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# Management of Warsaw Pact Weapons Acquisition: Soviet Goals and Pact Reality

A Research Paper

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# Management of Warsaw Pact Weapons Acquisition: Soviet Goals and Pact Reality

A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Office  
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**Management of Warsaw Pact  
Weapons Acquisition:  
Soviet Goals and Pact Reality**

**Summary**

*Information available  
as of 1 May 1986  
was used in this report.*

Classified Soviet writings indicate that in the late 1960s Soviet military planners established a more demanding wartime role for non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) forces, while at the same time Soviet economic planners launched a new drive for integration of the Soviet and East European economies. NSWP forces began to be assigned key offensive missions against frontline NATO forces. Meanwhile, East European industries were called upon to produce new technologies and equipment, particularly in the fields of computers, microelectronics, and machine tools. These measures were intended to improve Pact military and economic capabilities while easing the burgeoning strains on the Soviet Union.

Progress toward Soviet goals, however, was jeopardized by NSWP military and industrial deficiencies, and by the lack of a strong management mechanism to remedy them. NSWP armaments were falling behind those of Soviet and most NATO inventories in both quantity and quality, and NSWP defense and support industries were characterized by lagging military technology, slow industrial modernization, and duplication of effort. To overcome these problems, the Soviets pressed for further Warsaw Pact military and economic integration, emphasizing Pactwide military standards and extensive industrial cooperation and specialization.

In 1969 the Soviets set up a highly centralized, formal system for Warsaw Pact defense and armaments planning, which replaced the pattern of informal bilateral coordination of already established plans that had existed since the mid-1950s. Under this centralized system, still in operation, Soviet-driven Pact plans are the foundation upon which NSWP nations develop their five-year defense plans in a highly structured fashion during a five-year preparation period. Defense plans establish how the armed forces and the national territory should be prepared for war and document the targets for armaments acquisition. National five-year and annual state economic plans specify armaments production and delivery goals, which are closely coordinated with defense plans.

In theory, the Warsaw Pact countries collectively determine the directions of Pact development. The Pact's *Political Consultative Committee (PCC)* decides high-level political issues affecting collective defense. The *Council of Defense Ministers (CDM)* deals with more specific military matters and determines the main trends of development of the Combined Armed Forces

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(CAF) in accordance with PCC resolutions. The *Military Council* advises the CDM on relevant issues and works on the Warsaw Pact budget with the chiefs of the finance departments of the various nations' defense ministries. The *CAF Technical Committee* prepares recommendations for Pact armaments acquisition, studies future technical developments, and coordinates national armaments research and experimental and engineering work. Within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), the *Permanent Commission on Defense Industry* supports armaments acquisition by advising the Pact decisionmaking organizations, overseeing adoption of technical standards recommended by the Pact's Technical Committee, monitoring the capabilities of each nation's defense industries, and studying and implementing recommendations on national industrial specialization and joint weapons research and development (R&D) and production.

In reality, the Soviets have stacked the deck in this elaborate apparatus:

- Key positions—including the CAF Commander in Chief (CinC), Chief of Staff, the head of the Technical Committee, and the head of CEMA's Permanent Commission on Defense Industry—are always held by Soviets. Many key staff positions—such as those of the CEMA Secretariat Defense Industry Department, which serves the Permanent Commission on Defense Industry—are also largely or entirely filled by Soviets.
- The Soviets use procedural formalities—such as control of meeting agendas and delegations—to help ensure acceptance of their proposals in Pact and CEMA forums.
- The Soviets gain a great deal of information on the workings and performance of their allies' defense industries and military forces, while keeping their own capabilities secret

The most important instrument the Soviets use to steer Warsaw Pact force development is the planning process. Armaments planning takes place both on an alliance level (through multilateral and bilateral agreements) and individually within each state. [ ] indicates that the Soviets begin military planning about a year earlier than do the NSWP countries. The Soviet Ministry of Defense uses its own armaments planning to drive CAF planning. Using CAF planning as a base, the Combined Command

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formulates recommendations for each NSWP country on the development of its forces over the next five-year plan period. NSWP defense ministries in turn draft their own five-year defense plans, taking into account the Combined Command's recommendations. Negotiations on force development issues are then conducted between the Combined Command and the individual NSWP states, with the CAF recommendations serving as the basis for discussions. Final agreements are formalized in bilateral protocols signed by the CAF CinC and by the defense minister and Council of Ministers chairman of the NSWP state.

National armaments planning is heavily influenced by the Soviets in other ways as well. Most NSWP planning organizations and processes have been organized to closely resemble their Soviet counterparts. Throughout the planning cycle, Soviet party, government, and economic officials visit and receive their NSWP counterparts and attempt to coordinate positions. The Soviets also use representatives of the CAF CinC stationed with the NSWP armies to influence planning within the NSWP states. These representatives, Soviet officers who are usually four-star generals, serve as the key links in the entire reporting system established between the individual armies and the Combined Command.

