

4 Military Influence in Soviet Politics: Red Militarism or National Security Consensus?

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Introduction

In the past few years some Western observers have expressed growing concern about the state of civil–military relations in the Soviet Union. The issue was presented in its starkest form by a headline in the American press: ‘Will the Soviet Military Assume Power?’¹ This question received increasing attention in the West following the imposition of martial law in Poland, and later in the period of uncertain political succession preceding the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev as the new Soviet leader. Several events, including the removal of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov as Chief of the General Staff, the death of Defence Minister Dmitrii Ustinov, and his replacement by Marshal Sergei Sokolov have again focused attention on Soviet civil–military relations. This chapter seeks to provide a better understanding of the issue, in its historical context, and particularly in its relevance to contemporary Soviet politics.

Military rule is only one aspect of civil–military relations. The point at which the military take over the functions of civilian government represents one extreme on a spectrum of military influence in politics. At the other extreme lies the military’s own domain – the preparation for and conduct of war – and the question here concerns the extent of civilian control and direction of military matters. For the Soviet Union, this question requires consideration of such issues as the role of the Communist Party versus the military in the formulation of Soviet military doctrine and strategy; the influence of design bureaux and military services in the acquisition of new weapons; and the place of arms control in the determination of military policy.

Two issues link the ends of the spectrum and demonstrate the various degrees of military influence in Soviet politics. One concerns the allocation of resources between civilian and military purposes. Here conflict between those who favour high rates of growth for military spending and those who feel that more attention should be given to consumption and investment has obvious relevance for Soviet security policy. At the same time, it has a bearing on politico-military relations, because the relative strength of military priorities in budget allocations directly influences domestic politics – particularly during a period of general economic stagnation.

The second issue linking the two main areas is the role of the military in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. As the aftermath of the South Korean airliner tragedy of autumn 1983 demonstrated, foreign policy is closely tied to security policy. But because the former is in principle the purview of the political leadership, any attempt by the military to increase its influence significantly in this area has clear repercussions on politico-military relations.

The extent to which one can speak of 'the military' as a separate interest group, influencing foreign policy or deciding budget priorities, lies at the heart of the debate over Soviet civil–military relations. The prevailing wisdom had held that the Soviet military constituted a coherent group with specific functional and ideological objectives, maintained in opposition to those of the party.² In recent years this view has been challenged from two perspectives. One focuses on the commonality of interests between party and military leaders – the fact that most Soviet officers and many soldiers are party members, and that party leaders by and large support military objectives both for a strong external defence as well as for internal societal cohesion (based on military-patriotic education).³ The other perspective argues that the Soviet armed forces do not constitute a corporate unit, but rather represent several competing bureaucracies, each active in promoting policies that serve its own parochial interests.⁴

This debate over the nature of Soviet civil–military relations informs consideration of the four issues mentioned above – the likelihood of military rule in the Soviet Union; decision-making on weapons procurement and military doctrine; the military role in allocating budget priorities; and the military influence on foreign policy. After a brief consideration of Soviet politico-military relations since the Revolution, this chapter will focus on the contemporary period, analysing each of the four major issues in turn.

Historical Background

In the months following the October Revolution of 1917, the Red Army became the first institution of the Soviet Government. Early Bolshevik ideas about military forces recalled the French Socialist Jean Jaurès's conception of *l'Armée Nouvelle*, a territorial militia that could not be used for foreign aggression or internal repression, as the standing armies of the past had been. The military circumstances of the Civil War, however, precluded this option. During this period, the Bolsheviks were obliged to reinstitute many of the practices of the old Tsarist army, including the hiring of ex-Tsarist officers as 'military specialists' (*voenspetsy*).

One of the first debates over Soviet civil-military relations concerned the question of the military specialists. Although Leon Trotsky, as Commissar of War, had instituted a system of Communist Party control over the military commanders – through parallel political and military command – many of his fellow Bolsheviks were still not satisfied. Dubbed the 'military opposition', they opposed both the employment of military specialists and the use of conscription to form a mass army. According to the military opposition, these developments were leading away from the socialist ideal of a civilian-based militia towards what they called 'red militarism'.⁵ The debate between proponents of a standing army and those in favour of a territorial militia was resolved through the military reforms of 1924–5, in favour of a mixed system. As a Soviet study of the reforms points out, however, the element of a territorial militia was retained mainly for economic reasons.⁶ Nevertheless, V. I. Lenin and Trotsky planned for the party to maintain predominance over the military. In fact, the first party agency in charge of overseeing military affairs – the Military Organisation of the Central Committee – was formed before the Revolution, in April 1917.⁷ It was the forerunner of what today is called the Main Political Administration (*Glavnoe politicheskoe upravlenie*) (MPA).

