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Soviet Military Theory: Structure and Significance

A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

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Preface

This paper describes how members of the Soviet party and military establishments formulate what the Soviets consider the two components of military theory—military doctrine and military science. It includes an examination of the political context in which military theory is formulated and the conceptual structure the Soviets have developed to classify it. It also highlights the importance the Soviets assign to testing the resulting theoretical propositions and how this testing is accomplished.

Military theory is discussed in publications written by Soviet military officers. These writings discuss tactical and operational questions and provide guidance to the armed forces. The Soviet political leaders, however—who apparently have the final word on military doctrine—have avoided public identification with any of these discussions at the operational-tactical level. This leaves open the question of how these guidelines would be implemented in the event of a crisis.

On the other hand, recent evidence clearly indicates that Soviet military doctrine is reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to provide the justification for military policies and programs. It is important, therefore, that doctrine be viewed with an understanding of the political and military context in which it was formulated.

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Soviet Military Theory: Structure and Significance

Overview

Soviet writings on military theory—particularly those on military doctrine—serve three principal purposes:

- They provide the moral and political justification for maintaining a large, well-equipped combat-ready defense establishment.
- They provide operational guidance to the armed forces.
- They serve as an officially approved rationale for Soviet military policies and programs, including the defense portion of the Five-Year Economic Plan

In addition, unclassified military publications are probably designed to influence foreign audiences, particularly those assessing Soviet defense posture.

The political leadership appears to have the final word on military doctrine and the capability to exert political control over the entire process. The current leadership, nevertheless, has avoided publicly identifying itself with any but the most commonplace doctrinal propositions

The role of Communist Party bodies such as congresses in the creation of military doctrine appears to be highly exaggerated in the Soviet press. Although military issues may be discussed in party sessions, it appears they are held mainly to ratify and disseminate decisions previously made by Soviet leaders. The Defense Council probably is the forum in which doctrinal issues are decided, subject to ratification by the Politburo

The professional military, directed by the General Staff, develops the purely military aspects of Soviet doctrine and evaluates theories through centrally controlled exercises. Research results are broadly distributed before conclusions are adopted for general use in the armed forces

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Soviet Military Theory: Structure and Significance

Political Basis of Doctrine

The Soviets define military doctrine as "the Marxist-Leninist-based view accepted by the government on the nature of war, the use of armed forces in conflict, and the preparations of a country and its armed forces for war." Thus, Soviet military doctrine contains both political and military-technological aspects, with political considerations paramount. The Soviets find a classical expression of the relationship between these two aspects of doctrine in the Clausewitzian dictum that war is the continuation of politics. According to Lenin, the "Marxists have always considered this axiom as the theoretical foundation for the meaning of every war."

Recent evidence strongly suggests that military doctrine serves to rationalize the defense effort in terms of the threat, the probable nature of a future war, the role of the armed forces, and the preparation of the country for war. This evidence has strengthened our assumption that what appears publicly as "military doctrine" is based on sensitive documents which are periodically revised.

Selected portions of doctrine appear in Soviet military and political literature. These writings are not intended to provide information on subjects such as defense appropriations, the rationale for certain weapon systems, or the deployment of military forces. Rather, the party intends to demonstrate to the armed forces and citizenry the legitimacy of maintaining a large, well-equipped defense establishment. The international setting in which the doctrine is expected to be operative is defined in terms of Marxist-Leninist principles, with the ultimate objective the triumph of the socialist over the capitalist system.

The Soviet political leaders also recognize that Westerners can be influenced by publications on military doctrine. [] for example, were recently informed by Soviet senior political-military analysts that a new and authoritative book on Soviet military strategy, which included Soviet views

on military superiority and nuclear first-strike capability, would appear soon and contribute to a "rational discussion of SALT II in the United States." Through this and similar literature the Soviets have tried to convince foreign audiences, particularly those concerned with defense analyses, of the political support behind and the intellectual soundness of Soviet defense policies.

Military-Technological Basis of Doctrine

Structure

Military science is defined by the Soviets as a systematic study of the laws and nature of armed struggle, as well as the military preparations by the country and the armed forces for war. The Soviets divide military science into different categories. The most important is military art, which is concerned with how a war is fought.

Military art is divided into:

- Strategy, which entails planning the conduct of war, training the armed forces, and providing support for combat operations.
- Operational art, which is concerned with the conduct of operations by large groups of forces.
- Tactics, which involves the preparation for and conduct of a battle.