Despite the highly structured process, planning rarely proceeds smoothly. [ ] reports that since the mid-1970s the Soviet appetite for arms and pressure for introducing new armaments programs have grown, making bilateral negotiations progressively more difficult as NSWP countries seek to modify ambitious Soviet plans. Although the long coordination process is designed to allow each nation to influence the plan, [ ] reports that the Soviets have proved insistent on many of their proposals. The Soviet tendency to modify agreements midplan also inhibits the effectiveness of the planning process.

We cannot confidently isolate the changes that have been wrought by the Pact planning system independent of other factors. We believe, however, that progress in equipment modernization and standardization and in development of NSWP defense industry has been significantly enhanced by the centralized system. NSWP countries have improved their military and defense industrial capabilities despite considerable economic difficulties. They have substantially upgraded their holdings of land arms and aircraft, and have tackled new and more challenging production tasks in both complete weapon systems and componentry.

The planning apparatus affords the Soviets several advantages. It:

- Allows them to plan and closely monitor both the defense industrial capabilities and weapon inventories of their Warsaw Pact allies.
- Helps reduce the stress on Soviet defense industries and free production resources for manufacturing more advanced equipment.
- Contributes to Pact readiness for industrial mobilization for war and provides a larger base on which to draw.
- Contributes to weapons standardization in the CAF, which in turn facilitates joint operational planning, training, supply, maintenance, and repair.
- Enhances control of NSWP forces, because the dependence of each Warsaw Pact army, except Romania's, on many types of nonindigenously developed and/or produced arms would make it difficult, if not impossible, for any of the armies to contemplate any long-term action without the guarantee of external logistic support.
- Provides an image of greater consensual decisionmaking than exists, which may make it easier for NSWP leaders to claim that they have not caved in to Soviet pressure.

Pact coordination of armaments acquisition has had both advantages and disadvantages for the NSWP nations. The centralized planning process has formalized the necessity of responding to Soviet demands, but it has also made it easier for the NSWP nations to register their opinions and influence decisions before they are made. Although the NSWP defense industries are a generation or more behind their Soviet counterpart, coordinated planning has made possible more efficient specialization of production and helped eliminate costly duplication. Pact cooperation has kept the East Europeans from developing a broad military R&D base of their own, but has allowed them to advance R&D in profitable areas that have dual military and civil applications, such as optic., machine tools, and microelectronics. Finally, the planning process has facilitated weapons trade within the Pact, thus allowing the NSWP states to reap some of the financial benefits of producing military equipment

Pact planning has not accomplished all it is intended to:

- One of the primary goals—to narrow the gap between Soviet and East European forces—is not being attained. According to [ ] in 1980 the NSWP countries agreed to field by the mid-1980s ground forces similar in quality to those that existed in the Soviet Union in the late 1970s. Although their capabilities have improved, no NSWP country had met those goals by 1985, and probably few will do so by 1990.
- Even the scaled-down plans that the East Europeans have since agreed to are not being met. Most Pact countries have not bought the contracted quantities of increasingly expensive Soviet weapons.
- All NSWP countries have had problems meeting scheduled deliveries to each other and to the USSR.
- Pact members do not appear to have a cooperative mechanism for determining prices for military equipment, and both the Soviets and East Europeans reportedly sell to each other at inflated prices.
- Although some equipment standardization has been accomplished both in the factory and in the field, the record has been mixed. For example, Pact nations have at least seven types of battle tanks—with a range of gun calibers, ammunition, engines, and other features. Problems with licensing technological processes within CEMA have impeded technology sharing and have been a key factor hampering industrial standardization.
- Foreign military sales have occasionally been a source of contention between the Soviets and their allies. In the late 1970s, the Soviets proposed formal Pact coordination of military assistance to the Third World, but negative NSWP reaction caused them to call for better voluntary coordination instead.

In the future, the Pact system of planning and management will probably be tasked with even greater challenges. Under Gorbachev's drive for industrial modernization, heavy demands are being levied on the Soviet machine-building sector, which produces military arms and equipment as well as consumer and producer durables. The Soviets may be hoping to



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alleviate some of the stress on this sector through a gradual increase of the NSWP role in Pact military production. They will want to guard, however, against NSWP countries wresting back some of the economic and military clout these countries have forfeited through their dependence on the USSR for weapons. They will also want to ensure that NSWP countries do not become overextended, jeopardizing other commitments to the USSR and their own industrial modernization. To maintain their influence and to steer their military-economic relations with the NSWP countries in a direction compatible with their interests, the Soviets will probably depend heavily on the Pact planning and management system, and they may seek to broaden still further its scope and authority.

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