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The Soviet Union: Political and Military Trends

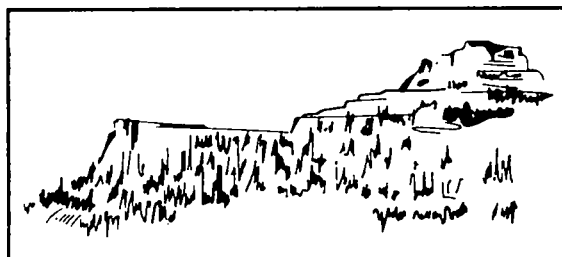
Joseph F. Pilat
Patrick J. Garrity



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Center for National Security Studies
Los Alamos National Laboratory

MASTER

JOSEPH F. PILAT and **PATRICK J. GARRITY** are on the staff of the Center for National Security Studies.

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

On July 20, 1989, the Center for National Security Studies (CNSS) of the Los Alamos National Laboratory held a workshop on "The Soviet Union: Political and Military Trends" (see Agenda on p. 15). The morning session was devoted to a discussion of the magnitude of the problems confronting the Soviet Union, the political and economic reforms designed to address those problems, and the repercussions of those reforms on Soviet foreign policy and defense spending. In the afternoon session, the Soviet view of the changing character of warfare, the technologies and force structures that the Soviets might develop and deploy to anticipate the battlefield of the future, and the role that conventional arms control might play in Soviet political and military strategy were examined.

There was a remarkable degree of consensus among Soviet workshop participants about the deep-rooted political and economic problems that face the Soviet Union. There was, however, significant disagreement over the long-term implications of this systemic crisis for Soviet strategic goals and behavior—and especially for Soviet military doctrine and technology.

Political-Economic Developments. The Soviet Union is in crisis, and the Soviets recognize reform as being necessary to the preservation and advancement of their system. A reform process with political and economic dimensions (*perestroika*) has begun. If it is to succeed, this process will take decades. The workshop participants agreed, however, that it is difficult to reform an authoritarian system, and attempts at reform have, in fact, exacerbated these political and economic crises. The Soviet leadership now faces ethnic assertiveness; labor restiveness; and a growing public sense of the inadequacy of the system, which is plagued by mismanagement, inefficiency, consumer shortages, and rising expectations.

The ability of the regime to deliver upon promised improvements has been hindered by bureaucratic and public recalcitrance. Yet, the problems with which the reformers are grappling will have to be addressed, even by a more conservative regime. In this situation, the Soviet Union is facing a decade or more of continuing crisis, whether the reform process succeeds or is rolled back. The longer the reform process continues, however, the more difficult it will be to roll it back. Gorbachev himself now appears durable because there do not appear to be any alternatives to his leadership; however, he is under tremendous pressure to achieve near-term results.

Perestroika is necessary for Russia to enter the new millennium and, as the Soviet leadership recognizes, foreign policy must be subordinated to *perestroika*. The deep

domestic crisis in the Soviet Union, along with an increasingly hostile international environment to traditional Soviet objectives, has resulted in a concessionary foreign policy that is being urgently pursued. The Soviet Union's interest in international organizations, its disengagement from regional conflicts, and its willingness to accept asymmetric reductions in arms control negotiations are the most dramatic demonstrations of the Soviets' "new thinking." For the next decade, at least, the subordination of Soviet foreign and military policies to *perestroika* will probably be necessary, even for a more conservative regime.

Military-Technical Developments. There was a consensus among the participants that the Soviet Union is focusing on slowing the Western application of scientific-technological innovation for military purposes. This Soviet agenda has been most apparent with respect to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), but the USSR is also concerned with the West's progress in advanced conventional weapons. The participants disagreed significantly, however, over whether the Soviet Union intends to opt out of the military-technical competition altogether, or whether the USSR will seek to control the pace of that competition to Soviet advantage.

One group of workshop participants concluded that Soviet arms control proposals and adjustments in force structure seem to match Soviet projections of the requirements of the battlefield of the future. Better technology in smaller numbers could be a net plus for the Soviet military if the West's own technological innovation is constrained by arms control and other political measures. In the end, the Soviet military is looking to position itself as strongly as possible for what it regards as the next round in the inevitable military-technical competition with the West.

Another group of participants disagreed strongly with this set of conclusions, on the grounds that it ignores Soviet political and economic realities. Gorbachev and the political leadership now openly question the wisdom of the Soviet military buildup of the past several decades. In their view, the traditional Soviet emphasis on military means of security did not achieve the anticipated results, and has, in fact, proven counterproductive. As NATO's intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) deployment decision demonstrated, the Western alliance would compete in this arena—and, because their economies were much larger and their capacity for technological innovation much greater, the Western nations could compete on advantageous terms. The Soviet leadership accordingly now seeks to define and preserve security in political terms. The Soviet political leaders are not looking forward to a high-technology competition that they think they will win; rather, they are hoping to dampen the competition so that they will not be forced to compete at all.

The Soviet Union: Political and Military Trends

Joseph F. Pilat and Patrick J. Garrity

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOVIET POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Political Reform

The current Soviet leadership recognizes the failures of the repressive Stalinist system to adapt over time and, as a by-product of *perestroika*, changes in the system are occurring. The immediate results of political reform have often been negative, however. Ethnic assertiveness is rising, and all nationalities are affected. Not only are nationalities challenging the central government with demands for greater economic and political autonomy, but national and ethnic groups are confronting each other. Religious sentiment has frequently fed ethnic unrest, but it has not been the cause of ethnic conflicts. An ad hoc approach has been adopted by the regime; there is no "magic" set of policies that can alleviate the problem of deeply rooted and long-suppressed nationalities. Labor is also restive. Labor problems, of course, had occurred before, but they did not receive publicity. In the past, they could be dealt with by imprisoning the labor leaders. Gorbachev's response to recent miners' strikes has been to buy off the miners, but this approach will increase the demands of laborers in other sectors and the regime does not have the resources to use this approach across the board.

Moreover, in order to lay the groundwork for reform, the Soviet leadership has used *glasnost* to discredit the old system. Official history and ideology have been undermined and nothing has yet been offered to replace them. This means that the legitimacy of the current regime can only be justified by the promise of success in the future.

