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The Republic Challenge to Soviet Defense Policy and Planning

An Intelligence Assessment

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The Republic Challenge to Soviet Defense Policy and Planning

An Intelligence Assessment

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March 1991

The Republic Challenge to Soviet Defense Policy and Planning

Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 March 1991
was used in this report.*

Since November 1988, when Estonia declared its own laws sovereign over USSR laws, the republics have increasingly asserted their authority over aspects of national security policy:

- Ten of the 15 republics have actively abetted popular resistance to the military draft by hampering the military's ability to conscript youths and station them throughout the USSR—as a result of which the fall draft secured only 80 percent of its target conscript class, with compliance running as low as 10 percent in Georgia.
- Nine republics have asserted the right to create their own “armies,” threatening the center's monopoly on instruments of force and its ability to maintain an all-union military. Four republics have begun the process.
- Several republics are seeking to limit their financial contributions to the national defense, to exert some authority over how the defense budget is spent, to limit the goods and services they must provide Soviet military units stationed on their territory, and to obtain greater control over resident defense industry facilities.
- Nearly all of the republics have demanded a voice in Soviet military operations—asserting their right to refuse the stationing of new military units in their republics and to share control over the use of troops from their republics. Some also have asserted their right to establish nuclear-free zones and to limit other environmentally damaging activities

After some attempts at accommodation and vacillation in enforcement of Soviet decrees, the center since late fall has taken an increasingly tough line. On 1 December 1990, Gorbachev issued a strongly worded presidential decree demanding the repeal of republic laws that conflict with all-union laws on defense and replaced the Ministry of Internal Affairs leadership with a new hardline team. In January the armed forces and security services carried out a clumsy military crackdown in the Baltic republics. These actions may dampen some of the republics' assertiveness on military questions over the next year or so. It seems unlikely, however—short of massive repression—that the all-union defense and security leadership will completely contain republic protests and roll back all the gains republics have made. Republic sovereignty is broadly and deeply based in popular opinion

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As it surveys the prospect of republic secession, the Soviet General Staff faces potentially severe degradation to the nation's military capability:

- A General Staff decision to concentrate sensitive strategic offensive forces in the Russian Republic would be costly and could disrupt strategic planning. Two of the Strategic Rocket Force's 26 ICBM divisions currently are located in Belorussia, two in the Ukraine, and two in Kazakhstan.
- If the Baltic republics were to secede, the loss of territory and population would be minimal; however, the loss of strategic defense and early warning assets in these republics would reduce warning time of an attack and degrade Soviet ability to defeat it.
- The loss of the Ukraine and Moldova or Belorussia would cut the defensive depth of the European USSR by half. Moscow would be less than 650 km from the frontier. The three republics have some 66 million people and more than 15 percent of the defense-industrial base.
- The loss of some of the republics to the south could expose the Russian underbelly to political or Islamic-based instability and create opportunities for Turkish or Iranian influence, while cutting the union's conscript pool substantially and requiring the relocation of some strategic offensive and defensive forces.
- The security concerns of the remaining republics would depend largely on which ones remained. The Russian Republic presumably could become heir to all or the vast majority of Soviet nuclear weapons, in addition to most of the existing central forces

How far the devolution of defense authority proceeds depends in large part on the outlook for a new all-union treaty and the shape of the resulting political entities:

- Even in a *federation*—probably the best case from the center's point of view—the union government would almost certainly have to meet, through military reform efforts, many of the demands of the republics, such as drastic reductions in the size of the central forces, home basing for conscripts, and a greater say for republics through the union parliament or a Federation Council type of body in broad national security decision making. However, the center would retain tight control over military planning and force employment.

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- In a loose *confederation*, we believe member republics probably would field their own armies, with joint planning for mutual defense conducted with the center—which, with a small central force, would control strategic and other nuclear weapons, integrate the air defenses of all participating republics, and, probably, provide a quick-reaction force against threats from outside the confederation.

Because confederation would probably involve the constituent republics in nearly all aspects of security decision making, the General Staff may actually come to view such a system as the worst option. In the long term, if faced with having to choose between confederation and several republics achieving their independence, the General Staff may prefer a smaller Soviet Union.

If the union unravels, tensions resulting from historical antagonisms among and within the various republics could lead to military clashes that would pose policy challenges to the United States—and, especially, to its European allies. Soviet military planners must contemplate the potential for alliances between some republics and outside powers—for example, Moldova with Romania, or Azerbaijan with Turkey. None of the independent republics would want Soviet or Russian troops on their territories, although some might well allow their stationing during a transitional period. Apart from Russia, only the Ukraine has the potential to field a sizable, modern force. In any event, the General Staff—whether controlled by Russia or a smaller Soviet Union—will be increasingly focused on internal stability and operational planning to counter regional threats and to mount a strategic defense of increasingly fluid Soviet borders.

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Scope Note

This paper addresses republic defense and security initiatives and their potential impact. It first describes the Soviet defense establishment that is under attack, and cites a number of republic actions that have challenged the current system of military conscription, created or threatened to create republic-controlled "armies," interfered with supplies to the military, and asserted the right to control the center's defense activities within republic boundaries. It then addresses the impact or potential impact of such actions on military planning, manpower and economic resources, and operational considerations—including the Defense Ministry's ability to station, command, train, and use its forces—as well as arms control negotiations. (S NF)

Issues related to the challenges facing the Soviet General Staff in an era of historic political change are addressed in a number of recent SOVA products [

] SOV 91-10009 (Secret NF), March 1991; Soviet Military Development: General Staff Planning for the 1990s.

The Republic Challenge to Soviet Defense Policy and Planning

The Republic Agenda

Since 1985, republic governments and unofficial groups have forcefully communicated their frustrations about the burdens imposed on them by the union's defense and security establishments (see figure 1). They have cited the military's priority in resource allocation, to the detriment of living standards; the exploitation and mistreatment of conscripts sent to the union armed forces, where living and working conditions are often harsh and junior servicemen are frequently subjected to sometimes fatal beatings and to extortion by more senior enlisted personnel; the severe environmental damage resulting from hazardous military and military-industrial activities; and the near exclusive control over military operations, internal security, and border matters maintained by the center's military, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), and KGB personnel. They also have bridled under the typically arrogant and highhanded manner of the military and security forces.

Since November 1988, when Estonia issued a declaration proclaiming its own laws sovereign over USSR laws, republics have begun to make inroads into the union's monopoly on power (see inset). They have named local KGB and MVD chiefs and created custom guards and militia not controlled by the center. Where they have not been able to gain control, they have at least been able to play a "spoiler" role, such as constraining the military with respect to some defense production or testing on the grounds of environmental concerns. In the last year or two, military district (MD) and local commanders have made greater efforts to cooperate with local officials and assuage some popular anxieties, but this has not deflected the initiatives of many republics. Four trends in particular worry the Soviet leadership.

