

~~TOP SECRET~~

CIA

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

R U

6 May 1969

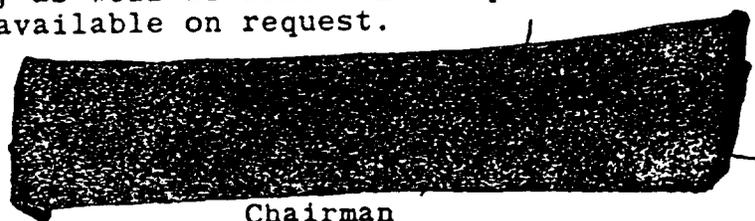
MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable David Packard
Chairman, NSSM-3 Steering Group

SUBJECT : Report of Interagency Working Group
for NSSM-24

2010
217111000

1. The second paragraph of NSSM-24 requests-- in relation to the NSSM-3 strategic study--an analysis of how the Soviets view the strategic balance. On behalf of the Foreign Political and Military Reactions Study Group, I forward an interagency response to this request. I suggest it be considered for inclusion as an appendix to the final report of the NSSM-3 Steering Group.

2. This report is designed to be only as detailed as might be useful to a high level audience. An extensive chronological listing of Soviet statements, which are part of the evidence behind the analysis, is also available but was not made a part of the final report. This listing, as well as additional copies of the study itself, is available on request.



Chairman
Foreign Political and Military
Reactions Study Group

Attachment: a/s

19	OATSD(PA)DFOISR
	TOP SECRET CONTROL
Copy No.	R 1
Case No.	94-F-0841
T.S. No.	94-TS-148
Document No.	5

611111/07

2410

~~TOP SECRET~~

TS 199011E
Copy No. 1

1
0107

~~TOP SECRET~~
LIMDIS/FOREIGN DISSEM
NO DISSEM ABROAD/CONTROLLED DISSEM

INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP FOR
NATIONAL SECURITY STUDY MEMORANDUM 24

Study Group Report

HOW THE SOVIETS VIEW THE STRATEGIC BALANCE

Copy No. 1

TS-199011C
May 1969

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Summary	1
Introduction	4
I. Moscow's Assessment of the Strategic Relationship	4
Strategic Power	4
Economic Power	7
II. Other Factors Behind the Soviet View of the Strategic Relationship	8
Moscow's Striving for an Image of Equality	8
The Geographic Factor in Moscow's View of the Balance	9
Soviet Studies on Strategic Interaction	9
Soviet Expectations of Scientific Breakthroughs	11
Soviet Theater Forces and the East-West Balance	11
Third Party Nuclear Strength in the Soviet View of the Balance	12
III. Institutional Factors Affecting Soviet Assessments of the Strategic Balance	13

~~TOP SECRET~~
LIMDIS NO FOREIGN DISSEM
NO DISSEM ABROAD/CONTROLLED DISSEM

TS-199011C
May 1969

How the Soviets View the Strategic Balance
(NSSM-24)

Summary

As Soviet strategic power has increased in the past three years, the Soviets have evinced greater confidence in the existence of a state of mutual deterrence. An important factor behind the current confidence of the Soviets is their assessment that the United States shares this view of the balance. Apprehensions that future developments in the strategic relationship may be unfavorable are also present in Soviet statements, which generally go on to indicate that a posture of deterrence shall be maintained--whether by increased arms spending or arms control diplomacy. The bulk of the statements also indicate that the intentional use of strategic power is not a rational means to advance Moscow's interests in light of the US retaliatory capabilities.

Strategic "superiority" is infrequently mentioned, and then usually by military advocates of more strategic weaponry. Furthermore, military spokesmen even more rarely discuss the theoretical effects of a first-strike force, and Soviet military planners recognize the technological obstacles to this type of superior force posture--a massive and reliable ICBM force, an effective air and missile defense force, and

Note: This report was prepared by the Foreign Political and Military Reactions Group for NSSM-3. This Group included representatives from the Department of State, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis), the Office of the Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the National Security Council Staff, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

an effective antisubmarine capability. Although the concept of "superiority" undoubtedly attracts the thoughts of the Soviets, the practical task of maintaining their strategic relationship with the US occupies their day-to-day efforts.

