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Main Trends in Soviet Military Policy

Submitted by the
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The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, AEC, and NSA.

Concurring:

- Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
- Director, Defense Intelligence Agency
- The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB
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The Assistant to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.

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MAIN TRENDS IN SOVIET MILITARY POLICY

THE PROBLEM

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

SCOPE

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

NIE 11-8-64; "Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Attack," dated 8 October 1964, TOP SECRET, Restricted Data (Limited Distribution) and Memorandum to Holders of NIE 11-8-64, dated 7 April 1965.

NIE 11-3-64; "Soviet Bloc Air and Missile Defense Capabilities Through Mid-1970," dated 16 December 1964, TOP SECRET.

NIE 11-14-64; "Capabilities of the Soviet General Purpose Forces, 1964-1970," dated 10 December 1964, SECRET.

CONCLUSIONS

A. Soviet decisions since Khrushchev's fall do not indicate any general alteration in his military policies. During the next six years, we believe that the main aim of the USSR's military policy and programs will remain that of strengthening the Soviet deterrent.¹ In the

¹ The Director of the National Security Agency and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF consider that the intensity with which the USSR is pursuing a massive military research and development program—the specific content and progress of which are not clearly known to the US—portends far more than an intent merely to strengthen Soviet deterrent posture. They believe that attainment of strategic superiority continues to be the goal of Soviet political and military leadership and that the USSR is actively searching for ways and means of building toward parity and ultimate superiority.

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strategic field, we expect the USSR to increase the numbers and effectiveness of a variety of weapon systems and, in particular, greatly to improve retaliatory capabilities. These programs may include the deployment of anti-missile defenses. But we think it highly unlikely that the Soviets could achieve a combination of offensive and defensive forces so strong as to persuade the leadership that it could launch a strategic attack upon the West and limit to acceptable proportions the subsequent damage to the USSR. (*Paras. 18, 46-52*)

B. The Soviets will continue to press their dynamic military and space R&D programs. Soviet security considerations demand vigorous efforts to prevent a Western military technological advantage which might threaten the credibility of their deterrent. Beyond this, we believe that the Soviet R&D effort represents an attempt to achieve major technological advances in the hope of offsetting present Western strategic advantages. Should the Soviets achieve a technological advance which offered the prospect of significant improvement in military capabilities, they would seek to exploit it for political and military advantage, but their decisions as to deployment would involve a weighing of such advantage against economic considerations and US capabilities to counter. (*Paras 29-32*)

C. With respect to theater forces, capabilities for nuclear combat will remain a prime Soviet concern. Certain recent trends, however, point to a growing concern with non-nuclear war, and we expect Soviet military policy to devote increasing attention to this contingency. Further, there is some evidence that the Soviets intend to develop greater capabilities for distant, limited military action, an area in which they are presently at a great disadvantage. (*Paras. 40-43, 56-57*)

D. The new Soviet leaders will continue to apply economic restraints to the expansion of military programs. The Soviet economy could support a substantially increased military effort. Nevertheless, the demands of costly military and space programs conflict directly with the requirements of the civil economy, and the newly announced agricultural program does not portend any early easing of economic constraints. Barring important changes in the international situation, we consider major shifts in the level of Soviet defense spending to be unlikely. (*Paras. 20, 25-27*)

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E. Soviet military policy will also be heavily influenced by external developments. In Eastern Europe, if present trends toward autonomy continue, the Warsaw Pact will evolve toward a conventional military alliance, and the range of contingencies in which the USSR can rely on effective support from its Warsaw Pact allies will narrow. In Asia, the hardening of the Sino-Soviet dispute will probably force the USSR to recognize the military implications of China's hostility and ambitions, and the USSR will probably strengthen conventional forces in Soviet Asia. In Western Europe, the Soviets would consider their military problem to be sharply altered by any important changes in the political cohesion or military effectiveness of NATO. But the Soviets will continue to weigh the adequacy of military programs primarily against US capabilities, and to judge the desirability of proposed programs against probable US reaction. (*Paras. 33-36*)

F. Beyond the general mission of deterrence, we doubt that any single doctrinal design, meeting the tests of comprehensiveness and feasibility, will govern the development of Soviet military forces over the next six years. Old debates which seem certain to outlive Khrushchev's departure, the momentum of deployment programs, the clash of vested interests, attempts to capitalize on some technological advance, an urge to match or counter various enemy capabilities—these are some of the factors which are likely to inhibit any far-reaching rationalization of military policy around a single doctrine. (*Para. 51*)