Military Conscription. The failure of the draft in the spring of 1990 graphically demonstrated republic resistance to the center's traditional prerogatives. Even official statistics—almost certainly understated—show that four of the 15 republics failed to draft

even 50 percent of the number of young men needed to satisfy their conscription quotas. Since then, 10 republics have abetted popular resistance to the draft by passing laws hampering the military's ability to conscript youths and station them throughout the USSR. The Baltic, Georgian, and Moldovan legislatures have suspended conscription and stated that youths should serve in territorial units in their own republics. Armenia, the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Russia have called for between 50 percent and 100 percent of their republics' draftees to be stationed at home. The Central Asians have called for the stationing of their conscripts, the majority of whom have gone into the Construction Troops, in the Turkestan MD. Tajikistan also has called for alternative service for draftees

These steps had an impact on the fall 1990 conscription []

Soviet military forces met only about 80 percent of the fall draft callup, compared with about 95 percent in the spring. Progress was particularly slow in the Baltic republics, the Caucasus, the western Ukraine, and Moldova—with republic compliance ranging from 10 percent in Georgia to some 60 percent in Moldova. The Slavic republics—Russia, Belorussia, and the Ukraine—represent the critical test, because the problem areas identified account for only a small percentage of draftees. Without giving specifics, the MOD recently has indicated that draft results were poor in several oblasts of the Ukraine, too—most likely in the western Ukraine, where anti-Soviet sentiments run high. For example, the chief of the L'vov oblast military commissariat claimed that only 44 percent of his conscription quota had been met. Official claims notwithstanding, [] reports of draft resistance and poor conscription results in some cities in Russia, coupled with similar reports from the Ukraine, suggest that the Slavic republics also may increasingly fall short of MOD goals.

Figure 1
Soviet Republic Initiatives That Bear on Defense Policies

	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belorussia	Estonia	Georgia	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyziya	Larvia	Lithuania	Moldova	RSFSR	Tajikistan	Turkmeniya	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
Declared the right to possess republic military troops	●	●	●	●	●	■	■	●	●	●	■	■	■	●	■
Declared the intent to become militarily neutral	■	■	●	■	■	■	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	●	■
Declared the intent to become nuclear-free zone	■	■	●	●	■	■	●	●	■	■	■	■	●	●	■
Suspended Soviet conscription	■	■	■	●	●	■	■	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	● ^c
Declared that Soviet conscripts should serve primarily in home republic	●	●	■	▲	▲	■	■	▲	▲	●	■	●	■	●	■
Provided for alternative service option	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	■
Issued claims over Soviet military installations	●	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	■
Passed legislation toward creation of republic military forces	●	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	●	●	■	■	■	■	■
Started to train republic troops	●	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	■	●	■	■	■	■	■
Moved to incorporate nationalist and paramilitary groups into republic military or security forces	●	●	■	●	●	■	■	●	●	●	■	■	■	■	■
Moved to create republic security forces	●	●	■	■	●	■	■	■	●	●	■	■	■	■	■
Created republic border posts or checkpoints for political, economic, or military purposes	●	▲	●	●	■	■	■	●	●	■	■	■	■	▲	■

^aMoldova has declared itself to be a demilitarized zone.
^bPresent moratorium on nuclear testing; demand to be involved in decisionmaking on nuclear weapons deployment.
^cUzbekistan halted the fall 1990 conscription for Construction Troops slated to serve outside of the republic.
^dThese republics no longer recognize Soviet conscription laws.

Republic Armies. Nine of the 15 republics have asserted the right to have their own armed forces. Only four have actually begun to create their own "armies," which vary considerably in size and military significance:

- The *Armenians* have gone furthest toward building their own military (see inset). They have a de facto Minister of Defense, currently the Chairman of the

**The Target: The Integrated, All-Union
Defense Establishment**

The Soviet armed forces are under the exclusive control of central authorities, and the General Staff undoubtedly wants to keep it that way. Strategic forces are controlled directly by the General Staff in Moscow, while general purpose ground and air forces report to the General Staff through the commander of one of the 14 military districts (MDs)—see figure 2. Several MDs are composed of part or all of more than one republic, while other republics are split between two or more MDs. The General Staff controls forces through a comprehensive and redundant network of fixed and mobile command posts and supporting communications.

Strategic offensive forces—typically equipped with long-range nuclear weapons—are deployed in peacetime in a manner to protect them from attack. Soviet bombers and ballistic missile units are based inland, and ballistic missile submarines operate from ports with ready access to deployment areas generally located close to Soviet territory. Over the past several years, arms control agreements and technical considerations have led the Soviets to further centralize their strategic offensive forces. All strategic nuclear missiles covered under the INF Treaty have been or are being removed from the Baltic republics, Belorussia, and the Ukraine, while the older Soviet ICBM forces in the central and eastern parts of the USSR are likely to be eliminated as the Soviets downsize their forces as they implement the START treaty.

Strategic defensive forces are concentrated along the periphery of the USSR in barrier defenses (particularly along the European periphery), with area defenses of strategically important zones and point defenses of key facilities throughout the USSR. The system includes air defense radars, fighter-interceptor bases, and SAM facilities. A series of large radars at locations on the periphery of the USSR

provide warning and tracking of ballistic missile attack. In the interior, there is an active ABM intercept system around Moscow.

General purpose ground and air forces have an outward land orientation along potential axes of attack, and general purpose naval forces are based, in part, to support potential continental operations. Facilities that support Soviet forces tend to be located in the central portions of the USSR. For example, the bulk of the nuclear weapons storage facilities are located in the Russian Republic (RSFSR).

The Soviets also have tightly managed their defense-industrial complex from the center. Defense-industrial production is concentrated in the RSFSR (70 percent) and the Ukraine (15 percent), with the remainder of these defense facilities scattered among the other republics. Nearly all major assembly plants are in the RSFSR or the Ukraine. Roughly three-quarters of military RDT&E facilities are located in the RSFSR, and several important test facilities and missile ranges are in Central Asia.

Overall, the RSFSR dominates in terms of military significance. The Ukraine and Belorussia are next in importance because of their size, location, and industrial base. The remaining republics' forces and facilities are primarily oriented toward providing strategic defense and conducting general purpose operations in what—at least in the past—would most likely have been secondary theaters of operations. Forces in the Baltic republics defend against air attack along the northwestern approaches to the USSR, as well as provide coastal defense against amphibious landings. Forces in the southern republics are oriented toward eastern Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and western China.

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Birth of a Republic Army

The fledgling Armenian military is based on a patchwork of unofficial armed groups, most of which were united in the summer of 1990 by the new nationalist-led legislature. These groups, which had initially formed to fight Azeris and wrest control of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh territory from the Azerbaijan Republic, lost sight of their cause and began fighting each other. Some were controlled by local- and republic-level politicians more concerned with retaining their positions than with political causes.