The bases of their current estimate of "equality" involve more than a tabulation of relative strategic force strengths. Defense officials, for instance, claim that the vastness of the USSR and its system of centralized planning have resulted in a more rational, less vulnerable dispersal of population and industrial facilities. There are also those in the Soviet military who seriously regard their theater forces as a part of the strategic balance, insofar as such forces ensure Soviet influence in Europe. Another factor in Moscow's view of the balance of power is the hope for qualitative breakthroughs in research and development, confidently predicted--but not described--by some Soviet military spokesmen.

Soviet economic analysts, while recognizing the difference in the economic capacity of the US and USSR, have also contributed to the "equality assessment." They have acknowledged some of their own economic difficulties, but at the same time they have concluded that the US faces major economic problems in maintaining arms expenditures while meeting domestic requirements. And lastly, some Soviet military analysts have apparently approached the problem of measuring strategic power by utilizing computer-based war outcome models, rather than merely adding types and numbers of weapons.

Just how the Soviets weigh the geographic, scientific, and economic factors in their view of the strategic balance is not entirely clear. On the basis of their present willingness to discuss strategic arms limitations with the US, the Soviet leadership has apparently concluded that current Soviet deployment programs are producing a strategic relationship which it defines as adequate, given the present US forces. This provides only minimum guidance, however, on what the Soviet leadership might consider desirable deployment levels if the US were to expand its present strategic force capabilities substantially or to undertake unilateral reduction of these forces.

- 2 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

An additional consideration clouds a detailed analysis of what may be called "the" Soviet view of the balance. Power in the Soviet leadership is shared by several men, some with competing interests, and in the Politburo ruling committee there are probably several separate views of the US-USSR strategic relationship. Accordingly, future changes in the power balance in the Politburo may account for either subtle or major alterations in the collective's voice on the nature of the strategic relationship.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Introduction

This study examines the question of the Soviet perception of the strategic relationship with the United States. (How the Soviets might react to US strategic plans and programs is treated in National Security Study Memorandum 3.)

The conclusions and discussion in this study draw on all relevant and available intelligence information. Basic to this examination is our knowledge and understanding of the evolution of Soviet forces, the resources devoted to them over the past decade, and the research and development work on future weapon systems.

While our overall approach is based on a wide variety of sources and methods of analysis, the study highlights the key factors which *the Soviets themselves* have identified, either directly or indirectly, as significant in calculations of the power relationship.

In short, the study endeavors to place the reader, as it were, within the Kremlin decision-making environment.

I. Moscow's Assessment of the Strategic Relationship

In their analysis of internal and international power relationships, the Soviets' ideological bias takes second place to a highly pragmatic approach in the formulation of major policy decisions. In assessing the balance of power, or what they call the "correlation of forces," they give particular consideration to two manifestations of strength--present and projected military power and socio-economic trends.

Strategic Power

Kremlin leaders in the last few years have evinced greatly increased confidence in their second-strike capability and apparently are persuaded that the US shares this assessment. The Soviets are probably confident of their ability to read correctly US assessments of the strategic balance at any particular

time, because of the nature of the US political process--for example, the annual publication of the US posture statement--and the frequent leaks of portions of US national estimates. At the same time, Soviet leaders have acknowledged the well-publicized retaliatory capabilities of the United States and they have reiterated the line that the intentional use of strategic power--i.e. any first-strike strategy--is not a rational means to advance Moscow's interests.

The Soviets' confidence in the credibility of their deterrent has been strengthened by increments made to their strategic capabilities in 1966-68. In setting about to redress the strategic imbalance, the Soviets obviously were concerned with the number of weapons available to each side and with their characteristics, such as reliability, vulnerability, size, and accuracy. For example, they first deployed soft ICBM launchers. When current construction is completed, they will also have as many hardened, dispersed single-silo launchers as the US. They are also moving to make their second-strike force less vulnerable by placing a sizable force of strategic missiles at sea.