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DISCUSSION

I. THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA

1. The Khrushchev era was a period of fundamental changes in the armament, organization, and operational concepts of the Soviet armed forces. Khrushchev inherited a military machine comprising enormous land armies for offensive operations, masses of anti-aircraft guns and fighters for strategic defense, and only limited nuclear capabilities. By the end of 1964, the force included a formidable nuclear delivery capability for offensive operations, modernized missile, air, and naval forces for strategic defense, and smaller, but greatly modernized theater forces for land campaigns in a nuclear environment. This radical change in the nature of the military establishment was accompanied by important changes in basic Soviet military doctrine and policy. In the mid-fifties, Soviet military theorists concentrated heavily on large-scale campaigns in Europe; by the early sixties they were giving increased attention to the complex problems of intercontinental strategic exchange.

2. Khrushchev's personality and political skill accelerated the revolution in Soviet military affairs but did not cause it. Marked advances in military technology, the rising costs of modern weapons, and the growing strength of NATO would have forced change in the Soviet military establishment in any case. But Khrushchev grasped the politico-military significance of the new technology far quicker than most of his conservative military hierarchy; his designs for adjusting the military establishment to new situations were often much too bold for most of the Soviet marshals. Although Khrushchev used a wide variety of polemical, political, and organizational devices to overcome their opposition, he often received only grudging support for his military policies—sometimes he encountered near defiance.

3. While the marshals approved of the new missiles, with rare exceptions they opposed Khrushchev's accompanying military policies, in particular his penchant for viewing military forces more as political tools than in terms of their actual use in warfare. Khrushchev looked upon his missile forces primarily as a barrier against war. Aware of Soviet strategic inferiority, he nonetheless believed that the missile forces would serve to deter a direct attack on the USSR. He also believed that they could be used to dissuade a potential enemy from opposing Soviet interests in local conflicts for fear of provoking a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. He argued that, if general war should occur, it would be decided in a very short time by the initial nuclear exchange. Consequently he often spoke and sometimes acted as though his missile forces constituted in effect an all-purpose substitute—and indeed a less expensive substitute—for the diverse military capabilities which the Soviet Union had long maintained.

4. Such a politico-military doctrine struck at some fundamental premises of the Soviet military establishment. It called into question such specifics as the value of large theater forces and the mass-mobilization system. More

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fundamentally, it cast doubt on the relevance of traditional military experience. Khrushchev's emphasis on deterrence of all wars through strategic rocket forces left scant basis for the military to develop operational concepts and requirements for other components of the forces.

5. Khrushchev's decision to embrace openly a deterrent military policy was clearly based in part on economic considerations. The kind of forces advocated by the marshals to fight a war if it should come, including huge ground forces, were obviously much more expensive than those advocated by Khrushchev with his faith in the efficacy of deterrence. But Khrushchev's rationale for his military policies also indicated that he had considered, at least broadly, the technical aspects of strategic nuclear warfare. He concluded that the requirements for a successful disarming strike were enormous and, further, that the first exchange of a nuclear war would wreak such damage that subsequent operations could have only minor effects on the outcome. These views were in some respects oversimplified, but they were quite sophisticated when compared to those held by most Soviet marshals at the time.

6. Under Khrushchev's prodding, and with the actual advent of large numbers of new weapons, the military leaders began to explore in new depth the implications of nuclear warfare. They did so, however, not so much from the standpoint of defining what force levels might be adequate for deterrence, but primarily in order to formulate requirements for fighting this new kind of war. In the process, the force commanders concluded, not that their arms of service had no further role to play, but that they confronted new and more demanding requirements. They constantly warned that the USSR should be prepared for the contingency in which deterrence had failed. Neither Khrushchev nor the more conservative marshals ever wholly prevailed in Soviet doctrine, and the forces actually deployed reflected compromises between their views.

7. Beyond these purely military disputes, the marshals were probably alarmed by certain political decisions entailing commitments and responsibilities, some of which Soviet capabilities could not sustain. Anxious to make political capital of the new missile forces, Khrushchev precipitated a Berlin crisis in 1958 which found the military establishment unready to overawe the US in strategic terms. His ill-fated Cuban venture presented the military leaders with the grim prospect of a military confrontation with the US under particularly unfavorable circumstances. And the military implications of the rift with Communist China must have added to the marshals' concern over the wisdom of Khrushchev's leadership.