Upon his election in late August 1990, President Ter-Petrosyan appointed a de facto Minister of Defense and asked the armed groups to swear allegiance to the new republic Supreme Soviet. Those that did are now being trained by republic officials under the auspices of the republic MVD. Some are already deployed to the republic's border areas, and others may be defending Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh from Azeris. They are equipped primarily with small arms but have obtained some larger weapons, including mortars, flamethrowers, and truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers, through thefts from Soviet army depots and some small-scale production. In addition, they may have commandeered civilian helicopters. They have attempted to make off with Soviet army tanks and APCs, but we believe they have not yet succeeded in retaining ownership of such weapons. We have no reliable information allowing us to estimate the Armenian army's size.

Military Affairs Committee in the republic Supreme Soviet, and have sworn in their first defense "regiment." In a press interview in November 1990, the defense minister claimed that Armenian units under the auspices of the republic MVD were securing virtually the entire Armenian border. He added that these troops were being trained at republic army garrisons.

- In Azerbaijan, the nationalist Azeri People's Front has its own military wing that, for at least the last year, has been fighting Armenian paramilitary

groups. The Azerbaijan leaders have increasingly used a new "special-purpose militia" they formed against Armenian insurgent groups. The republic president also has ~~been~~ told President Gorbachev that Azerbaijan intends to organize its own military.

- One of the first moves by the new nationalist Georgian Supreme Soviet in the fall of 1990 was to rename the republic's Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet (DOSAAF) and to change its charter. The purpose of the Georgian DOSAAF is now to build a Georgian National Army, to which all Georgian conscripts are to be assigned. In late November, Georgia announced the creation of a 1,200-man volunteer officer corps, intended to be the nucleus of a republic armed force, and passed legislation creating a Georgian National Guard. In late January and early February 1991, the Georgians went much further. They passed legislation instituting their own draft—which is to begin in the spring of 1991—and claim to have a republic militia numbering some 20,000 and a republic guard numbering about 12,000 men. Some of these republic forces are now being used to suppress Ossetian separatists in the Georgian republic.
- According to press reports, Moldova plans to form a 10,000-man carabinieri-style police force. This force, under the republic MVD, would augment central defense forces during a crisis. In addition, Interior Minister Kostash announced in October 1990 the swearing in of the first regiment of the Moldovan National Army. Moldovan officials also have announced plans to sponsor exchanges with the Romanian military. The Moldovans may be pulling back from some of these efforts, in the wake of Gorbachev's 22 December decree ordering them to dismantle their military and paramilitary formations

In addition, several other republics—notably the Baltic republics—have moved to create their own border guards or militias or to assert republic authority over local MVD forces, which had previously been under

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the joint control of republic authorities and the central MVD. In the Ukraine, nascent nationalist paramilitary formations have emerged from the remnants of its DOSAAF or sporting clubs and do not yet seem to qualify for status as a "republic army."

Defense Economics. A number of republics are also seeking greater control over military spending and defense-industrial management. The RSFSR, for example, has endorsed an economic reform proposal that calls for a 20-percent real cut in defense spending for 1991, double the cut announced by the MOD. In addition, the RSFSR and several other republics want to control the uses to which their contributions to the union defense budget are put. Many republics also want to strip the center of its taxing authority and force it to rely on voluntary contributions. Without the power to tax, the center would be emasculated, and this weakness—which has been fatal to almost all previous confederations—could spell the end of a strong, centralized military

Some republics, particularly the RSFSR, also have moved to wrest defense industries located on their territory from union control. The RSFSR has offered tax breaks to enterprises that shift their subordination from union to republic, and some evidence suggests that some defense-industrial managers in the RSFSR will take orders from Yel'tsin rather than the center. There is also evidence, however, that the efforts to control defense production have confused plant managers and hampered defense production. In a concession to republic demands, the draft union treaty prepared by Gorbachev calls for joint control of defense industries by the center and the republics. Such dual subordination holds the potential for much future conflict

Adding to the disruptions confronting defense industrialists is the struggle between the center and republics over the correct path to economic reform. For example, Col. Gen. V. Achuz'ov, promoted in December 1990 to Deputy Minister of Defense, recently cited the "sundering of economic ties among enterprises" as the cause of the Ministry of Defense Industry's failure to supply his troops adequately. In October 1990, after months of dithering, the USSR

Supreme Soviet adopted a compromise reform program to move to a market economy within the next two years. The plan calls for very limited privatization of defense plants and mandates a centrally controlled defense conversion effort. At the same time, the Russian Republic has endorsed a radical plan that calls for privatization of 70 to 80 percent of all defense plants. Defense conversion would be encouraged in the newly privatized plants through tax incentives and direct subsidies.

Several republics and localities have resisted providing the housing resources to the MOD that they are required by law to deliver—a trend that has increased as the General Staff searches for installations and apartments to house the units returning from Eastern Europe. The Latvian government has gone the furthest, threatening to deny services and supplies to the central military's installations. Latvian officials stated that they would not deliver food, electric power, or water to Soviet army installations. These statements engendered heated responses and counterthreats from high-ranking Soviet military officials, and probably ultimately contributed to military support for a crack-down in the Baltic republics

Control Over Military Operations. Several republics have asserted control over all Soviet activities, including those of the military, within their territory. Whether such declarations are enforceable is questionable, but they seem likely to complicate considerably the lives of USSR armed forces commanders. Stationed Soviet forces already are a major irritant in several republics:

- Baltic leaders have declared their intent to make their region a nuclear-free zone. These leaders have called for the center to set a timetable for the removal of Soviet forces from their soil. In addition, one source of special tension has been the presence of a ballistic missile early warning radar facility at Skrunda, in Latvia. Baltic leaders have indicated that they understand that they may have to accept a transition period during which some stationed Soviet forces will remain.

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- Belorussia and the Ukraine have declared their intent to become nuclear-free zones, though they have taken no action to force removal of any nuclear facilities. The head of the leading Ukrainian nationalist organization has stated that, during that republic's transition to independence, strategic weapons would remain under central control.
- Turkmenistan has declared itself a chemical- and nuclear-weapons-free zone.
- The Kazakh leadership has demanded that it be informed before any nuclear testing on its territory and consulted regarding the stationing of nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction there.
- Armenia and Belorussia have declared that no military formations or bases from "other countries" (the USSR) may be stationed on their territory without the consent of the republic legislatures.

The Georgian Republic has been the most violently opposed to a Soviet military presence. Extremist nationalists have resorted to violence to take over military buildings and intimidate Soviet security personnel. Georgian nationalists have successfully taken over several military recreation and sports centers by storming the facilities and literally throwing out the occupants. In the spring of 1990 they were unsuccessful in an attempt to storm an MVD base during May Day festivities. Nationalists, who now dominate the republic government, have called for all Soviet "occupying" troops to be removed from the republic, by force if necessary.