What the Soviets are doing in the general area of strategic power can, perhaps, best be summarized by an analysis of 1969 Soviet military expenditures. The analysis indicates that increased outlays for the new submarine-launched ballistic missile and MRBM/IRBM systems will probably offset any decline in ICBM expenditures. At the same time, the Soviets are expected to increase expenditures for military R&D and space. Major R&D programs for strategic systems--an improved ABM system and multiple warheads for ICBMs--are already under way, and rising expenditures for space are anticipated.

When the Soviet effort is measured in dollars, it appears that the USSR is currently spending somewhat more than the US for strategic offense, more than three times as much for strategic defense, about the same amount for space and military research and development, but only about three-fourths as much as the US in total, because of increased US spending for general purpose forces and for command and general support, chiefly as it relates to Vietnam. The Soviets, in short, are paying a high price for strategic confidence.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Regardless of their improved strategic position, a large number of Soviet military and many political leaders still are concerned especially with the specter of a US surprise attack. Their concern is reflected in the signs of apprehension which are present in some Soviet leaders' statements on what the future strategic relationship might be. They probably believe that new-generation US systems--the Poseidon SLBM, the Minuteman III ICBM--will vitiate some of their recently achieved gains in the strategic relationship.

The Soviets are well aware of US statements that the introduction of the Poseidon and the Minuteman III will increase manyfold the number of independently targeted US warheads, thereby again tipping the balance in favor of the US in this respect. They may well be concerned from their observation of US MIRV tests to date and from recent public discussions in this country that the US may be seeking to develop MIRVs which have the accuracy to be used against hard targets. While the Soviets have within the last year begun testing of a simple multiple warhead comparable to the Polaris A-3, it is still unclear whether this presages an effort to develop a MIRV, and in any event the Soviets probably recognize that they are presently well behind the US in this field.

There is probably considerable doubt within the ruling Politburo about the technical prospects and economic effects of trying to counter these developments at this time with new weapons programs. Some Soviet leaders appear to realize that the only alternative to an intensification of such an arms race would be some form of strategic arms limitation which would not jeopardize their relative position. Other leaders may not seriously expect that strategic arms limitations agreements would, over the long run, be successful in stabilizing matters. This group could thus regard strategic arms talks at this time as a way of exploring the US position and seeking to delay US programs--by way of a MIRV test ban, for example--at little expense to the USSR.

What remains unclear, however, is exactly how the Soviet leaders would define an adequate deterrent posture and what they believe are the desirable

~~TOP SECRET~~

limitations to be placed on various weapons systems. This is due not only to the lack of hard intelligence, but also to the presence of differences between and among the civilian and military leadership on strategic force structure issues.

Economic Power

The cost of new Soviet strategic programs to offset the effects of projected improvements in US strategic forces could easily raise the peak level of Soviet defense spending by the equivalent of several billion dollars in the mid-1970s. This increase in spending would provide the USSR with no appreciable strategic gain over the US, and if achieved at the expense of investment programs, prospects for future Soviet growth would be reduced.

These issues are apparently on the mind of Premier Kosygin in particular. Kosygin emphasized his concern for the economic effects of the arms race on both the USSR and the West in a meeting with the president of the UK Board of Trade in June 1968. Evidently concerned over domestic Soviet problems, he railed against US military spending asserting (erroneously) that on an annual per capita basis it was three times the comparable Soviet expenditure. Kosygin went on to assert that US economic growth would go mostly to the military, and that the annual expenditures were a "catastrophic sum." Similarly, in a conversation with former Secretary of Defense McNamara in November 1968, Kosygin described the size of US military expenditures as "colossal," and emphasized that military budgets had reached impossible levels, that "both sides have enough," and that a further increase in military expenditures could have unpredictable consequences.