Changes in the Strategic Relationship

8. Dramatic successes in programs to develop offensive missile systems led the Soviet leadership by the mid-1950s to foresee the day when a massive array of nuclear-armed strategic missiles would remove the USSR from the galling position of gross strategic inferiority. Beginning in 1955 (when MRBM deployment started), the Soviet missile force grew rapidly. ICBM deployment pro-

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grams were slower and often uneven, but by the end of 1963, the USSR had a strategic missile force targeted against both Eurasia and the US which had indeed sharply changed the nature of the East-West strategic relationship. The bulk of the strategic missiles were of medium and intermediate range, holding Europe hostage against US strategic attack; the ICBM force, though much smaller, increased Soviet assurance that the US would be struck in a general war. This marked advance in Soviet strategic stature was further enhanced by Soviet space achievements.

9. The buildup of strategic missile forces on both sides impelled Soviet military thinking to grapple with the global nature of modern war. In this context the Soviets soon found their new missile forces deficient in important respects. In exploring the nature of general war, they naturally discovered that enormous advantages belonged to the side which struck first. But their own force was neither large enough to risk a first blow nor well enough protected to assure them that the enemy would not be tempted to attack. Indeed, concern for the vulnerability of the Soviet strategic missile force—soft launchers grouped by twos and fours—probably became acute once the Soviets discovered that the US had penetrated their security and located their missile sites.

10. One course of action open to the Soviets was to multiply their strategic attack forces to such a high level that in time of crisis US policy would be powerfully restrained by fear that the Soviets might risk a first strike. But Soviet advances had spurred the US into large programs of its own which made it difficult for the USSR to set force goals which were economically feasible and could promise, when reached, to have this effect. Accordingly, the Soviets chose the alternative means of strengthening their deterrent by improving retaliatory capabilities; they sought to achieve this by some increase in the size of strategic attack forces, by diversification and improvement of delivery means and nuclear warheads, and by protection of their forces through hardening, dispersal and reduced reaction times.

11. Measures to strengthen the Soviet deterrent also included vigorous efforts to revamp strategic defense capabilities. Surface-to-air missiles replaced AAA guns. Several new-generation supersonic interceptors with all-weather capabilities and air-to-air missiles were introduced into air defense units to replace some of the old day fighters. Warning and control systems were expanded and sophisticated. The R&D program to develop anti-missile defenses was given high priority. Despite impressive improvements, however, Soviet strategic defense capabilities did not overtake the increasingly sophisticated and diversified Western attack capabilities—in particular, the growing threat posed by ballistic missiles.

General Purpose Forces

12. Khrushchev's view of the nature of modern war made land armies, tactical aviation, and surface fleets the prime candidates for reduction to offset the heavy economic burden imposed by Soviet efforts in strategic attack and defense and the space programs. By the late 1950s, Khrushchev's determination to reduce

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the size of theater forces was evident as he poured scorn on the utility of mass armies in modern warfare. Soviet military manpower had already been cut by about two million men between 1955 and the end of 1959, largely at the expense of ground forces. In January 1960, Khrushchev announced his intent to reduce military manpower from 3.6 to 2.4 million. He made it clear that this cut was to be absorbed largely by general purpose forces; that the intended cut in these forces would exceed 1.2 million was implicit in the rapid growth of strategic attack and defense elements.

13. This challenge was more than conservative Soviet military leaders could bear in silence, and their objections appeared in the open military press. Most spokesmen defended multimillion men armies on the grounds of their vital role in general nuclear war. Others almost certainly pointed, in closed forums, to the possibility of "flexible response" by NATO and the contingency of conflict with China, and an article by Sokolovskiy in 1964 cited the possibility of protracted non-nuclear war, thereby implying a new rationale for large theater forces.

14. Khrushchev never was able completely to override proponents of large theater forces. The force reductions announced in 1960 ground to a halt early in 1961, half-completed, and for a time Khrushchev's policies were apparently checked. However, another decline in military manpower during the 1962-1964 time period indicated that this check was only temporary. Although the size of theater forces was cut sharply during his regime, their capabilities for general nuclear war were considerably increased as the result of greater mechanization and the introduction of free rocket or missile nuclear and CW delivery systems.

15. On the face of it, it appears strange that Soviet marshals would continue to register great discontent with an army of at least 120 divisions backed up by a formidable array of tactical missiles and aircraft. From the Soviet marshals' point of view, however, the cuts had been drastic. Some 35 to 55 line divisions had been deactivated. Further the remaining divisions were sharply cut in size and about half were maintained at reduced or cadre strength. Combat and service support of ground forces had also been reduced. The number of operational aircraft in Tactical Aviation was halved during 1960-1961. In many circumstances, it would be difficult fully to mobilize and deploy Soviet theater forces. Nevertheless, it is apparent that they still represent a formidable capability for land warfare, despite their loss of prominence during the Khrushchev era.