There was no feedback in the old system; that is, there was no way for leaders at the top to understand the impact of their policies at the bottom. Gorbachev's reforms are intended to create a channel for the populace to "enter" the system. A critical question is whether existing institutions and channels can handle the overflow of public input. There is no consensus among the populace on the direction of change, making the rising input particularly difficult to handle. Gorbachev recognizes the need to create a new apparatus if political reform is to succeed, beginning with establishing the accountability of the Soviet elite (*nomenklatura*) and the bureaucrats (*apparatchiki*). The reform process has created a "brave new world" for bureaucrats. The Communist party is itself being redefined in the process of renewal; the leading role of the party in Soviet society will have to be earned in the future. While these changes are only beginning, and are reversible, popular fear of the regime is declining, and it will be difficult to roll the changes back.

Political reform in the Soviet Union, which has proceeded from both the bottom and the top, is affecting Soviet society. Gorbachev seeks to strengthen the central governing authority and legislative power to the point where reform leaders could indeed implement reform from the top down. On the other hand, the introduction of democratization and *glasnost* is intended to increase citizen participation at the bottom. Is this reform process promising or, in fact, contradictory? In the long term, a more mature electorate may develop a sense of responsibility and obligation commensurate with democratic powers—a new political culture may be developed. But conservatives have challenged Gorbachev's rationale for *glasnost* and

democratization, citing the dangers of excessive criticism of the party and the past, as well as ethnic tensions and self-determination movements. On the other hand, the most radical reformers outside of the party question whether Gorbachev's equivocations—especially his capitulation to the bureaucracy and the party *nomenklatura* by further centralizing power—have stalled reform. The manner in which these conflicting benefits and risks of reform are dealt with will be a test of Gorbachev's leadership.

Gorbachev has understood that political reform is instrumental to economic reform, but the results have not always been encouraging. The opposition groups that emerged out of the recent national elections are not coherent. There is a small group of intellectuals and academics (largely from Moscow and Leningrad) with liberal-democratic leanings, but the principal political and social opposition force is populist, represented by Boris Yeltsin, and these populists are not necessarily liberal-democratic. Reform will necessarily create—at least in the short term, greater social inequality, unemployment, devaluation, and inflation. This may not be acceptable to the populists, who are united in opposition to the privileges of the *nomenklatura*, and who want higher pensions and consumer protection, but are opposed to inequality and have directed criticism against the cooperatives and "profiteers" arising from the reforms. These attitudes are a "mixed bag" for the reform process and have, for example, set price reform back at least six to seven years. Given the enshrined egalitarian impulse in historical Russian/Soviet society, which has affected the populace's acceptance of political and economic reform, a generational change will be required before the old values diminish.

Economic Reform and Its Implications for Defense Spending

The Soviets missed the second industrial revolution in the 1960s. Soviet participation in the second as well as the third industrial revolution—the technological information revolution—is now on the table. The Soviet Union is a giant in output but a midget in productivity and quality. The Soviet Union is not part of the world technology market, and it needs international linkages and

markets if it is to modernize its economy.

The Soviet economic reform program must be viewed from a long-term perspective. If the reforms are successful, it will take twenty to thirty years for the transformation of the entire system to a "socialist market" one, which appears to be Gorbachev's objective. There is no road map. During that time, three pillars of the Soviet command economy must be destroyed: centralized allocation of resources; administrative pricing; and the cycles of repetitive control and planning (five-year plans). (None of these pillars has yet been attacked in any significant way.) The objective of this economic renovation and reorganization is efficiency and quality. Soviet goods must be saleable in world markets. In the view of the participants, the Soviets must

- decentralize enterprise direction, removing central micromanagement and getting the party out of the day-to-day operations;
- combine central and local power, with reforms from above and below (although because the economic problems are so dismal, they must be pushed from above).

Panel members argued that needed reforms include:

- price reform—market forces should become the mechanism for determining prices;
- reform of the monetary system—there must be disciplined budgets and an end to soft budget constraints with the resultant monetary overhang, commercial and central banking systems, and separate fiscal and monetary policies;
- creation of competitive structures in the economy—an end to monopolies, and freedom of entry for new entrepreneurs;
- change in the enterprise structure—there must be purchasing autonomy and rewards for enterprise managers (cooperatives are a beginning, but they are new institutions; the existing system must also be converted).

To undertake these reforms will be difficult. For the first time in decades, these issues are on the table; their resolution depends less on Gorbachev's personal ability than on establishing the sort of process that can produce visible results for ordinary Soviet citizens.

Quantity versus Quality. Gorbachev, like past Soviet leaders, criticized workers for lagging productivity soon after he obtained power. His initial goal was to increase output from the country's existing factories and equipment, through a speed-up in the growth rate of output from existing plant and equipment. But Gorbachev found that increased production of poor quality products merely boosted gross output figures but did not provide the quality needed to meet the needs of a modernizing economy. Quantity figures were recognized as meaningless. Now Gorbachev has shifted policy, and quality output is emphasized as the first measure of performance. Modernization means moving towards world production standards, and more efficient use of energy and metals. However, the shift in goals has been negligible in practice, and the results of the 1988 plan performance failed to show qualitative improvement in production output.

Implementing the shift from quantity to quality has resulted in a dilemma. If modernization is to be successful, plant and equipment must be restructured. But this will inevitably create disruptions, dislocations, unemployment, and temporarily reduced performance. The Soviet leadership faces costly tradeoffs between continuing to push for quality over quantity production, as well as declining production because of bottlenecks with worsening economic conditions for the general population.

Giving Priority to the Agricultural-Service Sectors. In 1986, Soviet reform efforts focused on improving the performance of basic industry. Minimal attention was given to reforming either the agricultural or service sectors. However, the realization that restructuring industry would result first in shortages, and only later in increased quality and quantity of goods, caused the leadership to shift reform to sectors that could produce results quickly. Since mid-1987, there appears to have been an emphasis on increasing food, medical care, and housing—goods that would prove to average Soviet citizens that reform works and should be supported. Decollectivization of agricultural production and services through the legalization of cooperatives is being attempted as a vehicle of change. The Soviets have made statements to the effect that they are officially committed to in-

crease the allocation of resources for consumer services.

The decollectivization and privatization process, however, has been set back because of resistance to change by the regional party and central bureaucracy as well as the skepticism of peasants and workers. After decades of living with collectivized farms and other enforced means of economic equality, a significant portion of the populace regards as threatening any change that could result in unemployment and income differentiation. Thriving cooperatives have been closed, and successful farms have been burned. Soviet leaders must recreate a balance between excellence on the job and high productivity and the perquisites that go with them, on the one hand, and social responsibility and communist ideology on the other. Successfully breaking down the intellectual barriers to reform is crucial to the establishment of a self-reliant peasant class, yet this has been acknowledged as one of the most difficult reforms.