Soviet leaders are aware that American socio-economic pressures and problems put into question how much the US can do in the strategic arena. Soviet economists and other spokesmen have concluded that the US needs to find resources to devote to the solution of domestic problems and that the pace of the arms race the US is capable of maintaining should not be assessed on the basis of a healthy economy, stable

society and united population. While their conclusions are influenced by an ideological bias, they do not go so far afield as to claim that internal problems will constrain the US in the maintenance of a credible deterrent posture.

II. Other Factors Behind the Soviet View of the Strategic Relationship

The Soviets also weigh other factors--and include a good deal of wishful thinking and some self-deception--in their assessment of the balance of power.

Moscow's Striving for an Image of Equality

Soviet leaders are interested not only in being assured of their country's military security, but also in convincing the world that the Soviet Union is a superpower in the same class as the United States. Their political dealings with other states are facilitated to the degree they can represent themselves, credibly, as a nation equal to the most powerful "imperialist" state.

Statements such as Gromyko's assertion in June 1968 that current Soviet strategic power is "by no means lesser" than that of the West indicate that the image is vital to them, for several other reasons. The Soviet claim to equality with the US avoids both the admission of a less than equal bargaining position in strategic arms limitations talks, and the loss of the image in the external world. Arms talks advocates within the leadership must also be able to claim equality to counter internal arguments that an arms control agreement would freeze the Soviet Union into a position of strategic inferiority.

Their sensitivity on the point of inequality was reflected in Kosygin's conversation with Western officials in mid-November last year. Kosygin heatedly denied the implication, which was attributed to Secretary Rusk in a press account, that the USSR was more in need of arms control measures than the United States, and insisted that this subject was equally important to both sides.

Statements on Soviet "superiority" are infrequent, generally confined to military interest groups, and usually geared to internal decision-making matters on force structure. In the context of disarmament-related decisions, advocates of preponderant strategic weaponry are, in effect, arguing that international arms control agreements cannot insure Soviet national security. Their effort in this regard is to convince policy makers to continue strategic preparations in light of the contingency that deterrence might fail.

The Geographic Factor in Moscow's View of the Balance

Assertions of equality by the Soviets may be based in part on Soviet assessments of the relative vulnerabilities of the US and USSR. Soviet spokesmen have claimed on a number of occasions that the vast land mass of the USSR is a potential defense asset in conditions of nuclear war. They assert that the centralized control of economic planning in the USSR has resulted in a rational distribution of population and industrial facilities from the defense point of view.

The conclusions and impact of the studies that civil defense officials presumably make for the Soviet leadership are unknown. They appear to believe that the USSR would require fewer strategic weapons than the US to cause comparable levels of casualties and damage.*

Soviet Studies on Strategic Interaction

Apropos of the methodology employed for the above discussion, Soviet strategists are many years behind in the application of the techniques of systems anal-

* If this is so, the Soviets would appear to be making a questionable assumption. The Soviet Union's urban population of some 100 million is located in more cities than the US urban population. But the geographic area, or urban sprawl, in which the US population is located is more than twice the area in which the comparable Soviet urban population lives.

ysis. The USSR's buildup of strategic forces has not evolved solely from the execution of a well-defined strategy based upon detailed calculations. There are signs, nonetheless, of increasing appreciation of the uses of strategic analysis.

Recent articles in the classified journal *Military Thought* indicate that some Soviet military strategists are becoming aware of the potential effects of a strategic nuclear exchange by means of aggregative interaction models. Their articles, however, stop short of discussing the more revealing points of strategic simulation, such as what the studies reveal to them about the impact of the new-generation systems programed for the US. Soviet references to strategic studies are, nevertheless, important for the indications they contain that the problem of measuring strategic power is not confined to a simple tabulation of inventories of weapons.