Economic Factors

16. The post-1958 expansion of strategic attack and air defense capabilities, as well as the intensification of efforts on military R&D and space, led to a marked increase in total defense expenditures.² This increase would have been

²The question of defense expenditures for 1964 is currently under study, and a Memorandum to Holders of this estimate, covering this subject, will be published when this analysis is completed.

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even greater except for the substantial reduction in military manpower—on the order of three-quarter million men between 1958 and 1964. These new programs contributed to the slowdown in the growth of the Soviet economy over the past few years, principally because their impact was greatest in areas requiring specialized skills, equipment, and resources critically needed for other important economic objectives.

17. After 1962, to relieve the increasingly acute strains in the Soviet economy, Khrushchev began again to press for changes to resource allocation. He accompanied this by efforts in the field of foreign policy, resuming the tactics of detente, highlighted by the limited nuclear test ban. In discussing the next long-term plan, just before he fell, he referred to Soviet military forces as being "at their proper level." A leveling off in military spending brought apparent curtailments or slowdowns in a number of military programs. Meanwhile, the marshals, while refraining from direct attacks on the ceilings imposed by the total military budget, argued for military doctrines and force structures not achievable under those ceilings. The evidence suggests that this problem and these conflicts remained unresolved when Khrushchev left the Soviet leadership in October 1964. They will almost certainly continue to play an important role in the formulation of policy under the new leaders.

II. POST-KHRUSHCHEV DEVELOPMENTS IN MILITARY POLICY

18. The military evidently played no active role in the removal of Khrushchev, although some military leaders were presumably consulted and assurances of their neutrality and of their backing if necessary were secured. The price, if any, for these assurances was probably not high. In any event, since the ouster there have been no indications of any general alteration of Khrushchev's military policy; indeed, an early action of the new leadership in this sphere was to announce a slight reduction in the overt military budget.

19. After a few months of silence, the military press began in 1965 to carry a series of articles by prominent officers. These articles all profess obedience to party control of the military, but seize on the concept of collectivity, currently stressed by the political leadership for other reasons, to assert the importance of professional military advice. They also turn to special use the anti-Khrushchev epithets of "bragging," "hare-brained scheming," and "subjectivism." These formulations appear to be aimed, in the military context, against reliance upon a single weapon system for deterrence as opposed to forces capable of dealing with all contingencies should deterrence fail. In these articles, the concepts of ultra-conservative marshals came in for sharp criticism, and there was no reference to "multi-million man armies." One prominent theme has been the need to approach military problems in a comprehensive and scientific way, eschewing partial solutions which leave unsolved or even aggravate other problems. While the argument is obscure, these articles suggest a willingness to abandon earlier extreme positions, and call for the further development of many types of forces against a variety of military contingencies.

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20. Thus far the military spokesmen do not appear to be championing a particular view of doctrine, force structure, or resource allocation. It appears that, in their view, the first order of business for the military is to reassert itself in the formation of Soviet military doctrines and policies and thus be able to establish a rationale for force structuring. Such steps, however, are probably but a prelude to basic arguments about resource allocations in general, and it is no accident that military spokesmen have become vocal as the Five-Year-Plan for 1966-1970 is being formulated. The new Soviet leaders will continue to apply economic restraints to the expansion of military programs.

III. FACTORS AFFECTING FUTURE POLICIES AND FORCE LEVELS

21. Our view of the future course of Soviet military affairs has always been based in large part upon an evaluation of a large number of political, economic, and strategic factors. The complexity of relationships among these factors has been markedly increased by the recent change of Soviet leadership and the prospect of a struggle for power.

Internal Politics

22. We cannot rule out the possibility of sudden political changes in the Soviet Union, including changes in the relations between the party and the military and in the concepts which guide military policy. The present situation of divided leadership makes it likely that there will be a struggle for supreme power among the various leaders, and one of the issues in this struggle may be that of military policy. As a relatively cohesive force among the elements which make up the Soviet elite, the officer corps of the Soviet armed forces could constitute either a strong support or a potential threat to existing leaders. It may occur to one man or another (as it did to Khrushchev in 1955) to make a bid for power with military support. How the military would greet such a proposal is by no means certain; many leading military figures would almost certainly fear too close an involvement in political struggles. On the whole, it seems to us more likely that in any struggle for power the military would confine themselves to their traditional role of supporting the aspirations of that political leader who least threatened their privileged position in Soviet society, or who promised to pay greater attention to their opinion in the decision-making process.

23. The marshals may believe that collective leadership will better serve their interests than would the rule of any one man. The basically conservative Soviet military establishment may see in the collective arrangement opportunities to press its views with more chance of success than it would have against a single ruler, especially if that ruler had some of the predilections of Khrushchev.