The Russian Factor

The Russian Republic's political importance and its size, both in land mass and population, make it unique among the Soviet republics. Republic officials are positioned to influence the missions, structure, and capabilities of the center's forces, and it is possible that Russia eventually will be heir to the bulk of the USSR's military assets. At the same time, defense initiatives taken by the RSFSR have the most serious potential impact on the center's ability to plan and conduct military operations.

Ukrainian Independence: The Defense Ministry's Worst Nightmare

The potential for insistence by the Ukraine on fielding its own army and navy—including, perhaps, the seizure of weapons, garrisons, and defense production facilities in the republic—poses a unique threat to Soviet defense interests. The Ukraine is home to the largest concentration of forces in the USSR outside the RSFSR, including some 30 tank and motorized rifle divisions, four divisions (two ICBM and two IRBM) of the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Black Sea Fleet, Nikolayev shipyards, a number of air force and air defense units, and about 15 percent of Soviet defense industry.

More significant, the Ukraine, unlike the other smaller republics, probably has enough skilled and trained manpower to staff and command components of all five forces. The Ukrainian Republic provides some 14 percent of the overall Soviet conscript pool, but Ukrainians also make up as much as 25 percent of the officer corps. According to an article in Krasnaya zvezda, 10 percent of the General Staff is Ukrainian. A Soviet naval officer recently noted that 40 percent of Northern Fleet personnel came from the Ukraine.

So far, the Ukraine has made no outright moves to set up a republic army or to assume control of military facilities on its territory, although the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet has asserted the republic's right to have its own military forces. The legislature's initiatives to date have focused on keeping Ukrainian conscripts on republic territory during their terms of service.

Russian Republic President Boris Yel'tsin's views on the future of the USSR armed forces appear generally to coincide with those of military reformer Vladimir Lopatin, a Yel'tsin adviser. In November 1990 a Lopatin-chaired working group sent forward a set of

security proposals to Yel'tsin that called for continued central control of nuclear forces and retention of unified all-union forces as opposed to republic armies. These proposals undoubtedly reflected both satisfaction with de facto Russian dominance of the Soviet military and a sense that Russia eventually will control the most important all-union forces in any case.

Nevertheless, Yel'tsin seems determined to establish political control over Russia's territory, thus making it mandatory for the USSR MOD to have the cooperation of the Russian government (and top military leaders have met with the RSFSR parliament to discuss issues of mutual concern). He has even suggested that Russia have the right to name the USSR Minister of Defense—a civilian—in a new central coalition government. Moreover, Yel'tsin periodically has threatened to create a Russian army if the center continues to refuse the republics an adequate role in important security and economic decisions. A September 1990 RSFSR legislative resolution, adopted by the center, calls for the center to create volunteer units to deal with interethnic conflicts and reserves the right to suspend Russian draftees' service if such units are not instituted. Yel'tsin also has said that he will control weapons exports from Russian factories. Moreover, he has expressed his concern about the environmental impact on the RSFSR of a military presence augmented by forces withdrawn from Europe, and the socioeconomic impact of dumping demobilized servicemen on Russia.

In early February 1990, Col. Gen. Konstantin Kobets, a deputy chief of the General Staff in charge of the signal troops, was appointed chairman of the Russian State Committee on Defense and Security—effectively, the RSFSR's Minister of Defense. Presumably, Kobets, who apparently continues as a serving General Staff officer, will function as a bridge between the republic and the center as new defense relations are forged. A second officer, Colonel General Volkogonov, who has been chief of the Military History Institute, was also appointed an adviser to the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. Volkogonov, however, has been out of favor with the military leadership and is unlikely to play the same kind of mediating role as Kobets.

Reaction From the Center

The senior military leadership has strongly opposed the republics' independent stance on military issues, in particular, their interference with conscription and their desire to set up republic armies. Defense Minister Yazov, General Staff Chief Moiseyev, and other military officials contend that only a strong union army can guarantee the national security and the integrity of the state. They have denounced the republics' antimilitary legislation and failure to comply with all-union defense laws. In November, with military nerves stretched to the breaking point by republic actions, Yazov announced new measures authorized by the central government, including authorizing military personnel to use force to counter attacks on them or on military facilities by republics and their citizens.

Until recently, the center has vacillated on enforcement of its defense-related laws and decrees. In March 1990 the military organized an effort to round up Lithuanian deserters who were being hidden in the republic. In one incident that received extensive media and popular attention, Soviet soldiers seized more than a dozen deserters from a psychiatric hospital in Vilnius, beating them viciously and then dispatching them to units in the harsh climate of the Soviet Far East. Nevertheless, the campaign was quickly stopped after no more than a few dozen of several hundred deserters were captured, presumably because of the outcry in Lithuania. Similarly, the MOD thus far has moved to prosecute only a small percentage of thousands of draft resisters, some of whom are performing alternative public service authorized by republic laws.

On 25 July 1990, Gorbachev issued a decree ordering the disbanding by 9 August of illegal military formations and the surrender of all illegally held weapons, an order aimed particularly at armed formations in Armenia. The security forces took almost no practical steps to enforce the decree, and Gorbachev's deadline passed with no movement toward control of the armed bands. (Later that month, however, after Gorbachev

agreed to allow republic forces the lead in eliminating such groups, Armenian National Army leaders surrendered to republic authorities in Yerevan.)

During the fall, Gorbachev's position on these questions shifted away from accommodating the demands of the republics and moved toward a tougher new policy. In an August 1990 speech to a military audience, he implied that he might endorse the concept of a voluntary military and even suggested that he might consider favorably the issue of republic militias. However, faced with rising disaffection at all levels of the armed forces and months of pressure from military leaders, on 1 December he issued a toughly worded presidential decree demanding the repeal of republic laws that conflict with all-union laws on defense and replaced the MVD leadership with a hardline politician (Boris Puġo) and a charismatic general with Afghan experience (Boris Grömov). In early December 1990, Gorbachev met with a large group of industrialists, including many from the defense industry, to hear their concerns and reassure them about his own intentions. He was treated to a withering recital of the problems and disruptions caused by governmental wavering and conflicting orders

In an effort to regain the policy initiative in dealing with the recalcitrant republics, as well as with questions of law and order nationwide, Gorbachev also proposed new presidential structures, including a new national security council that probably will have some say on defense and internal security issues—although he intends to retain decisionmaking authority. Moreover, Gorbachev obtained approval from the Congress of People's Deputies for his concept of a union treaty that recasts the USSR as a federation of sovereign republics and retains a substantial role for the center. The Congress also approved the proposed Federation Council, which is intended to give leaders of republics and autonomous regions a greater say in decisionmaking in the future

Military authorities have taken a number of actions to deal with circumstances caused by mounting ethnic strains within the forces, and the power of nationalist

influences on the military has been exacerbated by the growing activism of republic governments.¹ Initially, the military was generally inclined to compromise. In December 1990 the MOD announced that it would assign 80 percent of all Baltic conscripts to their home republics. No republic yet has attempted to force the removal of nuclear weapons from its territory as part of its antinuclear policy, but the central government, concerned about the security of the weapons, evidently has removed most of them from some areas of unrest.² In early January 1991, by contrast, the central government and the military moved forcefully to suppress republic assertiveness in the Baltic republics. The conscription issue, with which the center justified the crackdown, was a pretext for it to reassert its control more generally over republics that seemed determined to achieve independence. It is evident that the republic efforts to frustrate the union conscription effort, along with other policies challenging the MOD's ability to do its business, were major factors contributing to the center's decision to use force.