In a June 1967 article in *Military Thought*, for example, a Major General Anureyev asserted that the balance of forces is determined not only by the numbers of weapons, but also by the quality of the weaponry (e.g., reliability, accuracy, and reaction time) and more importantly by the manner in which they are used. In an examination of a first-strike option, Anureyev argued that a sharp, favorable change in the balance of forces is possible through improvement in reaction time, timely and correct interpretation of the opponent's activity, and the optimal allocation of weapons against the opponent's strategic retaliatory capabilities, including his support and control system.

Discussions of the mathematical elaboration of strategic interaction models for evaluating the balance of nuclear power are kept highly abstract. According to Anureyev, the key requirement in assessing the balance of forces is translating "the tasks of military art into...the language of mathematical logic with the subsequent application of computer methods." In a May 1968 *Military Thought* article, a Major General Prokhorov discussed mathematical models as a means of assessing the potential damage that the USSR could inflict on enemy economic, political, and military centers, given alternative uses of the forces

~~TOP SECRET~~

and equipment available. Prokhorov also stressed a force-design criterion--"the minimization of our own losses."

Soviet Expectations of Scientific Breakthroughs

Research and development play an important role in Moscow's hopes for maintaining a favorable balance of power in the future. Some strategic force advocates have stressed that research and development were the most promising avenues for achieving superiority, emphasizing the prospect for successfully staging a surprise technological breakthrough. One such advocate wrote in 1966 that the attainment of quantitative and qualitative superiority "requires lengthy production efforts" while concluding (without elaboration) that the "creation of a basically new weapon, secretly nurtured in scientific research offices and design collectives, can abruptly alter the forces within a short period of time."

A more authoritative article by Minister of Defense Grechko in late 1967 discussed the issue of military superiority and rated combat readiness and advances in weaponry well ahead of numbers of strategic missiles. Qualitative superiority, he asserted, "comprised the content of the party's present military policy."

These articles place research and development as a priority element of the strategic relationship.

Soviet Theater Forces and the East-West Balance

Some Soviet leaders regard their European theater forces as playing a role in the East-West strategic relationship in Europe. This is probably a remnant of the days when the Soviet Union had no strategic force capable of inflicting significant damage on the continental United States and used as a surrogate its ability to hold Western Europe "hostage" to Soviet conventional forces, as well as medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs and IRBMs). While the Soviets now have a credible deterrent capability directed at the US, there is no evidence that they have rejected the notion that their European

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

forces play a role in their strategic position, inasmuch as such forces maintain Soviet influence in Western Europe and control in Eastern Europe.

Soviet military writers have broached the concept that strategic forces may act as the umbrella for limited distant action by theater forces. The surfacing of this concept may, in part, be another indication of the confidence some Soviets have in their deterrent. It may also be related to resource allocations disputes within the military establishment between the advocates of more conventional weaponry and those for strategic forces.

Third Party Nuclear Strength in the Soviet View
Of the Balance

Soviet military defensive planning doubtless takes into consideration the medium bombers of the French *force de dissuasion* (which will be supplemented in the 1970s by submarine-launched ballistic missiles, or SLBMs, and MRBMs) and the medium bombers and SLBMs of Great Britain. However, it is not likely that the Soviets consider them a major factor in the strategic balance. For political reasons they have said very little about French strategic forces and seem to regard the British capabilities as having no independent significance, but rather serving as a supplement to US forces. Since the strategic attack forces of both France and Britain are small in comparison with those of the United States, the Soviets probably pay them little attention outside of relatively minor adjustments to their air defenses. Soviet propaganda continues to evince fear over alleged West German interest in securing nuclear weapons, but it is difficult to ascertain to what extent this reflects genuine fears or is intended to support Soviet political aims in maintaining control over Eastern Europe.