The Soviets rank components of military art in terms of their importance to doctrine. Strategy is considered most significant, and operational art ranks above tactics.

Operational art, which is the connecting link between strategy and tactics, became an accepted part of Soviet military thought in the mid-1920s after experience during World War I demonstrated that dividing military art into strategy and tactics alone was inadequate. Soviet theorists established a new subdivision because they anticipated that in a future war involving the USSR, the geographic length of the front would be longer and the number of Soviet troops engaged would be larger than for any other country. Tactics could be applied to the battlefield activities of corps-size and smaller units. The term "operational art" was chosen for the army and front echelons even though it was recognized that the term would be confusing because of the frequent use of the word "operational" in the military lexicon

Debate Over Content of Military Science

Although all Soviet theorists agree that military art is the most important component of military science, they often disagree over whether such categories as history, geography, administration, and technology should be included in military art. This dialogue is evident in recent editions of *Military Thought*.¹ For example, in an August 1976 article, Lt. Gen. M. A. Gareyev, chief of the Military Science Directorate of the General Staff, divided military science into general theory, military art, organizational development, training and indoctrination, and military economics. Gareyev's classification system was discussed in several articles which appeared in the February 1977 edition of the same publication. Some authors disagreed with his categorization as well as his decision to exclude military history as a category. One writer argued that the history of military art provided the nucleus of military science

The significance of these discussions is that they may indicate deeper bureaucratic disputes within the Soviet defense establishment. In his decision not to include military history as a separate component of military science, Gareyev may have been warning the military that they were giving too much attention to past experiences—specifically World War II—in the formulation of doctrine.

¹ *Military Thought* is the principal theoretical publication of the Soviet Ministry of Defense. Its dissemination is restricted to Soviet military officers

Gareyev's inclusion of military economics as a component appeared to be more controversial than his exclusion of military history. He included it because of the "increased significance of military economics in the area of support of armed struggle." He wrote that military economics is the study of demands made on the economy for preparing and conducting war as well as the effective allocation of resources among the armed forces.

The theory of military economics and how it relates to military science has been discussed in several *Military Thought* articles. One writer argued that since civilian specialists "do not consider it their duty to investigate general military-economic problems," the training of military economists should be improved and their numbers at military academies increased. Others wrote, however, that military economics should not be directly related to military science. The debate may indicate that: (1) there is discussion within the bureaucracy concerning the allocation of resources to defense; (2) certain officers may be hoping to expand the military role in the economic planning process; and (3) there are probably some who have attempted to defend or upgrade the status of professional economists in the military. Since we have not seen a definitive article in a military journal on the status of military economics as a component of military science, we assume the debate has not been closed

Formulation of Military Theory

Political-Military Relations

The Soviets claim that the level to which a nation develops military theory is a major factor in determining its combat effectiveness. They have devoted considerable resources and attention to developing a highly structured classification of military thought—an effort that differs from the more ad hoc US method.² This elaborate structure offers insights into the process that is used to develop Soviet military doctrine and science.

² Such terms as national security, military doctrine, and military strategy have no precise, official definitions in the United States and are often used interchangeably. Moreover, the discussion of strategic issues is not dominated by the military. Other US governmental agencies, the academic community, research institutes, and domestic pressure groups are actively involved in the debate of defense issues

There appears to be an understanding between the political leaders and the military about how these two groups should interact when shaping the content of military theory. The party leaders have the final word on doctrine and can exert political control over the entire process. Although the military claims primacy in the formulation of military science, military research is conducted under the watchful eyes of officers of the Main Political Directorate (MPD) of the Soviet Army and Navy.³ Thus, according to a recent Soviet publication, "military doctrine is developed by the political leadership of the country with the participation of the highest military organs."

Military Doctrine

Party Authority: Myth and Reality. Soviet military writers invariably indicate that military doctrine is formulated on the basis of Communist Party directives. For example, the Soviet *Officer's Handbook* states that:

All questions of the defense of the socialist fatherland, of military development, of military theory and practice, today as in the past, are decided in precise conformity with the ideology and policy of the party, on the basis of the directives and instructions formulated in the resolutions of congresses, of plenums of the Central Committee, and of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU

Although Soviet writers repeat the official claim that the Central Committee and the party congresses have a major responsibility in the policymaking process, this exaggerates the role of the political party forums. Party congresses are too large and unmanageable to effectively debate and decide defense matters. Whereas military issues may be discussed at these sessions, it appears that they are held primarily to ratify and disseminate decisions previously made by the Soviet leaders

³ The MPD is responsible for the ideological purity of the entire Soviet military establishment. In addition to censors who screen written material for security violations, every major military publication staff has a political-military officer whose role is to control ideological content rather than to challenge writers on technical grounds.