For the service sector, cooperatives are the answer, but the early Soviet efforts in this area "overshot" the mark. The cooperatives had no competition and made too much money. An effective agrarian policy would be tested by the increased value of agricultural products delivered to the market and table. A shift to family farms with the bulk of the good land under private personal management, with substantial improvement in infrastructure (including farms, storage, transport, and food processing), and Soviet and local party oversight to ensure adequate supplies and market access might lead to substantial increases in productivity. (This constitutes a tremendous and very difficult undertaking for Soviet society.) A shift of military builders to construct the infrastructure and provide transport and government and party oversight to assume adherence to policy would be helpful. Incomes policy would lead to substantial differentiation of income. Availability of hard goods would ensure real income incentives. Finally, the fifty-year leases for good land could be passed on to heirs or sold; the potential benefits accrued from family farming would be significantly enhanced.

Political Economics of Price Reform. In current circumstances—whereby consumer goods are heavily subsidized and the deficit stands at least at

11 percent of the gross national product (GNP)—a large, sudden increase in the prices of consumer goods would be socially divisive and politically costly. So far, the political leadership has prevailed over Soviet economists who argue that price reform should have been the first step in reform despite their political and social costs. Instead, the leadership has adopted a staged, transitional approach whereby the inflationary gap and budget deficits are dealt with first. Specifically, the leadership plans to increase supplies to absorb excess purchasing power, change relative prices through wholesale price reform, and defer consumer price reform. First, some reductions in subsidies to producer goods and changes in relative prices will be introduced. Then during the 1990s, sensitive consumer price reform would be undertaken. The target is a price system that reflects the full cost of production without subsidies or other distortions and that can respond flexibly to demand.

The leadership faces a dilemma in postponing price reform: the longer price reform is delayed, the higher the risk that comprehensive reform will get stuck in the transition phase indefinitely—as has indeed occurred in many reforming economies. Nevertheless, absorbing a monetary overhang and restricting prices to reflect relative scarcities and market values could have a serious negative impact on real income of citizens. Were price reform of consumer goods to follow absorption of the overhang, wholesale price changes, and removal of subsidies, the impact might be modest and equitable. The dilemma will be resolved by calculating trade-offs between the ultimate success of *perestroika* and the negative social (and potentially political) consequences of price reform.

Interdependence or Modified Autarky. Previous joint Soviet-Western economic ventures were intended to bring the world market to the Soviet Union, not, as is necessary, to bring the Soviet Union into the world market. Current Soviet reformers argue that without successful domestic reform foreign economic cooperation is not likely to be beneficial. Gorbachev has been reluctant to take on billions of dollars of Western loans to be used for imports, and has instead stressed the need for foreign capital that could complement reformed domestic sections. The Soviet leadership has earmarked joint ventures as a vehicle for establishing

mutually beneficial trade relations with its trading partners. The debate is presently focused on establishing special priorities for key foreign economic arrangements that ensure profitability to Western participants and crucial learning on the Soviet side.

Soviet leaders and Western businessmen may look to the American Trade Consortium as a potential standard for major joint ventures with Japanese, South Korean, West German, Italian, British, and French partners in their negotiations, including: a concessionary natural resource development, when one of the partners provides the incremental oil output that the Soviet Union can use to finance other joint ventures; other efforts keyed to developing production capability in food, consumer goods, and health areas to bolster pro-reform efforts; and control by Western partners of all elements affecting the effectiveness of technology transfer and quality of output. For any such arrangement to be successful, the ruble must be made convertible to foreign currencies. At the moment, the Soviets are discussing the possibility of establishing two currencies—an internal fixed ruble and an external convertible ruble.

Resource Allocation: Guns or Butter? The Soviet defense burden issue came to the public agenda in 1988 with critical discussion of defense spending and the conversion of military-industrial plants, the necessity of the current military draft, and a wide public debate on allocation issues. For the first time in Soviet planning history, the guns versus butter trade-offs appear to be moving in favor of butter. (According to some Western estimates, this shift actually began in the late 1970s, well before Gorbachev came into power.) So far, several significant proposals have been advanced: to commission new plant and equipment for modernizing industry and agriculture; to delay new resource allocation for upgrading models of tanks, aircraft, and artillery; and to reduce the draft of 18 year olds for military service and instead allow them to pursue advanced education or to become gainfully employed in the industrial or agricultural labor force. What actually occurs in these areas will be critical indicators of change in Soviet resource allocations.

The primacy of defense claims on resources has been challenged, and the burden of defense generally acknowledged, by the Soviet political leadership. The military has become a relative, not an

absolute claimant on resources. Investment priorities for civilian restructuring over military programs would, however, place *perestroika* in conflict with the more traditional Soviet view of the requirements of military security. This conflict may be eased if Soviet military doctrine and force planning shift to the notion of reasonable (not absolute) sufficiency, and if the Soviet armed forces emphasize defensive instead of offensive capabilities in a way that requires smaller forces and fewer officers. The Soviet Union may assign less importance to foreign military sales and aid, with concomitant reductions in military production and claims on hardware inventories. Arms control may also reduce the military burden. The Soviet reformers, therefore, must find the proper balance between proving the validity of reform to the average Soviet citizen without losing the support of the military bureaucracy to reactionary forces.

Substantial shifts of allocation of goods and services among the military would themselves fall short of the goals of current proposals and *perestroika*. Effective civilian use of resources transferred from the military sphere will depend upon the overall restructuring of the economy, the retraining of workers, and the provision for an effective incentive system. Paradoxically, a shift in the jurisdiction of research and production from military to civilian activities may not be desirable in the short run to ensure efficiency.

Domestic Reform and Foreign Policy

Of the forces driving Soviet foreign policy, domestic factors are surely the most important. The sources of Soviet foreign policy behavior include constraints created by the domestic crisis and the priority of *perestroika*, and an international environment that has been increasingly inhospitable to traditional Soviet foreign policy. In addition, the Soviet leadership has reconsidered the costs and benefits of pursuing the traditional path. These factors are mutually reinforcing and beneficial to the West.