In February 1991, following the violence in the Baltic republics, the center again has talked compromise. At a joint interview with newly appointed Chairman Kobets, Moiseyev announced the creation of a new General Staff organ for "collaboration" with the republic defense committees and stressed the increasing rights and responsibilities of the republics in the defense area. It is possible that this shift reflects in part the leadership's dismay about the outcome of the January effort to use force to intimidate Baltic independence proponents. More likely, however, it is one side of a carefully modulated policy which offers at least a fig leaf of greater influence on defense policy to republics that cooperate, while threatening much harsher measures against republics that do not

Implications for Soviet Defense Policies

Republic challenges are made all the more difficult because they are superimposed on sweeping changes already under way in Soviet defense policy and planning. All have a republic dimension:

- Although military plans continue to focus west, key Soviet military leaders are necessarily concerned over *emerging threats* to the USSR to the south, ranging from low-intensity border instability to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and unstable neighbors.
- With the withdrawal of forces from abroad, the Soviets' operational *plans* now are premised upon deep, strategic defensive operations to defend their increasingly fluid borders. Planners must grapple with increased cross-border traffic and cooperation, particularly in the south, and probably contemplate the potential for alliances between some republics and outside powers—for example, Moldova with Romania, or Azerbaijan with Turkey.³
- To obtain *manpower*, the Soviet armed forces have depended on a system of nearly universal conscription to fill the enlisted ranks for a force that currently numbers approximately 3.8 million men (not counting KGB, MVD, or Railroad Troops). General Staff-planned force reductions to a level of about 3 million men by the mid-1990s, as well as moves toward a voluntary military, will ease the problem of securing enough manpower to fulfill military tasks. Nevertheless, if the USSR were to remain intact, demographic trends would increase the share of less skilled and less reliable Central Asians and Caucasians in the conscript pool—from about 30 percent presently to roughly 40 percent by the year 2000, while the Slavic share would fall from the present 65 percent to approximately 60 percent. In the meantime, Soviet planners also are having to cope with separating warring ethnic groups and limiting contact among potentially hostile nationalities.
- Challenges to the Soviet *military presence* and activities are multiplying, as Soviet forces and their families return home from abroad in increasing

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numbers and compete with local civilians for scarce food supplies, housing, and other services and commodities. Both antinuclear and environmental pressures also will probably intensify

Republic Independence. Against this backdrop, the prospect of secession, or even increased autonomy for the republics, poses awesome challenges to General Staff planners already coping with the loss of the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. As they consider the prospect of outright loss of several of the current republics, military planners must have a variety of troubling considerations in mind:

- The relocation of six strategic offensive ICBM divisions (two in Belorussia, two in the Ukraine, and two in Kazakhstan) would be costly and would temporarily disrupt the operations of these forces to the degree that the General Staff may not be able to consider them available for allocation to its comprehensive, worldwide, strategic nuclear strike plans.
- The loss of strategic defense facilities in the Baltic republics could reduce warning time of an attack and would degrade Soviet ability to defeat it. Replacing Baltic facilities in the RSFSR would be extremely costly and would not fully offset the lost capabilities.⁴
- With the loss of the Ukraine and Moldova, the defensive depth of the remaining segment of the union bordering Europe would be less than half that of the present USSR. Moscow would be less than 650 km from the frontline, and the General Staff would lose control over about half of the Black Sea littoral. Finally, the center would lose access to over 15 percent of its defense-industrial base and some 56 million people.
- The loss of Belorussia also would cut the defensive depth in the European part of the USSR in half and the union's total population by about 10 million. In

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addition, a number of potential defensive positions along which Soviet planners might foresee construction of a defense in depth—the Berezina and Dnepr Rivers and the Pripyat' Marshes—would be unavailable.

- The loss of several republics in the west, moreover, would not reduce the length of the land borders of the remaining union controlled from Moscow. The reverse "funnel effect" of Soviet European geography—increasing the width of remaining territories by some 1,000 kilometers as the front moved eastward—would present future central planners with increased, not decreased, ground force lines of defense, unless they decided to limit them to selected areas or sectors (see figure 3).
- The loss of the Caucasian republics probably would not debilitate the union's defense industry or severely reduce the conscript pool (see figure 4). Nonetheless, these republics are home to important strategic defensive capabilities and provide the center with a military buffer to a region that is wracked by unrest. Their loss would create opportunities for Turkish or Iranian influence.
- The loss of the Central Asian republics would cut the conscript pool by over 20 percent, force the center to replace several critical military and production facilities, and, like the Caucasus, potentially bring political or Islamic-based instability closer to Russia's borders

The independent republics would have their own militaries, but some probably would sign national security treaties with the residual union or with Russia. Most of the newly independent republic forces would pose little or no threat to neighboring republics; some republics might see a threat from regional rivals and desire a guarantee from the union, while still others could see the union as the principal threat to their continued existence. None would be likely to want Soviet troops to be permanently stationed on its territory. In the unlikely event that Soviet forces were to remain in independent republics under some sort of basing-rights agreements, they could be increasingly exposed to violent demonstrations by republic citizens opposing their presence on environmental or other grounds.

In addition to dealing with the practical implications of the secession of particular republics, the General Staff confronts a number of more general problems stemming from the secession process itself and the associated uncertainty. Soviet defense planners, for example, probably are concerned about their ability to structure forces and *plan* operations to mount a credible, cohesive defense in the event of severe political disruption. They must wrestle, at least prospectively, with plans to defend a state whose future borders are not known and with forces that may not be made available to them. On the other hand, problems associated with command and control and *use* of forces that grow out of the assertiveness of the current republics actually would ease if the most restive ones were to become independent.