As the ultimate decisionmaking body in the Soviet Union, the Politburo makes the final decisions on Soviet military doctrine. Centralization and control are key characteristics of the Soviet decisionmaking process, and the formulation of doctrine is no exception.

The Defense Council appears to be the single most important body in the USSR dealing exclusively with military affairs.⁴ Chaired by the General Secretary, it is composed of top military and political leaders. Major decisions concerning the formulation of Soviet military doctrine probably are discussed and approved in the Defense Council, with the Politburo usually accepting proposals made by the Council. Among its most important functions are presumed to be the preparation, approval, and supervision of five-year defense plans.

Role of Political Leaders. We do not know how extensively Soviet political leaders become involved in the actual formation of military doctrine. Although the party leaders provide guidelines through decrees and instructions issued in the name of the Central Committee, the directives cited in Soviet military literature available to us seem vague. For example, military officers are told to "increase the combat readiness" of the armed forces and "to raise the level of military science work." For certain military projects it considers important, however, the Politburo is likely to give specific, classified directives. In any case, the current leaders, principally General Secretary Brezhnev, have avoided being publicly identified with the details of military doctrine.

In the past, party leaders were more openly associated with particular developments in Soviet military doctrine. When Stalin was alive, Soviet doctrine was based on his "permanently operating factors"—stability of the rear,⁵ morale of the army, quantity and quality of divisions, army weaponry, and organizational and leadership qualities of the command. Soviet military writers were restricted in their consideration of such

⁴ Article 121 of the 1977 Soviet Constitution states that the Defense Council is appointed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Brezhnev is named as its chairman; he is the only publicly identified member of the Defense Council.

⁵ "Stability of the rear" had both political and military significance, encompassing both the loyalty of the population and the ability of the rear area to provide the front with logistic support.

key doctrinal issues as the impact of nuclear weapons in war. In every article they were compelled to frame the discussion in Stalinist terms. This tight grip over the process of formulating doctrine was criticized by the military after Stalin's death and was described as having a negative impact on military thinking.

When Khrushchev was First Secretary, he apparently attempted to identify himself with the planning of Soviet military strategy and force structure. During his famous speech to the Supreme Soviet in January 1960, he declared that nuclear weapons would be decisive in a future war and that conventional forces were becoming obsolete. Khrushchev claimed he discussed his proposal with the General Staff, but his decision to downgrade the role of conventional forces met with direct resistance from conservative elements of the Soviet military establishment. Although the military deferred to Khrushchev's authority as party leader, after his departure in 1964 it was openly critical of his involvement in the formulation of doctrine and strategy.

The Soviet political leadership has changed its style under Brezhnev. Although Brezhnev has commented on defense-related topics—expressing Soviet support for arms control and detente, warning any “aggressors” of the consequences of a nuclear attack, and questioning the political utility of nuclear war—he and other top political leaders have stopped short of direct comment on Soviet military doctrine.

The decision by Brezhnev and other political leaders not to be publicly identified with substantive military issues has advantages for the Soviets. Their refusal to be openly committed to any one particular course of action allows them greater flexibility during international crises and increases the uncertainty in the West concerning how the Soviet leaders would respond in a crisis.

The Soviet political leaders also may have determined that warlike statements have an undesirable impact on the West. They know that Khrushchev's “missile-rattling” created apprehension among the NATO allies and helped to stimulate US missile production in the early 1960s. The top leaders may have decided Western analysts are less alarmed by doctrinal pronouncements made by the military, since the analysts

would assume that Soviet military leaders would be more bellicose in their statements than civilian rulers.