Perestroika is necessary for Russia to enter the new millennium and, it is recognized, foreign policy must be subordinated to *perestroika*. The deep domestic crisis in the Soviet Union has re-

sulted in a concessionary foreign policy that is being urgently pursued.

The conditions for pursuing the old foreign policy agenda have changed. The military buildup undertaken in the Brezhnev period was disappointing on political and military grounds. The Soviet deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces did not produce the anticipated deference of Western Europe to Soviet power, as NATO's INF deployment dramatically evidenced. The West's resolve in the INF controversy and its military modernization plans threatened to raise the costs of the Soviet military buildup, particularly by shifting the competition to high technology areas where the Soviets were at a competitive disadvantage. Not only had Soviet policies failed in Europe, but the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly isolated around the world, as developments in Afghanistan and Cambodia demonstrated. The prospect of a Sino-American security relationship also threatened to isolate the Soviet Union. Soviet Third World client states were increasingly opposed by advanced, newly industrialized states. Finally, the Soviet Union and its clients were becoming increasingly irrelevant to the global technology and trade revolutions.

Gorbachev's response to the changing international security environment was a series of dramatic foreign policy departures. One of the earliest signs of change occurred in the fall of 1985, when the Soviet position in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) accepted deep cuts and asymmetrical reductions. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the concessions in the INF negotiations, the unilateral reductions of conventional forces, the opening Warsaw Pact position in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) talks (in which asymmetrical cuts were accepted), all illustrate Gorbachev's changing foreign policy. This "new thinking" involves the discrediting of old beliefs and strategies and recognizes a conceptual revolution in international relations marked by growing international independence. However, this approach also makes virtue of necessity. Tactically, it is a rationalization and a way of presenting in an appealing manner to the Western democracies what adverse circumstances require the Soviets to undertake in any event.

For the next decade, at least, the accommodation of foreign and military policies to *perestroika* will

probably be necessary, even for a more conservative regime. As long as the international environment continues to be hostile to aggressive Soviet behavior, any Soviet leadership should be deterred from a return to traditional foreign policy behavior. While we are witnessing growing hostility to Gorbachev from almost all sectors, currently there is no alternative to Gorbachev and no evidence of a level of dissatisfaction with Gorbachev's foreign policy that would suggest a turnabout in this policy. The military and some other segments of Soviet society may have some criticisms of Gorbachev's international initiatives, but they would not seem to have institutional support for opposing Gorbachev—at least on these grounds.

In Eastern Europe, the Soviets are likely to tolerate a broad range of diversity and to encourage reform. The Soviets are concerned about the Warsaw Pact, and the implications of changes in Eastern Europe on the Pact's continued viability. Although the Hungarians have talked of becoming another Austria, East Europeans are to maintain and tolerate the Warsaw Pact, at least in the near term. Unless there is a dramatic change in Soviet policy, there will be increased pressures for change in Poland, Hungary, and other Eastern European states. The model for the East Europeans may be Finlandization. Europe may be returning to normalcy, and Soviet policy is making the inevitable proceed more quickly. The Soviets will eventually have to redefine their interest in Eastern Europe, but they are not thinking about it now. The Soviets have offered to get rid of the Pact in the past, it should be noted, and the political, economic, and military environment in Europe is being transformed by the CFE negotiations, Europe 1992, and other developments.

In the near term, Soviet intervention, even invasion, continues to be possible, especially if Hungary or Poland go beyond the pale and party dominance in critical areas declines. But, the longer the process of change in Eastern Europe continues, the less is the likelihood of Soviet reconquest. The Soviets appear to be willing, at least at present, to tolerate change so long as even a hollow Pact remains. The Brezhnev doctrine is not yet dead, but if developments proceed farther, it will die. The cost of Soviet intervention is now higher, and the incentives, while never high, are now lower. The Soviets could still be provoked by

a revolution from below à la Hungary in 1956, and a revolution in which there is revenge on the Communists is a nightmare for the Soviets and would almost certainly be seen as requiring intervention. Gorbachev's calculated ambiguity about the Brezhnev doctrine, and his refusal to discuss conditions for intervention, can be beneficial to East European reformers. Ultimately, whether or not the Soviets intervene will depend upon the good sense of these reformers. The Hungarians seem to have a feel for undertaking an evolutionary course within the bounds of Soviet tolerance.

There is no way to know if Gorbachev's new thinking is sincere—there are no "magic" means of "testing" Gorbachev. However, this need not lead to the West being immobilized or torn apart. The Soviet leadership may originally have sought a short-term *peredishika*, or "breathing spell," and nothing more, but this is no longer a viable alternative. The policy debate in the West in 1985, when Gorbachev came to power, was divided between those who would "squeeze" (i.e., put pressure on) the Soviets and those who would deal with them. Now, the squeezers have dropped out of the debate, which is now between "fast dealers" and "slow dealers."

In the face of Gorbachev's initiatives, the positive role of the Atlantic Alliance is important. From the perspective of the West, we will be better off maintaining the alliance systems in Europe in the short and medium terms. Dissolving the blocs is unnecessary, and the Soviets probably prefer, at least for the time being, the stabilizing effects of the U.S. presence in Europe. (It is not clear, however, that long-term Soviet goals have changed, which include the reduction or elimination of a U.S. presence on the continent.) The issue is whether NATO can maintain its cohesion better than the Warsaw Pact. As the Soviet threat recedes, there will be an inevitable relaxation in the security policy of the West, involving reductions in defense budgets and delays or cancellations of modernization programs. Whether in the context of arms control negotiations or in unilateral actions, the West should insist that the scope of actual Soviet reductions is greater than its own, and should avoid irreversible steps, such as a denuclearization of Europe. If a strong NATO front is presented, the Soviets will likely take heed.

TRENDS IN SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE, TECHNOLOGY, AND FORCE STRUCTURE

The Soviet Vision of Future Warfare and Military Technology

The professional Soviet military has traditionally relied on an institutionalized process of forecasting future trends in military technology and of assessing the impact of those trends on the character of the future battlefield. Over the decade or so, Soviet military leaders have begun to recognize and plan for a dramatically new strategic environment that could start to emerge before the end of the century.

A Coming Revolution in Military Affairs. Soviet military scientists argue that the pace of introduction of new military technologies has accelerated over the last ten years and, as a result, military affairs are on the threshold of a revolutionary transformation. The military is concerned that, if the West is able to acquire in good time military systems that incorporate these technologies, many of the Soviet force advances in the past twenty years could be offset. Increasingly, the Soviet military believes that the nature of the long-term competition with the West will be one of quality and that quantitative superiority is no longer sufficient. This concern is compounded by the Soviet economy's current inability to remain competitive with the West in the race to mass produce advanced military technologies.