Soviet military forces have traditionally been positioned primarily in response to operational requirements. The General Staff's ability to *station* units returning from Europe and Mongolia already has been complicated by the reluctance of various republics to accept a larger presence; the loss of one or more of the peripheral republics would further exacerbate rational planning for placement of the units remaining in a restructured and reduced force

Stationing of nuclear—especially, strategic nuclear—forces could pose even larger problems to a smaller USSR. The costs associated with physically relocating these forces from seceding republics to the RSFSR would be very high and could result in the eventual elimination of some Soviet strategic offensive forces currently based outside the RSFSR. Some strategic defensive assets could be more readily relocated; nevertheless, the change would require considerable expense and years to complete and could result in a substantial decrease in strategic air defense coverage. The center, consequently, has strong incentives to reach an accommodation with the Baltic republics and any other peripheral republics seeking separation from the union in order to continue operation of strategic air defense and early warning units in the regions

Figure 3
Potential Impact of the Loss of the Western Republics on Soviet Defense Lines

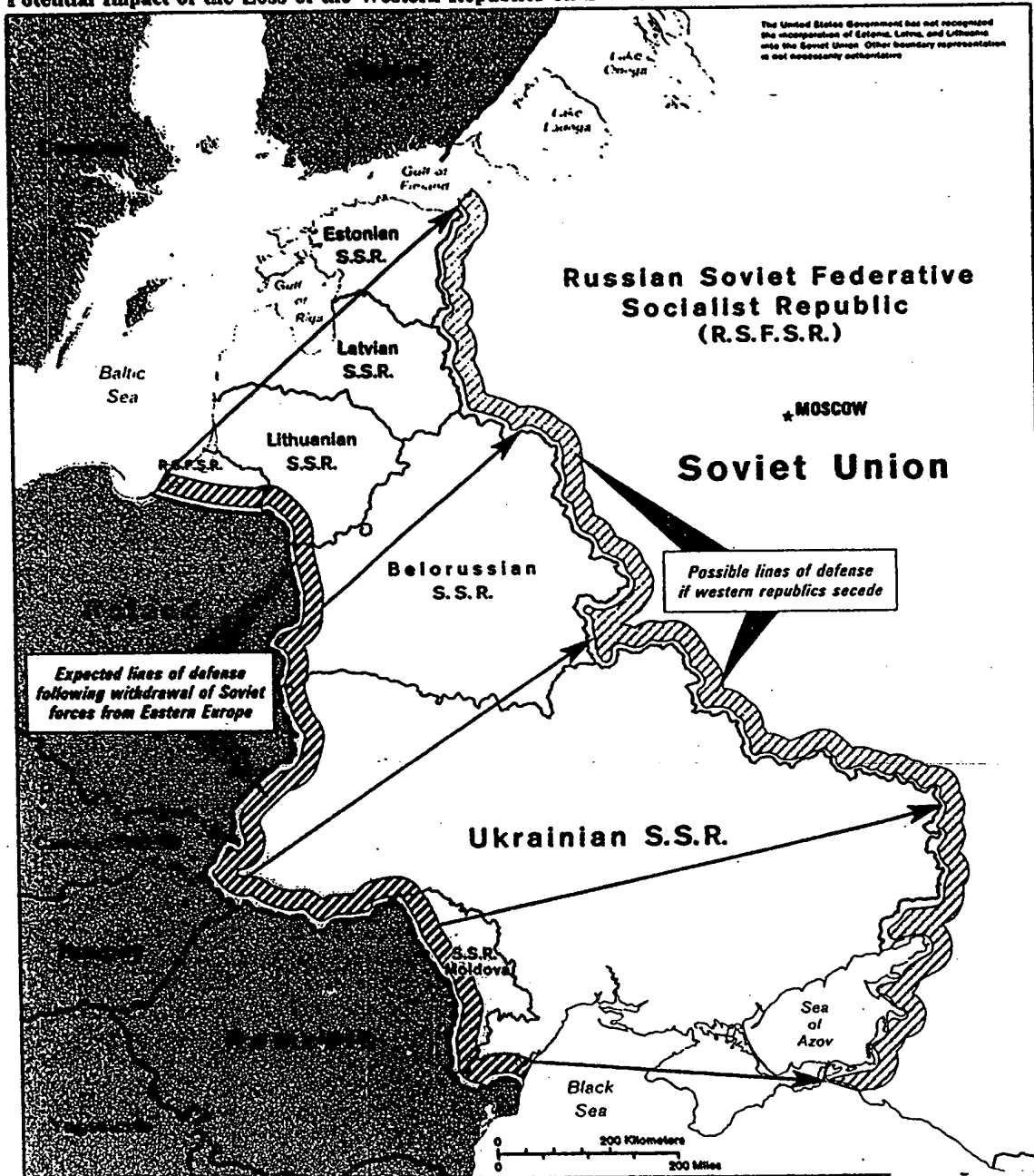
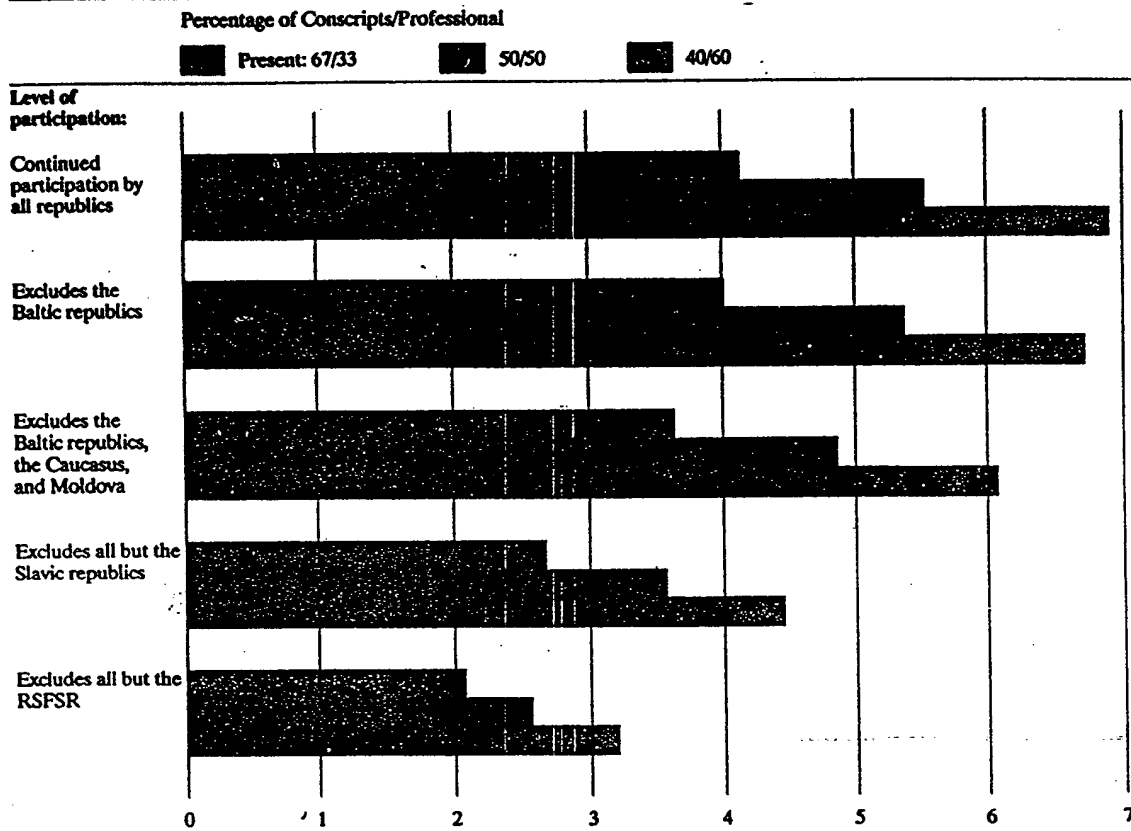