24. Over the next six years, there will almost certainly be a wholesale retirement of the aging top leadership of the Soviet military establishment. A new generation of marshals, admirals, and generals may take quite different views from those currently expressed by the military on a broad range of subjects.

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Economic Requirements

25. Given the uncertainties in our estimates of civilian economic developments and of the size and composition of the defense program, conclusions about the burden on the economy of defense expenditures can be stated only in general terms. Probable Soviet military and space programs through 1970 foreshadow an increase in the requirement for highly skilled engineers and scientists, complex machinery, and high-cost materials. Even if defense spending were to increase by 20 percent during the period of the estimate, the Soviet economy could shoulder this burden and at the same time gradually improve the equipment and technology of Soviet industry and the standard of living. If, on the other hand, defense spending were to decrease somewhat, the absolute requirement for these scarce resources would still be little different from what it was in 1964, but the strain on the civil economy would be eased because of the increasing supply of these resources.

26. In any case, we anticipate that military programs will be increasingly subjected to critical examination in terms of their cost and their effectiveness; not the least of the factors considered will be an assessment of Western military strategy and capabilities. In early Soviet weapons programs (i.e., the first ICBM, the first SAM, and the first missile submarine), the Soviets apparently paid scant attention to consideration of cost and effectiveness or to the life expectancy of the system in view of Western technological advances. In this period they almost certainly felt impelled by the exigencies of their strategic position to capitalize on early technology at whatever cost. But this type of pressure has diminished, while the cost of modern armaments has risen.

27. It is still too early to tell what effect, if any, the new agricultural investment program, announced by Brezhnev on 24 March 1965, will have on military spending. It is clear that the plan for investment in agriculture (71 billion rubles in the next five years) will require resources which can be provided only by reducing the growth of budgetary allocations to other priority claimants from past rates. While Brezhnev did not specify the claimants whose budgets would be "adjusted" to provide agriculture with its added rubles, some reduction in the rate of growth of previously favored components of heavy industry seems probable. Also, while the types of inputs needed to boost agriculture would not seem to require a cut in projected military research and development outlays, it is possible that certain hardware procurement schedules will be adjusted downward. Barring important changes in the international situation, however, and in view of the apparent outlook of the current leadership, major changes in Soviet defense spending in either direction seem unlikely.

Manpower

28. During the period of this estimate, the nature of Soviet military manpower problems will be fundamentally changed. Problems of quantity, caused by the low birth rates of World War II, are being replaced by problems of quality.

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The sophistication of equipment in all types of forces will demand an increasing degree of professionalism in all ranks which may prove incompatible with the conscription system now in effect, as well as competitive with increasing demands for high skill in the civil economy. Whatever the Soviet solution to this problem, the cost per man of the military establishment is likely to increase substantially.

Research and Development

29. Over the past several years, the Soviet R&D effort has continued to grow. Our evidence indicates large-scale and continuing efforts in all major categories of military R&D: ballistic missiles, ABMs, certain space programs, nuclear submarines, ASW, aircraft, nuclear weapons, and CW. Further, we see continued efforts of considerable magnitude on the scientific fronts supporting military requirements, such as computer technology, meteorology, oceanography, geophysics, and electronics. The quality of this evidence varies considerably. In general, however, we have virtually no information on the laboratory and design phase of the military R&D cycle; operational testing usually provides the earliest indication that a major new weapon system is under development. Thus, new systems of which we have no knowledge could now be in early stages of development.

30. The Soviets will continue to press their dynamic military and space R&D programs. Soviet security considerations demand vigorous efforts to prevent a Western military technological advantage which might threaten the credibility of their deterrent. Beyond this, we believe that the Soviet R&D effort represents an attempt to achieve major technological advances in the hope of offsetting present Western strategic advantages.

31. Should the Soviets achieve a technological advance which offered the prospect of significant improvement in military capabilities, the Soviet leaders would certainly seek to exploit such an advance to gain political and military advantage, and they would undoubtedly consider increasing their military expenditures if effective exploitation seemed to require it. But their decisions as to deployment would involve a weighing of economic considerations and of US capabilities to counter against the politico-military gains to be achieved.

32. The USSR's space program has become a key element in Soviet world prestige. Space remains the major area in which the Soviets can still propound a creditable claim to world primacy. There have been tenuous indications that the costly Soviet space program may be subjected to more critical scrutiny by the new Soviet leadership. For political reasons, however, the Soviets could ill afford to slacken in the space race, and from all indications they have no intention of doing so. We believe that the Soviet space program will retain its priority, that its accomplishments will continue to be impressive, and that it will focus on goals for which the USSR can most favorably compete.