Key Technologies and Their Application. The technologies of greatest interest to the Soviets over the next ten years are those associated with microelectronics, automated decision-support systems, telecommunications, lasers, and enhanced munitions lethality. By incorporating these technologies in future military systems, the Soviets anticipate widespread improvements in conventional weapon systems, particularly in the development of long-range, highly accurate, and remotely guided combat systems; remotely piloted vehicles; and electronic control systems.

There are four technical characteristics that Soviet military scientists stress with respect to these new military technologies: range, accuracy, lethality, and reaction time. The Soviets believe that these new technologies promise order-of-magnitude increases in system accuracies, independent of

range. If a target can be identified anywhere on the battlefield (or in the deepest reaches of the theater) it can be destroyed.

The Soviets believe that improvements in accuracy and range are likely to be complemented by near-revolutionary developments in explosives technologies. Among the technologies of interest to the Soviets are developments in fuel-air explosives. As a result of these and other munitions developments, the Soviets believe that future nonnuclear systems will experience an "order of magnitude" increase in destructive potential. A reconnaissance-strike complex, which combines sensor, communications, and fire systems in the real- or near-real time execution of fire support missions at depths up to 500 kms and deeper in the enemy tactical, operational, and even strategic rear is the most commonly cited example of the combination of these trends in Soviet sources.

In their longer-term forecasts (ten years and beyond), Soviet military scientists seem to envision even more revolutionary changes in the nature of warfare. At the core of Soviet long-term forecasts are subsequent generations of advanced conventional weapons, wide-spread applications of low-observable technologies, weapons based on new physical principles, and space-based reconnaissance and target acquisition capabilities. Tactical applications for laser systems and electromagnetic guns have received particular attention in Soviet sources. Soviet military sources have devoted increasing attention to the prospect for development of space-based reconnaissance-strike complexes.

The Battlefield of the Future. The Soviet military is intent not just on developing the capacity to minimize the impact of the West's acquisition of advanced military capabilities, but upon finding early solutions to the most effective exploitation of these technologies for their own military forces. The Soviet military believes that the technological potential now exists to implement fully the operational concepts first developed in the early 1930s. (These concepts are mobile operations on the part of both the offense and the defense, the emergence of deep strikes and the "deep battle," combined arms operations, and encirclement.) If these technological developments can be brought to fruition, the Soviet military will finally have the capability to execute

simultaneous conventional strikes throughout the depth of the enemy—without the associated complications associated with the use of nuclear-missile weapons.

The Soviets anticipate the scale of future conventional military operations to continue to undergo a dramatic transformation. Many of the new conventional weapons systems will have attributes that make them global in nature. Soviet military scientists are probably skeptical about their own capability to carry out global conventional warfare over the near term. However, the widespread deployment of space-based reconnaissance and target location systems, directly linked to long-range fire systems in real time, would make such a scenario increasingly more feasible over the long term.

The Soviets believe that the compression of time required for the detection-destruction cycle combined with the increase of battlefield mobility inherent in, for example, the widespread use of helicopters should dramatically increase the tempo of modern warfare. Consequently, command-and-staff personnel will have far less time to react to unforeseen or sudden changes in the situation. The Soviets will seek to automate more of the routine battlefield calculations and fully integrate information processing technologies into the troop control process. They believe that military communications have also entered a "transitional stage of development" with the introduction and widespread replacement of analogue with digital systems. As a result, the Soviets believe that it will be increasingly possible to automate and, thus, perform the key processes of the detection-destruction cycle in real time.

The Soviets also may have concluded that future conflicts may be extended in time because of the increasing complexity of military systems. The Soviets clearly anticipate that longer periods will be required to achieve strategic objectives. Military requirements associated with preparation for extended conflicts, which could have a duration of at least one year, have been evident in Soviet military sources for some time.

The Offense-Defense Relationship. Perhaps most importantly, Soviet military planners have apparently concluded that the introduction of new technologies will require a reevaluation of the offense and the defense in future operational plan-

ning. This trend was already underway in the late 1970s and early 1980s—well before Gorbachev's political emphasis on "defensive defense"—but it seems to have assumed increasing importance by the mid-1980s. In part, the Soviets appear to believe that their offensive emphasis over the past twenty-five years has left them lacking in defensive technologies and concepts for defensive operations. In addition, the Soviet military seems to think that the introduction of advanced conventional technologies will tend to produce gridlock on the battlefield—that maneuver may be severely constrained as the introduction of long-range, high-accuracy weapons increases the risk to critical targets throughout the depth of the battlefield. The task that the Soviet military has set for itself is to break the gridlock, to regenerate the possibility of maneuver, through the judicious introduction of new technologies and force structures.

Soviet interest in a better offensive-defensive mix may also represent one component of the military's response to future resource constraints. There is nothing in Soviet military assessments, however, to indicate that the Soviets are abandoning their traditional emphasis on offensive operations as the only method to achieve final victory over the enemy. Senior Soviet military authorities continue to insist that only the conduct of offensive operations can achieve a decisive defeat—a "smashing"—of enemy forces.

Future Soviet Force Structure. The Soviet military has frequently restructured its forces to meet the technical demands of the day. Four major force restructurings have occurred since the end of the Great Patriotic War (World War II), the most recent of which (from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s) was intended to permit the Soviets to fight conventionally under the threat of nuclear use by the adversary.

We may now be seeing the fifth major restructuring, one that emphasizes the combined arms battalion-brigade-corps arrangement. Corps and brigades are by no means new in the Soviet military; for example, during World War II, regiments and divisions were responsible for normal ground-gaining functions, while corps and brigades were assigned specialized functions (e.g., deep maneuver, once defense was ruptured).

The Soviet interest in the combined arms battalion-corps-brigade structure could be explained in

several ways, although it is certainly too early to make any definitive judgment. The Soviets themselves insist that such restructuring is intended to move the military toward an intrinsically defensive posture. On the other hand, it might provide the Soviet military with greater flexibility and improved command and control for operations on the anticipated high-technology future battlefield, as well as to support more specialized operations (e.g., fighting in urbanized or reforested terrain.) This new structure may permit the Soviets to conserve manpower, especially from the declining Slavic population, which was already a major issue even before Gorbachev's proposed reductions in manpower. It may also reflect the Soviet judgment that the tank will perhaps no longer hold a preeminent role on the battlefield of the future. Finally, the restructuring may allow the Soviets in some fashion to maximize their advantages under a future CFE agreement.