Figure 4
USSR: Estimated Supportable Military Force Size *
(Based on Conscript Availability in 1990)

Million men



* Includes all uniformed forces (Railroad Troops, KGB Border Guards, and MVD Internal Troops).

The breakup of the Soviet Union could considerably complicate *arms control negotiations* and monitoring/verification activities. If the process of secession were orderly and newly independent republics wanted to participate, the republics, the center, and negotiating partners probably could find ways to overcome problems and modify agreements. If independence were to

come about in more chaotic circumstances, however, the arms control process could be severely disrupted, with existing agreements rendered irrelevant or invalid. In either case, the RSFSR's perspective would be

critical in preserving agreements and continuing negotiations, because the bulk of the forces (both strategic and conventional) are stationed on its territory. If an independent RSFSR chose to participate in the various arms control treaties and discussions, the existing agreements would probably be preserved and the momentum of discussions maintained or even accelerated.

Salvaging a Union: Federation or Confederation.

Because of the pronounced resistance in a number of republics to continued domination by the center, central authorities will find it nearly impossible to turn the hands of the clock back to a time when the republics unquestioningly accepted a subservient role. Nonetheless, if the republics could be convinced to join a new form of association—either a federation or a confederation—some General Staff apprehensions about change in the security realm might be eased. Gorbachev has been pursuing this approach through his proposed all-union treaty, which offers limited autonomy and joint control to the republics in some spheres—for example, use of economic resources and trade—while maintaining tight control over national security and most other critical functions.

A new political relationship between the republics and the center could come to rest at numerous points along a continuum from the status quo to complete fragmentation of the current Soviet state, but the arrangements probably would fall into one of two rough categories that could be termed "federation" and "confederation." The implications of the two forms of government for national security structure and decisionmaking would, however, be sharply different. A federation would feature a strong central government with some latitude for increased autonomy and influence by the constituent republics—the all-union treaty is a model federation. By contrast, the republics making up a confederation would have substantially more independent authority, with only limited powers held by the center. Presumably, under a confederation the assent of the republics would be required for many decisions in the national security realm. This situation would undermine the central

security apparatus's ability to function in many areas, but the most serious implications would have to do with *control*—the ability to use forces for internal or external purposes:

- A *federation* would represent the better case from the center's point of view, because the republics' relationship to the center probably would bear a strong resemblance to the status quo. Even here, the union government, to stave off widespread civil unrest and disobedience, probably would have to meet, through military reform efforts, many of the demands of the republics. However, the union's relationship with the republics would remain characterized chiefly by continuing strong central control over nearly all security matters. All republics probably would not participate willingly in a Soviet federation. The Baltic republics, Armenia, and Georgia have all announced that they will not sign a new union treaty and will instead pursue independence. Some of these republics, however, might be willing to retain a security relationship with the center. The remaining ones are unlikely to back-track on calls for draftees to serve in their own republics.
- In a loose *confederation*—the option that is favored by those republics that are more willing to contemplate continued association with the center—the associated republics would depend upon the union for some of their security requirements. In this case, we might see retention of a small central force that controlled strategic and other nuclear weapons (the RSFSR's leadership, for example, has explicitly recommended continued central control over nuclear weapons); integrated the air defenses of all participating republics; and, possibly, provided a quick-reaction force against threats from outside the confederation. Such a central force might also be used for international peacekeeping missions. Each republic might field an army or national guard, with joint planning for mutual defense conducted by the center and the republics. Finally, republics would probably insist that the center allow them, at a minimum, to participate in all-union

Potential Impact of Republic Independence on CFE and START

Because the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty involves limits on NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, leaving each side to allocate force levels among its members, the accession of newly independent republics might be possible only if they reached an accord with the central authorities in Moscow on receiving a part of the USSR's original allocation to cover whatever forces the republics wished to deploy. Secession agreements with the Baltic republics, which already have expressed interest in joining CFE talks, probably would cover the status of remaining Soviet forces there and inspection rights under CFE. Other republics, such as Armenia and Azerbaijan, might have no interest in CFE and could disrupt its implementation by refusing to host inspections of any remaining Soviet facilities or by developing their own forces. The willingness of independent republics to participate in follow-on negotiations could affect the geographic scope of future agreements and expand participation in complex negotiations.

Strategic arms control efforts would be most affected if republics with ICBM and heavy bomber bases—Belorussia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and, of course, the RSFSR—left the union. Soviet military officials probably would plan to take any negotiated START reductions in older strategic forces based outside of the RSFSR first, and (costs permitting) would prefer to transfer any remaining modern strategic nuclear

forces to the RSFSR, in the event that republic were left as the successor to the center. From the US point of view, any such agreement should provide for continuing US access to conduct inspections in the less likely event that the Soviets sought to station strategic forces in independent republics. If the agreement did not allow for such access, the republic could refuse, as a nonsignatory, US requests to inspect declared Soviet strategic facilities. In the near term, the RSFSR or the Ukraine could demand representation on the Soviet START delegation, along with the separate right to ratify agreements that affected strategic forces stationed on its territory, leading to some additional delays in the process of negotiating and implementing strategic arms control treaties.

The prospect of republic independence already has affected the Soviets' positions and proposals in START and could affect their concepts for follow-on strategic arms control negotiations. In START II talks, for example, the Soviets could stress proposals that would allow flexibility in force reductions—such as the construction of new strategic facilities in the RSFSR to house relocated units—that would help them adjust to problems with the republics

decisions on larger defense issues, such as identification of potential threats, the size of defense budgets, and national arms control strategies.