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Changes in Alliance Systems

33. Over the next five years, important changes will probably occur in the military situation around the Soviet periphery. In Western Europe, France's acquisition of an independent capability for strategic nuclear attack will pose an additional contingency to Soviet thinking. The possibility that West Germany may acquire nuclear weapons in some way is of great concern to the USSR. In Eastern Europe, if present trends toward autonomy continue, the Warsaw Pact will become more a conventional military alliance, less a westward extension of Soviet forces. In Asia, the hardening of the Sino-Soviet dispute will probably force the USSR to recognize the military implications of China's hostility and ambitions.

34. These prospective developments, cutting across familiar concepts of a bipolar world organized into two cohesive rival camps, have military as well as political implications. With respect to China, the Soviets will count their overwhelming strategic superiority as an underlying advantage, but they will probably nevertheless anticipate security problems to which a nuclear response would be wholly inappropriate. We therefore think that the USSR will strengthen conventional forces in Soviet Asia. As for Western Europe, the Soviet leaders will almost certainly calculate that forces and doctrines developed to cope with NATO will suffice to meet lesser threats arising from France and West Germany. But the Soviets would consider their military problem to be sharply altered by any important changes in the political cohesion or military effectiveness of NATO.

35. The USSR has in recent years strengthened the forces of its East European allies, indicating that the Soviets rely on these forces at least for the defense of their own territories. But as autonomy spreads in Eastern Europe, the range of contingencies in which the USSR can rely on effective military support from its Warsaw Pact allies will narrow. We believe that the Soviet leaders already recognize this trend and question the utility of East European forces for conflicts in which individual national interests do not coincide with those of the USSR. This may require the Soviets to re-examine their concept of a rapid offensive sweep through Western Europe, at least to the extent that they had depended on the Satellite forces for supporting action.

US Military Capabilities

36. The Soviets will continue to weigh the adequacy of most current military programs primarily against US capabilities, and to judge the desirability of proposed programs against probable US reaction. For example, in weighing the pros and cons of ABM deployment, the Soviets have almost certainly considered probable US future developments in penetration aids. Soviet military doctrine, force structure, and weapons programs will be adjusted to reflect significant changes in estimates of US capabilities and could change sharply in the event of unexpected developments in US military policy or capabilities.

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Detente and Disarmament

37. Soviet-Western relations will remain subject to wide fluctuations; periods of international tensions and crises in various parts of the world may disrupt Soviet military plans at least temporarily. The growing complexity of military problems, calling as it does for rational planning and scientific expertise, will tend to make military policies and plans less susceptible to political shifts and temporary changes in the international arena. In any case, we think the Soviet leaders recognize that the present and prospective balance of military power vis-a-vis the West will not sustain a policy of high risks.

38. Mutual disarmament will probably be conceptually attractive to some of the Soviet leadership as a means for reducing the economic burden of their defense establishment. They may even see possibilities of improving their relative military position by driving hard bargains in disarmament negotiations, and securing reciprocal Western action for force reductions which they would have made in any case. Any progress toward international arms limitation agreements will probably be slow. But we think that the Soviets probably will continue to seek ways to curtail the arms race in a moderate degree by "mutual example" (i.e., unilateral, uninspected moves by both sides).

IV. PROBABLE TRENDS IN MILITARY POLICY AND FORCE STRUCTURE

Military Doctrines and Policies

39. Considering the relative capabilities of US and Soviet strategic forces, we believe it highly improbable that the Soviet attitude toward the likelihood of general war will change during the period of this estimate. They almost certainly consider that both sides are effectively deterred by the threat of retaliation from deliberate initiation of general war, and that in this period military developments on both sides are unlikely drastically to alter this situation.

40. Official Soviet doctrine concerning limited war appears to be undergoing some modification. Until the early 1960s, the Soviets dismissed the possibility of such wars between major powers, holding that limited non-nuclear wars would almost certainly escalate, and limited nuclear wars certainly would. Since 1961, some Soviet statements on this subject have suggested a growing acceptance of the possibility of limited non-nuclear conflict. Perhaps the least equivocal of these was Sokolovskiy's statement in an article in August 1964 that the USSR must prepare for the possibility of protracted non-nuclear war between major powers. Such statements may reflect notice of current US emphasis on "flexible response"; they may also reflect growing concern regarding the possibility of an armed conflict with Communist China. We think that this trend in doctrine is likely to continue, but the Soviets will certainly continue to regard such conflicts as involving very high risks of escalation into nuclear war.