Future Nuclear Technologies and Operations

There is clearly an intensifying debate in the Soviet Union about the role and meaning of nuclear weapons. It is difficult to know what part of the debate is concerned with "real" technical and military issues, and what part reflects the struggle for political power. There does, however, appear to be a shift away from traditional discussions, which were military-technical in nature (i.e., numbers, quality, operational concerns), to concerns having a political flavor (e.g., arms control).

The Soviet political and military concepts of the role of nuclear weapons have shifted considerably over time. During the late 1950s, Khrushchev stressed the one-variant (nuclear) war that he assumed would be short, intense, and would encompass the entire range of the enemy's tactical and strategic targets. Operationally, the Soviets were suffering at this time from a numbers problem—if they failed to act first and decisively, their small nuclear forces would be caught on the ground by a U.S. preemptive strike.

Khrushchev's successors believed that the extant Soviet nuclear posture, while adequate to deter direct attack on the Soviet Union, was not really sufficient for supporting their larger political objectives; therefore, from the mid-1960s to the late

1970s, the Soviets struggled to achieve what they called "parity"—not just in terms of numbers, but in quality, at all rungs of the nuclear ladder. This was termed by the Soviets as an historic achievement of socialism, and the Soviet leadership assumed that it would pay political dividends with respect to the West's willingness to accommodate the USSR's international ambitions. It also opened to the Soviets the prospect that they might be able to stalemate the United States at the nuclear level and thus allow them the luxury of using their numerically superior conventional forces in the theater.

Over the past decade, the Soviets have indicated their concern that the achievement of parity still did not mean they could attain anything resembling a reasonable outcome in a strategic exchange. The character of nuclear forces on both sides had become so robust that the Soviet military could not prevent a catastrophic blow against the homeland, although such prevention was the prescribed military mission of Soviet strategic forces (both offensive and defensive). Indeed, given the U.S. strategic modernization of recent years, the Soviet capacity to affect the nuclear balance (i.e., create a favorable correlation of forces) has actually been declining. Some prominent Soviet military officials, such as Marshall Ogarkov, have concluded that the point of diminishing returns has now been reached with respect to the growth of their nuclear forces, and that the revolution in military affairs associated with nuclear weapons has come to an end.

Where will the Soviets go from here? Gorbachev's agenda has been defined by his January 1986 proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. Political issues now define stability for Soviet leaders, with stability being defined as (a) no incentive to use a nuclear weapon, (b) no capacity to achieve a meaningful result through first use, and (c) prevention of accidents or other misuses of nuclear weapons. The Soviets claim that they want to create a situation where neither side has an incentive to raise the issue of nuclear use as part of the political conflict. Taken to its logical conclusion, this apparent preference of the Soviet political leadership is to work toward some variant of a minimum deterrent posture.

The precise views of the Soviet military are not obvious, but they are apparently different from

those espoused by Gorbachev. The Soviet military may accept or even favor reductions in nuclear weapons, but these reductions must not be unilateral. In the end, however, the civilians may force the military to accept some middle ground, which might involve substantial reductions in nuclear weapons but with technical modernization, acceptance of a triple zero (elimination of all battlefield nuclear weapons), and the denuclearization of the East-West political relationship. Such a middle ground might also open up the prospect, or necessity, of an emphasis on conventional high-technology weapons.

Conventional Arms Control and the Soviet Military

The Soviets have accepted that the goal of the Conventional Forces in Europe talks, with respect to force structure, is to achieve military parity in five categories of hardware: tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, attack aircraft, and attack helicopters. Assuming that the Soviet interest in such an agreement is sincere, they must have come to the conclusion that any future military competition will be principally qualitative in character because the attainment of overall quantitative superiority would by definition be ruled out.

With respect to Soviet military leaders—setting aside any larger political or economic reasons—why should they be willing to give up their current quantitative advantages in the European theater? This could reflect the Soviets' new understanding that, in light of the changing military environment, even the present NATO-Warsaw Pact force ratios will not allow the USSR to execute its preferred military strategy (i.e., a high-speed offensive at the outset of the war with deep penetrations of the defense on selected axes). The Soviets, therefore, may see the advantages of NATO assuming the offensive first, so that NATO forces will suffer attrition to the point that a Soviet counteroffensive can achieve the necessary force ratios for operational success.

By the same token, the Soviets may be interested in creating political barriers to a timely NATO response to Soviet mobilization. If NATO mobilization is delayed sufficiently, the Soviets may be able to achieve the kinds of force ratios that they

need to assume the offensive from the beginning. This is not the same as the unreinforced, standing-start, surprise attack that has long concerned NATO. Although the Soviets are interested in achieving surprise, they do not feel an operation should be planned on the assumption of surprise. Therefore, it is the reinforced attack that matters to the Soviets, and not just the thirty divisions in the forward area. Such a reinforced attack can only be brought to bear over a long time because of the way in which the Soviet military is structured in peacetime, where many units are maintained at such a low strength level that it would take some weeks to prepare and move them into combat. If a CFE agreement is improperly structured and verified, the Soviets may actually improve their relative ability to conduct a reinforced attack.

Another explanation of the Soviet military's acceptance of the CFE process is that they have entered into a reverse "Faustian bargain" with the political leadership. By this bargain, the Soviet military has agreed to suffer short-term pain (and especially the force structure reductions mandated by CFE) in order to gain, especially in the qualitative arena, in the longer term. The Soviet military may have agreed to this bargain because the alternatives are very unattractive, and not out of any sense of optimism about the long-term prospects for Gorbachev's reforms. It may not provide them with the high-confidence offensive capability they already have; but it could provide them with a defensive capability that they think is absolutely necessary, and a highly mobile, mechanized force for counter-offensive operations that can take advantage of a broken NATO.

Meaner and Leaner, or Just Leaner?

