currently being deployed and does not ascribe an ABM capability for the Tallinn system. They believe that the information available at present is still insufficient to estimate with confidence the full capabilities and mission of the Tallinn system. They agree that the available evidence does support a conclusion that the Tallinn sites have a defensive mission against the aerodynamic threat except against low-altitude threats. However, they also believe that the system, where augmented by the Hen House type radar, has a capability against ballistic missiles over a substantial portion of the deployment area; and that the system has considerable growth potential. They therefore would evaluate its continuing development and deployment with this capability in mind.

[12] Rear Adm. E. B. Fluckey, the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy, believes that this paragraph conveys the impression that low-altitude penetration of Soviet air space could be accomplished with relative impunity. He believes that this is not the case, that the total weight of Soviet air defense—missiles, manned interceptors, antiaircraft artillery, and associated fire control systems—provides a better capability against low-altitude penetration than is indicated in the text, particularly in good weather and in some sea approaches.

[13] Lt. Gen. Joseph F. Carroll, the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., Acting Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, and Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, have a different view concerning the Tallinn system. See their footnote to paragraph 52.

some change in force levels, organization, and deployment. In the ground forces we expect an eventual transition to smaller numbers of larger divisions with better support, more capable in conventional combat as well as in tactical nuclear situations. In any event, we think improvement will probably be gradual, without drastic changes in funding or manpower strength.

55. There will probably be no significant reduction in the force level of Tactical Aviation during the next few years. Over the longer term, the size of Tactical Aviation will depend on several considerations: how seriously the Soviets view the contingency of nonnuclear war and the consequent large requirement for tactical aircraft, the advent of newer and more capable aircraft, and the probable introduction of improved SAMs to relieve Tactical Aviation of some responsibility for air defense of ground forces. On balance, we think it probable that the number of operational aircraft will decline in the 1970's, but that the overall capability of Tactical Aviation will increase.[14] The Soviets may hedge against contingencies by maintaining a pool of older aircraft not in operational units, a practice they have adopted in the past few years.

56. The tempo of Soviet naval operations is accelerating. Soviet submarines and surface ships are operating far from home bases in increasing numbers and with increasing regularity. Soviet concern about the Polaris threat is demonstrated by almost constant intelligence trawler patrols off US Polaris bases. We expect operational and material improvements in Soviet ASW forces, but their capability in the open ocean will probably remain severely limited for the next several years. In our view, the long-term trend in Soviet naval general purpose forces will emphasize missile armament, nuclear submarines, surface ships capable of sustained long-range operations, long-range aerial reconnaissance, and improved ASW capabilities.

57. As we have noted, the USSR is limited in its capability to apply conventional power in areas beyond its periphery. Soviet capabilities for airborne and amphibious assault remain tied to support of Eurasian operations. Naval infantry still appears designed to fight primarily on the coastal flanks of larger land formations. The expanded merchant fleet and the new large transport aircraft provide improved lift capabilities, but the Soviets lack the sea and air combat capabilities necessary for distant operations against opposition. There is no perceptible Soviet program to achieve such capabilities.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

58. Soviet foreign policy will continue to be based primarily upon political and economic factors, but the military capabilities that the Soviets are developing and the military relationships that are evolving will affect their attitudes and

[14] Major Gen. Jack E. Thomas, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, would delete this sentence and substitute the following:

"On balance we think it probable that the number of operational aircraft will be maintained and may even increase somewhat in the 1970's, and that the overall capability of Tactical Aviation will increase."

approaches to policy. Considering the development of all their military forces, they are probably coming to regard their military situation as more favorable than it has been for many years. They will probably seek some political or propaganda advantage from this improvement, exploiting those aspects of their military posture in which they have achieved rough parity, such as ICBMs, or superiority, such as MRBMs and IRBMs. The Soviets have no present prospect of seriously challenging US superiority in capabilities for distant limited military action. But they may consider that the broader range of military capabilities that they are developing, including the improvement in their strategic relationship with the US, will enable them to take a harder line in various crises than they have in the past.

59. Over the longer term, the effect of military developments on Soviet general policy will depend upon a series of US and Soviet moves and countermoves which have not yet been determined. If there is no arms control agreement and if the arms race continues, the strategic relationship between the USSR and the US will become much more complex. Large-scale deployment of MIRVs and ABMs would introduce new variables into the equation. The continued strengthening of strategic forces would tend to raise tension, particularly insofar as they increased the importance of surprise and the related need for quick response. But increasing complexity would also produce new uncertainties on both sides which would probably have a generally deterrent effect.

60. The gradual improvements in the Soviet general purpose forces which we have estimated above will make them somewhat better suited than at present to conduct sustained conventional and tactical nuclear operations. This is not to imply that the Soviet leaders have decided to prepare for a deliberate limited assault on Europe under the umbrella of nuclear stalemate. Their estimate of Western capabilities and determination will almost certainly continue to deter them from such a course.

61. We believe the Soviets will continue to recognize that any conventional conflict with the West, particularly against NATO in Europe, would carry the grave risk of escalation to general nuclear war. Should the Soviets become involved in such a conflict, we think they would seek to limit its scope and duration, and would vigorously attempt through political means to resolve the issue. For the same general reasons, we consider it highly unlikely that the USSR would initiate the use of tactical nuclear weapons in a limited conflict with Western forces. If the Western Powers were to do so, the Soviets would probably not escalate to general war, but rather would retaliate in kind while seeking to end the conflict quickly by political means. Nonetheless, in such a rapidly moving situation, the chance of miscalculation by either side would be great.

62. The Soviets will continue to encourage revolution and subversion as a means of exercising their influence abroad. Soviet support for such local struggles need not and often does not go beyond political support. The USSR has provided military assistance in selected cases, but always in ways which limited

the Soviet commitment. The encouragement of these wars is not always in the Soviet national interest, and the USSR will continue to exhibit caution when a direct military confrontation with the US is possible.

Arms Control Possibilities

63. Moscow has seen political and perhaps military advantages in concluding certain limited agreements, such as the Test Ban Treaty and, more recently, the treaty governing the exploration and use of outer space. It has also apparently favored a nonproliferation treaty, though its efforts to extract political profit from the difficult negotiation process suggest that it does not view this matter as one of great urgency. The present Soviet attitude toward US proposals to discuss measures to prevent a further escalation of the arms race is less clear: the Soviets have not specifically rejected the notion of such talks, but they have also avoided any indication of serious immediate interest. It may be that, in addition to normal caution and distrust and a reluctance to engage in this kind of dialogue with the US while the Vietnam war continues, the Soviets are themselves of two minds concerning future limitations on armaments. Some may see an opportunity to reduce the long-term economic burden of a continued arms race. Others—probably including the military—might fear that an arms control agreement would have the effect of perpetuating the military superiority of the US, or perhaps of worsening the relative military position of the USSR. It is possible the Soviets will decide to negotiate, but for the present we rate the chances as less than even that they would agree to any extensive program of arms control or disarmament.