In light of the fact that the Soviets' main strategic concern is with the United States, another element generally peripheral to Moscow's view of the strategic balance at this moment is Communist China's nuclear force. The Moscow ABM system, for example, was clearly developed for the US continental

- 12 -

~~TOP SECRET~~

strategic threat. Only recently have developments surfaced which show a possible concern regarding ABM defenses against the CPR. The Soviets are aware that geography will allow the Chinese to target MRBMs and IRBMs against the Soviet Union and that the Chinese are pursuing an advanced weapons program. Soviet planning for the 1970s probably will give increasing attention to the Chinese strategic threat--one which will threaten the USSR before it does the US.

III. Institutional Factors Affecting Soviet Assessments of the Strategic Balance

While the Soviets have little trouble in getting and verifying official US assessments of the balance, several members of the ruling Politburo probably maintain different interpretations of the evidence. On the basis of their separate interpretations, they buttress their preferred interests and views for political, economic, or other motives.

This is particularly significant in the context of the Soviet polity, since the USSR does not possess a unitary executive institution, such as the US Presidency. Rather, executive power is shared among several members of the ruling Politburo who represent a variety of interests and views. In this regard, there is good evidence that Brezhnev is the chairman of a joint military-civilian body--at the senior, executive level--the rough equivalent of the National Security Council. In contrast to the NSC, however, some members of this body rank with Brezhnev in the Politburo--such as Kosygin and Podgorny, whose opinions, especially in defense allocations matters, Brezhnev must consider in light of the current balance of power within the collective leadership.

The Soviet Communist Party prevents competing institutions from establishing a degree of autonomy which would enable them to resist the party's central control. Nevertheless, the party has not been able (or willing) to suppress signs of competition between various institutions. Significantly, these signs have concerned subjects relating to key strategic issues.

Most recently, many differences have centered on the issue of strategic arms talks with the United States. Some elements of the intellectual and scientific community opposed to a step-up in the arms race consider that their most promising political support lies with government leader Kosygin and other officials whose primary interest centers on the state of the economy and consumer welfare. At the same time, the military establishment looks to party leader Brezhnev as its patron at the decision-making level.

Within the military establishment itself, as noted earlier, a dispute has centered on the issue of strategic versus conventional weaponry. The debate, which is not over, concerns future offensive force levels, the ABM matter, and the need for more flexible conventional forces. The debate also suggests that a determined fight for resource priorities within the military establishment is taking place on the eve of the next five-year plan, 1970-75.

There may be conflicts of interest even among those who favor strategic arms control agreements with the United States. The main civilian competitors are the investment and consumer interests, which would like a greater share of the resources that could be shifted from increased strategic arms spending. The main military competitors, the general purpose forces and the advocates of increased research and development, would also like a share of these resources.

The Department of State agrees that strategic issues, which involve decisions which must strike a balance between national security and politically sensitive economic considerations, have an enormous potential for dispute within the Politburo, between military and civilian leaders and among military claimants for resources. Moreover, strategic arms talks which would imply settlement of some of these questions by negotiations with the US--Moscow's principal protagonist on the world scene--adds further possible causes of dispute.

However, the Soviet system does not normally reward but customarily punishes political dissent in high places. And in the collective leadership mode it has tended to develop its own defense mechanisms or antibodies for avoiding divisive debates. The regime therefore preferred to mute or suppress defense ministry debates at high-level rather than encourage and systematize them. In general, the Soviet leaders have tended to take relatively narrow decisions, settling as much as they had to at a given moment and letting other aspects of a question drift.

Given the way in which the Soviet leadership works we have very little information on issues and positions taken by ranking individuals at any given moment. The nature of their public statements frequently is determined by circumstances such as the audience and occasion, and the speaker's own party or governmental position. Brezhnev, for example as general secretary of the party more often appears in the role of a Communist ideologist than Kosygin. Efforts to exploit press materials for evidence of differences among leaders have thus over the past twenty years rarely produced data sufficiently persuasive and reliable to serve as a basis for formulating US policy. One cannot, for example, assume that the debate on strategic arms negotiations ended with the decision to open talks with the US. Indeed, it would be more likely that the Soviets in deciding on the talks left to the future resolution of many issues which are potentially contentious in Moscow.