One group of workshop participants concluded that Soviet arms control proposals and adjustments in force structure seem to match Soviet projections of the requirements of the battlefield of the future. By this light, future advantages will accrue to the side seizing and maintaining the lead in the introduction of qualitatively new military systems, and the Soviet military is determined not to come in second in this competition. In the meantime, a case can be made that the military equipment the Soviets are talking about giving up may be wasting

assets in any case. Better technology in smaller numbers could be a net plus for the Soviet military if the West's own technological innovation, and the size and character of U.S. NATO forces, are constrained by arms control and other political measures.

For this group of participants, the Soviet military continues to believe that it can benefit in the end from Gorbachev's reform program. For some time, the military has recognized the diminishing capacity of the economy to produce the defense technologies required for continued control of the future long-term military competition with the West. The military has a clear appreciation that considerable time will be required for the effects of *perestroika* to be felt within the Soviet industrial infrastructure. However, the military may still believe that it would benefit even in an era of economic constraints on defense spending, because the introduction and integration of new industrial processes and equipment would shorten the production time of military equipment and reduce the material and labor costs associated with such production. It further recognizes that the social-economic transformation inherent in *perestroika* should produce the better educated and motivated recruit necessary for the operation of future high-technology weapons. Most importantly, however, the Soviet military has concluded that it will strengthen the position of socialism in the long-term competition with capitalism and the overall defensive capability of the country in a hostile environment.

In order to provide sufficient time for *perestroika*, the political leadership has publicly sought to reduce the emphasis on military means and increased its reliance on "political means" to achieve national security objectives. Soviet foreign policy and public diplomacy have been retooled for the express purpose of reducing international tensions and diminishing Western incentives to pursue promising, but potentially costly, applications of new military technologies. A critical component of this strategy has been to portray both Soviet military doctrine and military art as increasingly nonprovocative and defensively oriented.

To this end, the party has adopted a "new" military doctrine, intended to portray Soviet military planning and military art as being defensive in

nature. Soviet civilian national security experts have attempted to depict this doctrine as representing a renunciation of traditional Soviet offensive principles and as providing a doctrinal foundation for force reductions, in some cases unilaterally, to a level of "reasonable sufficiency."

Although it accepts many of the party's arms control and public diplomatic objectives, the Soviet military continues to resist any unilateral measures that they believe could diminish Soviet national security. Consequently, the military will continue to resist the more extreme measures for reallocations of resources proposed by many civilian economists and national security experts. In the end, the Soviet military is pursuing its end of the reverse "Fausian bargain," and looking to position itself as strongly as possible in what it regards as the next round in the inevitable military-technical competition with the capitalist world.

Another group of participants disagreed strongly with this set of conclusions, on the grounds that they ignore the political and economic realities described in the morning session. To be sure, if one abstracts from these political and economic realities, it is indeed possible to postulate a very clever Soviet strategy designed to encourage the West to change the nature of the military competition, so that the Soviets will gain a relative strategic advantage in the future. But this line of argument does not track with the apparent goals and strategy of the current Soviet political leadership.

Gorbachev and the political leadership now openly question the wisdom of the Soviet military buildup of the past several decades. In their view, the traditional emphasis on military means of security has proven counterproductive—the Western alliance was only too happy to compete in this arena since their economies were much larger and their capacities for technological innovation much greater. The Soviet leadership accordingly now seeks to define and preserve security in political terms. This redefinition of security is possible because Soviet leaders have concluded that the Western threat to the Soviet Union has been reduced, if not removed; therefore, risk of war is low and the need for military forces-in-being much less. Gorbachev is now apparently prepared to trade away "surplus" Soviet military force structure for the reciprocal benefits that he hopes to get from the West.

These benefits include a further reducing of the threat of war, a loosening of the Atlantic Alliance, and the like, which will permit him to divert even more military resources into the hard-pressed Soviet economy.

Gorbachev's political and economic policies have led to a series of defense and security policy decisions that clearly run against military preferences. The professional military was on record against the kind of unilateral force reductions that Gorbachev announced in December 1988. The Soviet CFE proposal, with its acceptance of asymmetrical cuts in favor of the West, cannot be ideal from a purely military perspective. Nor can the military be at all confident that there will be sufficient payoff in the 1990s from an improved economy as to make any Faustian bargain seem worthwhile.

In the past, of course, the professional Soviet military has had virtually a free hand when determining the military-technical dimensions of Soviet policy, at least within a set of general resource constraints. But the ability of the professional military establishment to insist on its way is no longer clear. In the space of a few short years, the social and political status of the Soviet military has taken an unprecedented buffeting. Traditional military prerogatives, such as the ability to monopolize national security information, are under attack. In many respects, it is the civilians who are now setting the agenda (e.g., with respect to the definition of "reasonable sufficiency," "defensive defense"). This is not to say that the military has become unimportant, but that it certainly is in a defensive mode. Therefore, even though the Soviet military may hold this view of the future battlefield described above, they may no longer have the ability to make that view the dominant factor in Soviet security policy.

Those workshop participants who held this view felt that political and economic weaknesses of the Soviet regime—and not any hypothetical shortfall in a future high-technology military competition—now drive Soviet national security policy. By this light, the prime object of Soviet arms control policy is to slow down the pace of military modernization and technological innovation. The Soviet political leaders are not looking forward to a high-technology competition that they think they will

win, but are rather hoping to dampen the competition so that they will not be forced to compete at all. They understand that it is impossible for the Soviets to produce advanced military systems through the special measures that have traditionally marked the defense industry, and that it will take decades to build up a broader industrial base necessary to do so.

These workshop participants by no means excluded a reversal of Soviet policy caused by, for example, the overthrow of Gorbachev and the ascendancy of a much more bellicose, anti-Western leadership. But this prospect is very different from an assumption that the current Soviet leadership is engaged principally in a political deception intended to improve the USSR's military position in the twenty-first century. The United States would be gravely mistaken to tailor its own national policy on the latter assumption, even though it must always be prepared to deal with the possibility of a more hostile Soviet leadership at some future time.

CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDEPOSTS FOR THE LABORATORY

The perception of a reduced Soviet threat has already affected thinking about defense policy and defense spending in the United States and its NATO allies. As we continue to assess the prospects for reform in the Soviet Union and their implication for security and stability in East-West relations, there are a number of critical indicators of genuine change in the Soviet defense posture that could even more significantly influence Western defense and Western reactions to Soviet arms control initiatives:

- Soviet positions on arms control, including continuing acceptance and implementation of asymmetric reductions in arms control talks;
- diminishing Soviet focus on disarmament and denuclearizing Europe;
- willingness to forego disruptive and destabilizing propaganda and public diplomacy in international fora (e.g., calls for an early comprehensive test ban or special nuclear material (SNM) production cutoff);
- reduction of military R&D, and direction of R&D to civil sector;

- commissioning new plant and equipment for modernizing industry and agriculture;
- defaying new resource allocation for upgrading models of tanks, aircraft, and artillery;
- military reorganization that reduces capability to seize and hold land and undertake surprise attacks and large-scale military operations;
- nonmilitary service options for draftees;
- acceptance of change in Eastern Europe;
- reduced arms sales to Third World client states.