Military Science

Key Institutions. Although we know that military science provides the basis of Soviet doctrine and is the responsibility of the military, it is not clear how, and by whom, the military findings become accepted as inputs to Soviet doctrine. The Soviet military literature notes only that the core of doctrine is derived from military science judgments concerning the probable nature and conduct of armed conflict.⁶

The key organizations engaged in formulating military science are the General Staff, the military academies, and the editorial staffs of the military journals. These organizations work directly with field commands (military districts, groups of forces, and fleets). They are responsible for analysis of military science problems as well as for publishing their findings

The General Staff apparently orchestrates the process, with its Military Science Directorate playing the key role in coordinating the inputs of the various contributors. The Directorate performs the managerial function of developing and assigning military science research topics, defining the research and analysis performed by subordinate organizations, and monitoring the dissemination of the final product

The Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff, the main staffs of the services, and the military academies propose research topics selected from proposals, monographs, and dissertations to the Military Science Directorate. The officers of the Military Science Directorate also study and react to topics imposed by the Minister of Defense and, possibly, the Defense Council. The directorate then assigns research topics to the appropriate military districts, fleets, academies, and institutes.⁷

⁶ Articles and books on Soviet military science are attributed primarily to military officers, a number of whom have earned the Soviet equivalent of a Ph.D. The findings of Soviet military science are probably formulated by these full-time specialists, although authoritative articles on military science are often signed by senior military officials.

⁷ See appendix B for a brief discussion about the Institute of the USA and Canada and the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations

Most frequently mentioned in military literature as being involved in these studies are the Academy of the General Staff and the Frunze Academy. The faculties of these schools are expected to study the assigned theoretical problems and to coordinate their efforts with the staffs of military districts and fleets. Soviet authors indicate that propositions are first tested with the use of computers, utilizing mathematical models and other techniques. Exercises are then designed to evaluate proposals in the field.

Value of Exercises. According to one military author, "to enrich theory with the accomplishments of practice . . . is the paramount methodological problem of Soviet military science." The Soviets stress that doctrine relies on integrating theory with practice, rather than "speculative discussions" of military issues. This emphasis dates back to Marx, who strongly believed that an idea must move from the realm of pure thought into practice.

The Soviet effort to combine theory with practice appears to focus on military exercises.* These are designed to evaluate the theoretical findings of personnel in military academies and major staffs, verify existing operational plans, and test the latest military equipment and weapons. As expressed by one officer, "Exercises serve as the major criterion for substantiating decisions pertaining to troop organizational development and new problems of military art."

Exercises are used to solve problems such as planning and implementing front offensive operations. War games conducted at one major military academy helped the officers to explore problems associated with a front offensive in a nuclear war and the degree of enemy destruction in particular operations.

Besides testing new theories, exercises are used to check principles in field manuals and other instructions to ensure that operational plans are not based on obsolete techniques [

Exercises also contribute to development of new weapon systems. Soviet writings indicate that military science research is always coordinated with the development of new combat equipment and weapons. A specific example was the use of exercises at one academy to improve the survivability of tanks in combat.

Special Research Teams. Soviet military literature emphasizes the importance of good organization in preparing, conducting, and synthesizing the results of exercises. In preparing the exercise, the planners draw up a schedule, indicate their goals, and project the results and possible areas of their application. While the exercise is being conducted, the officers are directed to collect data on their activities. The final stage entails analysis of major findings.

To fulfill these requirements, special research teams are formed to serve throughout the exercise. These teams are selected from personnel of military academies, particularly the General Staff Academy and the Frunze Academy. They probably are responsible for evaluating the specific problems and for synthesizing the results. Apparently the accumulated data from many exercises over several years are carefully recorded and analyzed in reports

Scientific Conferences. Reports on exercises are presented at military science conferences. Military academies sponsor these conferences in coordination with the headquarters of various military echelons from the army level up to the ministry level. Their conferences bring together key personnel from the operational and administrative sides of the defense establishment. They appear structured along the theme of a keynote address, normally delivered by a high-ranking military officer such as the Chief of the General Staff. This address may be the primary means for reviewing and analyzing recent exercises

According to one author, "This keynote address or report should be based on the results of the latest research on theories and practical operational combat training. It should not be weighed down with well-known statements from guideline documents, works on military theory, and materials from the military periodical press."

* Soviet military exercises serve two basic functions: unit training and testing military science principles. The exercises discussed in this paper are those designed to test theoretical findings

Military science conferences are important vehicles for disseminating the results of the military exercises throughout the armed forces. The presentations are given not only for the benefit of the representatives at the conference but are also published as articles and books by military newspapers, journals, and publishing houses for circulation throughout the armed forces. The proceedings of the conferences are then used as the basis for field manuals, military regulations, teaching manuals, and other official documents.