Under either system, the unwillingness of some republics to accede to the center's defense directives and demands for resources probably would exacerbate the difficulties the General Staff has already experienced in *using forces* to deal with domestic unrest and disobedience. Even in a federation, the continued insistence by some republics that their conscripts

serve in their own republics, their ragged responses to all-union conscription quotas, their calls for voluntary military service, and their active resistance to the center's stationing of large all-union forces on their soil probably would result in these republics being classified as potentially unreliable by the General Staff, and could even compel it to plan to avoid using some republic forces—especially militia—during domestic or international crises

Soviet military leaders would see retention of *sole authority* to use military force as crucial. Under a federation, they presumably would have such authority over central forces; under a confederation, they might not. In the latter case, central authorities almost certainly would require the permission of the republics to use central forces stationed on their territories to deal with *internal* problems, and might encounter outright republic bans on the center's use of any local militia. Also, a national decision to commit forces *abroad* probably would require concurrence of republic authorities—even in the face of an external threat to the survival of the state—and raise critical questions regarding the participation of specific ethnic groups, command and control, and logistics. Efforts already under way by military reformers to secure a role for the Defense and State Security Committee of the USSR Supreme Soviet in controlling the use of Soviet forces outside the USSR, similar to that under the US War Powers Act, could be mirrored at the republic level. If the Federation Council were used as Gorbachev seems to intend, it, too, could play a role in bringing to bear the opinions of the republics on such decisions—a development the USSR MOD would dislike. Moreover, each republic forming its own army eventually would be forced to develop its own command and control network—which would have to mesh with an integrated, all-union defense system.

Presumably, decisionmaking power over the use of nuclear weapons would be retained, under confederation, by the central authorities or—in the event of the complete collapse of the USSR—by the Russian leadership. If, in a union larger than the RSFSR, strategic weapons were deployed in other republics and those republics insisted on joint control of the weapons, the decision to employ them would be complicated and almost certainly delayed, possibly to the point where the success of the strategic nuclear plan would be jeopardized. Because of strong antinuclear sentiment in most of the current republics, however, the worst fears of the military leadership about sharing control of nuclear weapons in a confederation may not be realized (although some of the republics might review their thinking about the benefits of acquiring nuclear power status as they approached independence). The RSFSR apparently

accepts its status as the repository for substantial nuclear forces, and it is likely to accept nuclear forces that might be relocated from other republics, although the exorbitant expense involved in moving strategic weapons makes this an unattractive option.

The impact of a confederated form of government on the center's ability to perform other national security functions would be similarly disruptive. Whereas a federation might involve only minor changes from the status quo, the increased authority that republics would exercise in a confederation would markedly increase the military leadership's problems. For example, greatly expanded powers of the republics over *taxation and spending for defense purposes* would give them a veto over defense programs, making the armed forces access to resources subject to the generosity of the republics

The impact of political change on the armed forces' ability to *station* its forces to best advantage would depend wholly on how much control was ceded from the center to the republics in the negotiations setting up the new union. Even in a federation, the increased assertiveness now evident on environmental and other questions would almost certainly complicate the General Staff's decisionmaking process; under a confederation, traditional criteria for placement of many military units would have to take a backseat to political considerations

Another area that could be seriously affected involves the scope and type of *training* to be conducted on republic territory. Both training and readiness of the all-union armed forces would suffer if republic armies were more widely established, as they almost certainly would be under a confederation. Indeed, republic forces organized, equipped, and trained primarily for republic-specific tasks could vary from all-union norms so drastically that coordinated or integrated training operations would not be feasible. Finally, because of the Soviet leadership's insistence on firm control of strategic offensive forces and concern for the security of these weapons, field activity by mobile

ICBM units would probably decrease significantly, and other land-based nuclear force training would probably be conducted only at centrally controlled test and training facilities.

Outlook

The center's tough new policy may dampen some of the republics' assertiveness on defense issues, but it is unlikely, short of massive repression, that it will stifle republic protests or derail policies that have strong popular support. In Kazakhstan, for example, public feelings about nuclear and other environmental contamination are so strong that a relatively conventional Communist government has placed tremendous pressure on the central government and succeeded in obtaining a promise that the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site would be closed in 1993. Similarly, fears of and disrespect for military service are so widespread in the country that the MOD is unlikely to contain draft resistance to the point where it is no longer a problem, although it may succeed for the present in ending overt institutional efforts by the republics and localities to interfere with conscription.

Over at least the next few months, the General Staff will continue to exert pressure—with limited deference toward instituting some reform measures in the military—for the status quo. Failing that, it will strongly resist movement toward a system that would significantly undercut its traditional authority and responsibilities as well as the effectiveness of all-union forces. Internally, the center will use the MVD's 150,000 operational troops and special police, supplemented by the military's 45,000 airborne troops to control unrest and combat disobedience of union laws. Military planners will work to ensure the reliability of military units, replacing "unreliable" individuals and selectively employing units to minimize any conflicting loyalties. Externally, although senior officers will have to consider the implications of republic sovereignty, they will continue to plan on the basis of existing forces, dispositions, and missions. In late 1989 the General Staff issued directives premised upon a defense of Eastern Europe and a continuing role for non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) armies. Although, in retrospect, such assumptions seem near-sighted, at that time Soviet forces were (and still are)

based in (eastern) Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and NSWP armies apparently still coordinated their plans, readiness, and operations with the Soviet Union. ↑

↑ the MOD continues to plan on access to key regions such as the Baltic republics. ↓

Over the long term, the center and the republics will reach a new accommodation on security policy as one element of their evolving relationship. Soviet military planners will continue to argue that republic security concerns should be subordinated to central interests and may be expected to support a federative type of association to succeed today's union. If, as we think likely, deep-rooted and widespread republic opposition to union dominance continues and grows, the center ultimately may have to choose between a loose confederation of republics or allowing nearly all of them to become independent.

On the surface, a confederation might appear more attractive to the General Staff, because the union probably would be essentially unaffected in size or resources and its forces probably could continue to be deployed in some number in the republics. However, the degree of intrusion the republics would demand into virtually every aspect of military decision making and the inherent disruption to military planning and operations are likely, in our view, to disincline the military leadership to use its influence to press for the confederation option. In the long term, rather than accept the ambiguity, uncertainty, and delay likely to be associated with a confederation, Soviet military leaders may well prefer a much smaller union, allowing several of the republics to establish their independence as long as the remaining ones acceded to a tight, centrally controlled federation

The manner in which the USSR moves to a new relationship between the center and the republics could influence the way the military plays its role as well as the ultimate outcome. If the Baltic republics, for example, continued to push aggressively for independence, the armed forces would be likely to argue

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for active resistance—perhaps resulting in considerable violence. On the other hand, if the republics moved slowly, in conformity with Gorbachev's policy and with the terms of the USSR Constitution, it is possible that the armed forces may be forced over the long term to accept the transition to a new order without active or bloody confrontation. Nonetheless, because some republics have more military value to the center than others, the General Staff would probably fight losing those—such as the Ukraine—under any condition.

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