41. There has been no perceptible weakening of Soviet insistence that the use of tactical nuclear weapons in limited war would trigger the strategic exchange. While this doctrine serves deterrent purposes in part, it also represents

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an apparent Soviet conviction that escalation under such circumstances would be well-nigh uncontrollable. We do not believe that Soviet doctrine regarding the limited use of nuclear weapons will change in the foreseeable future, and we consider it highly unlikely that the USSR would initiate the use of such weapons in a limited conflict. If the Western powers were to do so, we believe that, doctrine notwithstanding, the Soviets would seek to prevent escalation to general war.

42. The official attitude toward "wars of liberation" is that such wars are "just" and deserving of Soviet support. This is in the first instance a political doctrine, intended to assert Soviet solidarity with a variety of anti-Western movements. In defining a particular conflict as a "national liberation struggle," however, the Soviets do not thereby accept an obligation to go beyond political support. They have provided military assistance in selected cases and always in ways which limited the USSR's commitment. This policy is due in part to the lack of Soviet capabilities to enter upon and sustain distant military actions.

43. One of the weaknesses of the USSR as a world power is its disadvantage, compared to the West, in projecting a substantial military force to distant areas. The Soviets probably feel impelled to improve their currently minimal capabilities to establish and maintain a military presence in areas distant from their borders in order to implement their policy of support for "wars of liberation." The difficulty of achieving a useful capability for this purpose in the face of US naval and air power is very considerable, and the support of local forces is often a satisfactory alternative. Nevertheless, some development of these capabilities is probably already underway, and the chances of Soviet involvement in distant limited military actions will increase.

Size of the Military Establishment

44. In December 1964, we estimated that the total strength of Soviet forces was about 2.8 to 2.9 million. In February 1965, Marshal Sokolovskiy claimed that the actual figure was 2.423 million—precisely the goal that Khrushchev set in 1960 when he announced his proposals for force reductions. We believe that Sokolovskiy's figure is too low, but we cannot conclusively demonstrate this; it is possible, for example, that reductions occurred during 1964 which the normal lag in acquisition of intelligence on military manpower prevented our taking into account.

45. Whatever the current total may be, we believe that major changes in military manpower over the next several years are unlikely, barring major world crises. Stability of manpower levels is suggested by the counterbalancing trends in probable developments in the various forces. While the number of strategic attack and defense weapons will continue to grow, the large complements of men needed for early Soviet systems will not be required by some of the newer ones. In theater forces, the same effect may occur on a lesser scale. For example, if support for combat-ready units is increased, this may be offset by a general de-emphasis on cadres for mass mobilization.

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Force Capabilities

46. Soviet strategic attack capabilities rest with a large and growing force of medium, intermediate, and intercontinental range missiles, supplemented by a bomber force and missile submarines. These forces have far more capability for attack against Eurasia and its periphery than against North America, and could devastate Europe in a first strike. Soviet ICBMs, supplemented by the heavy bomber and part of the medium bomber force, could wreak enormous damage on the US in a first strike, but the Soviets do not believe they could destroy enough of the US retaliatory force to prevent the devastation of the Soviet Union.

47. Soviet retaliatory capabilities against both the US and Europe are less impressive and are almost certainly unsatisfactory from the Soviet point of view. These capabilities rest essentially on hardened missile launchers and missile submarines. The hardened launchers at present comprise about one-third of the operational ICBM force deployed at only 26 sites, and less than 20 percent of the MR/IRBM force. The current status of the missile launching submarine force suggests that the Soviets would not yet have much confidence in its capacity for timely retaliation after a Western first strike.

48. In 1964, the Soviets initiated a dispersed single-silo deployment program for two new ICBM systems. As these new launchers become operational after mid-1965, the Soviet retaliatory capability will begin markedly to improve. Further, the Soviets are developing a very large booster which, as an ICBM, would be capable of delivering a 100 megaton weapon. We believe that the Soviets are constructing a new class of nuclear submarines; if so, these will probably carry 700 n.m. submerged-launch missiles, with larger numbers of launchers than in current Soviet ballistic missile submarines.

49. The Soviets will continue to develop and deploy strategic attack and defense systems with a view to strengthening their deterrent. Our best judgment as to the minimum capability which the Soviets might consider adequate deterrent strength is represented by the low side of our estimates of Soviet strategic attack and defense force levels for mid-1970. We believe it more likely that they would consider a greater capability in some, perhaps all, of these types of weapons necessary for adequate deterrence. It is possible that the force goals which the Soviets consider adequate for deterrence in the long term would exceed the upper limits of our estimates for the next six years.