Developments in any of these areas could affect Laboratory programmatic activities and planning. However, in several areas, the implications for the Laboratory could be direct and appear rapidly. Soviet concessions in arms control have led to calls for reciprocal concessions from the West, and could threaten nuclear and conventional modernization and Laboratory programs in these areas. Soviet calls for nuclear disarmament and a comprehensive test ban, and its continuing effort to denuclearize Europe, will further the tendency to delegitimize nuclear weapons, and could also affect the Laboratory's nuclear programs. If there are signs that Soviet military R&D has slowed down, funding for U.S. military R&D could be significantly cut, especially for SDI and other high-risk, high-leverage programs.

More specifically, five direct challenges to Laboratory programmatic activity and planning can at the present time be developed:

It is clear that dealing with the Soviet domestic crisis will preoccupy the Soviet leadership for at least a decade, whether or not perestroika succeeds. The Soviets will probably continue to seek a reduction in the East-West confrontation, in order to allow them to devote greater resources to dealing with domestic problems. If this occurs, then the perception of the Soviet military threat will probably continue to decline in the West for some time. With a decline in the threat perception, further and probably substantial reductions in Western resources devoted to defense must be expected over the next decade.

This assessment could change dramatically if events within the USSR or Eastern Europe lead the Soviet leadership to act in a manner that restores the Western perception of a substantial Soviet military threat. Nevertheless, the Laboratory cannot assume that the Soviets will behave as badly as

they have in the past (e.g., Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979) and thereby provide a convincing rationale for existing or higher levels of American defense spending.

The Laboratory, therefore, may increasingly be required to articulate a strategy and rationale for its national security programs that assume a substantial reduction of the Soviet threat as perceived by U.S. policymakers. At the same time, the Laboratory will retain the responsibility of preserving long-term U.S. response options in a period of declining defense budgets, should the more optimistic views of Soviet behavior prove unfounded.

Current Soviet policy suggests a willingness to accept significant changes in the post World War II pattern of international relations, although these changes have not yet been realized. The most significant change would involve a substantial reduction of the NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation in Central Europe through the existing INF Treaty, as well as the ongoing CFE talks and the expected short-range nuclear forces negotiations.

Although any dramatic shift in the European security environment is not likely in the short term, the Laboratory should consider now its nuclear and conventional weapons activities might be affected by a (1) CFE agreement and the prospects of a follow-on treaty that reduced NATO forces significantly, perhaps by 50 percent, as well as (2) separate naval arms control negotiations. At some point, these negotiations might lead to the withdrawal of substantial (and perhaps all) U.S. ground forces from the Continent, and could substantially reduce the operational flexibility and global mission of the U.S. Navy.

There is a campaign on the part of the Soviet leadership to "denuclearize" (and "demilitarize") international relations, at least at the political level. Although the USSR is unlikely to be interested in the total elimination of nuclear weapons, this Soviet campaign to denuclearize the East-West relationship will further the tendency to delegitimize nuclear weapons; it also reveals a continuing Soviet interest in denuclearizing Europe. The Soviets will continue their efforts to weaken and eventually eliminate the American nuclear commitment to its allies. U.S. forward-deployed nuclear forces (both land and sea-based) will likely come under increasing political pressure.

The Laboratory's tactical nuclear-weapon activities, and especially the FOTL/SRAM-T program, should account for the prospect that the United States may not be free to base its tactical nuclear weapons as it has in the past. The Laboratory should also anticipate continued Soviet efforts to pursue nuclear testing restrictions and SNM controls, and to propose reciprocal measures that would have the effect of preventing the modernization of all or part of the U.S. nuclear-weapons stockpile and of the nuclear-weapons complex itself.

The Soviet leadership seems determined to slow down the rate and impact of technological innovation in Western military forces. The Laboratory should be aware of the possibility that the Soviets will continue to pursue efforts, especially in arms control negotiations, to require formal restrictions on Western military technologies. As well, the Laboratory should expect that it will be required to play a part in justifying the national need to continue military research and development in the

face of Soviet charges that such R&D is destabilizing.

The Soviet military appears to be anticipating, and adjusting to, perceived future changes in the character of warfare, driven in large part by advances in military technology. Western efforts to analyze the impact of technological developments on the future battlefield have not been as serious or systematic. The Laboratory could profitably track ongoing Soviet analyses of the impact of advanced technology on the future battlefield, perform its own assessment of the accuracy and implication of these projections, and assess the meaning of these trends for future Western security. For instance, are the Soviets correct in assuming that the future battlefield will be more transparent and lethal, and hence will favor the defender? That advanced conventional weapons will rival the military effectiveness of nuclear weapons? That space represents an increasingly important theater for the success of terrestrial military operations?

**THE SOVIET UNION:
POLITICAL AND MILITARY TRENDS**

JULY 20, 1989

AGENDA

Chairman: Hans Heymann, Jr., Defense Intelligence College

Morning Session: Exploring Political Change in the Soviet Union

Presentations:

"Domestic Changes in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev"

Robert Blackwell, National Intelligence Council

"Political Changes in the Soviet Union: Implications for Defense and Foreign Policy"

Arnold Horelick, RAND Corporation

"Prospects for *Perestroika* with Implications for Soviet Defense Spending"

John Hardt, Congressional Research Service

Discussion

Afternoon Session: Evaluating Future Soviet Military Doctrine and Force Structure

Presentations:

"Soviet Interest in Advanced Conventional Technologies"

Notra Trulock, National Defense University

"Soviet Views of Future Nuclear-Conventional Tradeoffs"

Daniel Goure, SRS Technologies

"Conventional Arms Control and Soviet Military Strategy"

John Bird, Central Intelligence Agency

"Changes in Soviet Military Doctrine and Force Structure"

Lt. Col. Les Grau, USA, Soviet Army Studies Office, Ft. Leavenworth

Discussion