Once the results of theoretical research, exercises, and scientific conferences have been disseminated, they are to be adopted for use by the armed forces. In the words of one military officer, "Without the prompt communication of scientific research results to the 'consumer,' and without their practical adoption, no investigation, however high its theoretical level, can be considered complete; it loses its practical value and risks being an addition to that fund of literature in the archives which is in no demand whatsoever." Implementing the findings of research projects becomes the final stage in integrating theory and practice in the formulation of Soviet military doctrine and science.

Conclusions

Many questions remain about the development of Soviet military doctrine and science. We have only a general idea of the specific functions of the key institutions involved in the process, especially the interaction between the Politburo, Defense Council, and General Staff. We know that there are disputes in the USSR over doctrinal issues, but we lack clear evidence as to how they are resolved.

We believe that the party leaders, who consider themselves the guardians of the ideological purity of the socialist movement, define military doctrine in terms of the Marxist-Leninist class struggle and that they have the final word on the development of Soviet military doctrine.

Military science, the technological basis of doctrine, is developed in a systematic and controlled manner by full-time military specialists, schooled in the institutions offering advanced degrees in military science. They are required to master and contribute to the discussion of the importance of military art, history, economics, and other categories of military science. A limited amount of debate over the significance of these categories is allowed, indicating occasional tension within the defense bureaucracy.

The major goal of this systematic approach is to provide the armed forces with a sound guide to action in the event of war. The guiding Marxist-Leninist principle is the integration of theory and practice. This is accomplished through the use of exercises which test hypothesis, operational plans, and military equipment and weapons.

Appendix A

Marxism-Leninism and Soviet Military Theory

Influence

The Soviets attribute their superpower status not only to the quantity and quality of their weapons but also to a superior military doctrine based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the foundation of Communist ideology. As defined by Lenin, the principal objective of Marxist theory was to instill belief in the eventual victory of socialism over capitalism. This goal would be realized only through the constant review and modification of hypotheses in light of practical experience.

The influence of Marxism-Leninism is pervasive throughout Soviet military writings. All authors must pay their respects to the works of Lenin and the dictims of the party. Adherence to the established ideological goal of the triumph of socialism is a constant theme in Soviet military literature. At the same time, military research is conducted pragmatically, integrating theory and practice.

Dialectical and Historical Materialism

Marxist-Leninist ideology, which shapes the world outlook of Soviet military and political leaders, is based on dialectical and historical materialism. Dialectical materialism holds that nature is in a state of continuous movement and change. Lenin believed that the core of the dialectic was the "unity of opposites," meaning that the basis of all development is the division of a unit into opposing elements and the clash between them. Historical materialism is the dialectic applied to social conditions, describing the conflict between capitalism and socialism. Concerning international politics, historical materialism presumes controversy, violence, and the inevitable destruction of capitalism. Although accommodation with "imperialist states" could be justified on a temporary basis, Lenin argued that ultimately the capitalist system could be overthrown only by violent means.

The nuclear age, however, has made the use of force as advocated by Lenin less attractive as a policy option; controversy in the USSR regarding the dangers of nuclear war was especially evident during the

Khrushchev regime. At the 20th Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev announced that war was no longer "fatalistically inevitable" and that "peaceful coexistence" would prevail as Soviet policy. This was a major revision of the traditional Communist dogma that a war to the finish between the socialist and capitalist systems would eventually take place. Khrushchev also implied that the tenet of inevitable Communist victory was no longer relevant in an age when war might mean mutual annihilation.⁹

Khrushchev's successors continue to claim that the Soviet Union promotes peaceful coexistence and detente with the West. They no longer argue, however, that all wars, including wars of national liberation, could lead to the destruction of civilization. In fact, Soviet leaders and writers have openly stated that the USSR has an obligation to support wars of national liberation.¹⁰

In the view of Soviet political and military writers, capitalist countries may be temporarily constrained by internal problems, but the nature of Western imperialism has not changed. Soviet leaders, including Defense Minister Ustinov, have warned that there are "militaristic circles" in the United States who hope to obtain military superiority over the USSR. As stated in 1972 in the Soviet book, *Military Force and International Relations*, "During the postwar period the United States constantly pursued the goal of achieving a military superiority over the Soviet Union that would enable it to achieve success in opposing it and in restraining the international revolutionary and national liberation process." This world view has caused the Soviet Union to engage in a steady buildup of

⁹ These revisions of Marxist-Leninist theory on war were bitterly attacked by the Chinese Communists in the early 1960s. The Chinese rejected the thesis that the possibility of escalation in a nuclear age made limited war too dangerous. They accused the Soviets of dwelling too much on the horrors of nuclear wars and neglecting to support their allies in wars of national liberation. The Chinese insisted that even if a local conflict escalated into a world war, the socialist states would triumph.