50. We have considered the possibility of a Soviet attempt to acquire a combination of offensive and defensive forces, which, going beyond deterrence, would permit a first strike which would limit damage to the Soviet Union to acceptable proportions. Considering the number, hardness, and reaction times of targets to be struck in such an attack, and the likelihood that many, such as Polaris submarines, would escape destruction, such a Soviet effort would require both a large, highly sophisticated missile force and a widespread, very effective anti-missile and anti-air defense. In view of the technological and

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economic magnitude of the task and the likelihood that the US would detect and match or overmatch the Soviet effort, we believe it highly unlikely that the Soviets could achieve such a force during the next six years.³

51. Short of an effective first-strike capability as defined above, but greater than might seem adequate for deterrence, lie force levels which would reflect no comprehensive strategic or doctrinal design. Such forces might result from the sheer momentum of deployment programs, attempts to capitalize on a temporary technical advantage, or a psychological urge to match the US in delivery systems. But they would most likely result from Soviet difficulties in defining and agreeing on force levels which would constitute adequate deterrence.

52. The most critical issue for Soviet strategic defense is anti-ballistic missile deployment. We believe that Soviet ABM systems thus far developed do not satisfy the Soviet requirements in terms of effectiveness and reliability. Considering the effort being devoted to ABM development, it is possible, though by no means certain, that within the period of this estimate the Soviets will achieve a system which they deem satisfactory for widespread deployment. When and if such a system is developed, the Soviet leaders will have to consider the great cost of large-scale deployment. They would almost certainly wish to defend key urban-industrial areas and they might seek to defend some portion of their ICBM force in order to strengthen their deterrent. Beyond these generalizations, we cannot estimate the extent to which they would commit resources to ABM defenses.

53. The Soviet Navy contributes significantly to strategic attack capabilities, although it is still preponderantly a defensive force. It now is in a period of transition to the modern missile systems, ships, and nuclear powered submarines begun under Khrushchev. The capability of the missile submarine force is steadily improving, and by the end of the decade these submarines probably will be conducting regular patrols throughout the North Atlantic and Pacific and possibly into the Mediterranean.

54. The Soviet capability to locate and attack carrier task forces has been growing through increased use of reconnaissance and missile-equipped aircraft and cruise missile submarines. We believe that this trend will continue. Soviet ASW capabilities outside their coastal waters are severely limited and will probably remain so for the period of this estimate. It is clear, however, that the Soviets are making and will continue to make vigorous efforts to improve

³The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF believes that the lack of information on the massive Soviet research and development effort does not warrant the degree of certainty expressed in this paragraph. Therefore, he would add the following two sentences to the paragraph:

However, it is likely that a major effort toward attainment of such a force would be made if the huge Soviet military research and development program provides the opportunity for achievement of a significant military advantage. Current information precludes a firm judgment as to specific capabilities toward which Soviet R&D is making the greatest progress.

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these capabilities. The Soviet Navy has long specialized in mine warfare in which it has a highly developed and diversified capability.

55. Available evidence does not of itself indicate whether or not the Soviets now have programs for the military use of space, apart from the military support provided by the Cosmos series of satellites. In particular we have no evidence that a program to establish an orbital bombardment capability is seriously contemplated at present by the Soviet leadership. However, the USSR almost certainly is investigating the feasibility of space systems for use as offensive and defensive weapons and to provide other types of military support, and we believe the chances are better than even that the Soviets are developing an anti-satellite capability.

56. Soviet theater forces reflect many years of effort devoted almost exclusively to gearing them for a concept of land campaigns in Europe during general nuclear war. Efforts to tailor Soviet theater forces to operate under this concept failed to provide all the required capabilities, but went far enough to diminish capabilities for non-nuclear war. Certain recent trends point to Soviet efforts to improve non-nuclear capabilities of some of their theater forces. If this latter concept gains ground, the Soviets probably will restructure their forces more extensively, increasing the proportion of infantry and conventional artillery, and augmenting supporting elements. This could probably be accomplished without major increases in personnel and costs.

57. A potentially important development in Soviet forces is the increasing capability for distant limited action. This is represented by improving long-range airlift and sealift capabilities, greater emphasis on airborne operations, the recent revival of naval infantry, and improvement of amphibious capabilities. These developments are applicable to regular theater operations, but they also suggest Soviet interest in achieving a capability for establishing a military presence in distant areas. We believe that these efforts will continue, and that by the end of the period special units will be able to move by sea or air to remote areas on short notice. During the period of the estimate, the Soviets will probably press for base and overflight rights in a number of countries to facilitate such movements. However, the Soviets do not as yet appear to be developing the sea and air combat escort capabilities which would make possible long-range military sea and airlift against the opposition of a major military power.

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