¹⁰ Recent Soviet activities in Africa show that the current regime is prepared to move quickly to exploit local conflicts. The Chinese, who used to attack the Soviets for refusing to support limited wars, now denounce them for doing so with apparent impunity.

conventional and strategic forces—a growth guided by the continued development of Soviet doctrine.

Methodology

In Soviet ideology, dialectical materialism provides a methodology for observing and explaining natural and social processes. It can be a scientific effort to use existing knowledge in understanding processes and in predicting events.¹¹ Lenin viewed this approach as applicable to every field. Its importance to military science was discussed recently in an article attributed to Marshal N. Ogarkov, chief of the Soviet General Staff. According to the article, the dialectical method is “. . . a reliable compass in the study of the many phenomena associated with the perfection of the defense of the state.”¹²

Adherence of the Soviets to dialectical materialism is relevant to our understanding of how they formulate military doctrine. The dialectical method holds that no phenomenon in nature can be understood if taken by itself. Thus, each war must be considered in light of the political and economic conditions surrounding it as well as the military factors.

Dialectical materialism calls for a continuous review of military affairs. Lenin’s “unity of opposites” theory presumes that change in weapons technology will lead to major changes in doctrine. The most prominent example of an important change in doctrine after an intensive debate was acceptance by Soviet political and military leaders of the revolutionary impact of nuclear weapons.

¹¹ A basic Soviet assumption is that regularities underlie all phenomena

¹² In the West, the tenets of Marxist philosophy and the notion that the dialectic is an indispensable guide to understanding social processes have been criticized. It has been argued that the laws of the dialectic are such that whatever the actual course of events, it is always possible to cite the results as illustrative of a dialectical change

The dialectical method presumes there will be clashes between writers advocating different positions and strategies. This concept is discussed by Marshal Ogarkov:

The law of conflict and unity of opposites reflects the basic idea of the dialectical understanding of the development of military affairs and, consequently, military science. The conflict of opposites is the source, the motive force of the development of all the diverse phenomena of armed conflict and war as a whole. . . .

Armed conflict is by its essence contradictory. The contradictions of armed conflict are first of all the contradictions between opposites: between strategic goals, offense and defense, the concentration of forces and means in limited spaces, the establishment of superiority on the axes of strikes and the possibility of their defeat by fire, the demands of the armed forces for expensive weapons, and the economic capabilities of the state. . . .

Appendix B

Institutes Under USSR Academy of Sciences

The Institute of the USA and Canada (IUSAC) and the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), both under the direction of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, are responsible for analyzing American domestic and foreign policies. One of their functions appears to be interpreting military developments in the United States and other Western countries for Soviet political leaders.

Within the IUSAC, there is a department which studies the military dimension of American foreign policy. This unit, staffed by retired General Staff officers, evaluates the political significance of American weapons and strategic policy. Their publications, which primarily depend on information from the Western press, reflect few details of Soviet defense issues, indicating that the institutes do not have access to classified information or are enjoined from using it.¹³

G. A. Arbatov, director of the IUSAC, is an adviser to Brezhnev. His responsibilities probably include reporting on the political climate within the United States concerning arms control and detente. Another likely responsibility is to project the response of US policymakers to Soviet military activities

Arbatov's role is valuable to the extent he is able to keep Politburo members informed on political-military events in the United States. Many Westerners believe that Arbatov and others in the Academy's research institutes have offered the Soviet political leaders a more sophisticated world outlook. Arbatov's view of detente may also influence the outlook of Brezhnev and other important officials, and this could impact somewhat on the political content of Soviet doctrine

¹³ According to one report, the analysts still did not have access to classified intelligence information as of mid-1975

There is no evidence to suggest that agencies such as IUSAC or IMEMO compete with military organizations in the formulation of Soviet military science. Moreover, the functions of these institutes are shared with other institutions, such as the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff (GRU) and the American Department of the Committee for State Security (KGB), which probably have more influence with Politburo members.

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