The next major debate for the new Soviet regime concerned the question that arose in the early 1920s over the appropriate military doctrine for the armed forces. Trotsky, in an essay of December 1921 entitled 'Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism', argued that 'a military "doctrine" presupposes a relative stability of the domestic and foreign situation', such as existed in Great Britain in the early 1900s. He claimed that 'the sole correct "doctrine" for us is: Be on guard and keep both eyes open!'⁸ Trotsky lost this debate to M. V.

Frunze, M. N. Tukhachevsky and the other proponents of a 'unified military doctrine'.⁹ The new army field regulations of 1929 incorporated the notion of a unified military doctrine, emphasising the role of tanks and aircraft and the 'operation in depth'. This document helped to inaugurate a major programme of mechanisation of the Soviet armed forces.¹⁰

While none of the debates over Soviet military policy discussed so far was particularly characterised by cleavages along military-political lines, such a dichotomy is even less applicable to the Joseph Stalin period. From the late 1920s, through the military purge of 1937-8 and the 'Great Patriotic War' of 1941-5, until his death in 1953, Stalin entirely dominated the formation and direction of Soviet military policy.

Although in 1930 Stalin rejected Tukhachevsky's proposal for increased weapons production (describing the likely consequences with the familiar epithet of 'red militarism'), he initiated a major build-up of Soviet military power shortly thereafter. As Stalin saw it, the requirements for production of modern military equipment were rapid industrialisation of the economy, stressing heavy industry over consumer goods and agriculture; strict centralisation of control; and a brutal repression of the peasantry through collectivisation, in order to extract surplus resources. The basic contours of the system he established for enhancing Soviet military power persist to the present day.¹¹

Nikita Khrushchev did not wield the absolute power of his predecessor, and politico-military relations during his tenure were characterised by more conflict. However, it is a testimony to his considerable strength that, despite opposition, Khrushchev was able to initiate the 'revolution in military affairs' (by emphasising nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles while decreasing manpower in the ground forces) and reorder budget priorities to shift resources from the military to agriculture and consumer industry. To be sure, in pressing for these changes Khrushchev had allies in the military—in particular from those sectors of the artillery troops from which the Strategic Rocket Forces were formed.¹² At the same time, many party as well as military figures opposed Khrushchev's reforms. Thus it is not appropriate to speak of the debates of the Khrushchev period as constituting a split along party-military lines.

Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that the military has had less to complain about under Leonid Brezhnev and his successors. This is not, however, due to any usurpation of political power by the

military, but rather to the fact that there now exists what one writer has called a 'national security consensus' between the party apparatus and the military. Especially at the highest levels, 'these two groups are closely connected by personal bonds, and by their respective members' similar formative experiences and identical world outlook'.¹³ Before discussing specifically the question of how this consensus manifests itself in contemporary Soviet politics, it is worth considering briefly what is known about the formal process of decision-making in Soviet security policy.

The Process of Decision-Making

The three main bodies involved in military policy-making are the Politburo, the Defence Council and the General Staff.¹⁴ These are, respectively, party, state and military organisations. The Politburo, formally elected by the party's Central Committee, is the most important political organ for the formulation of Soviet domestic and foreign policy. In recent years, coincident with US-Soviet negotiations on strategic arms, the Politburo has taken a more active role in foreign and military policy—particularly since the then Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and the late Defence Minister D. F. Ustinov became full members in 1973. It is chaired by the General Secretary of the party, Gorbachev. The Politburo's main influence on Soviet military policy, in addition to its concern with specific matters, is exercised through its decisions on allocation of resources between defence, consumption and investment.

The existence of a Defence Council, dealing more specifically with military affairs, was publicly revealed in May 1976, although it was suspected long before. At that time, General Secretary Brezhnev received the rank of Marshal and it was announced that he held the position of Chairman of the Defence Council as well. Although, according to the 1977 Constitution, the Defence Council is considered a state body, it has a close, if unclear, relationship to the Politburo. Its membership is probably small, including leading Politburo figures, the Minister of Defence, the head of the Military-Industrial Commission, and possibly the Chief of the General Staff.¹⁵ There is general agreement that the Defence Council constitutes, as one observer put it, 'the most important body for high-level politico-military consultation and decision-making'.¹⁶

The General Staff of the armed forces is responsible for determining

military requirements, based on the broad doctrinal directives of the political leadership; for drawing up operational plans for war contingencies; and for overall command and control of the forces. It divides other responsibilities with the Ministry of Defence, which is considered to focus more on administration.

To understand the role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in the country's military affairs, it is necessary to consider three important departments of the Central Committee apparatus: the Main Political Administration, the Administrative Organs Department and the Department of the Defence Industry.

In addition to its relation to the Central Committee, the Main Political Administration is also a directorate of the Ministry of Defence. According to a recent official Soviet definition, the MPA 'directs the political organs, and the party and *Komsomol* [Young Communist League] organisations of the army and navy, guarantees party influence on all aspects of life and work of the troops, and takes measures towards raising their combat readiness'.¹⁷ Traditionally, Western scholars have interpreted the MPA as the party's 'watchdog' over the military. Recently, however, an impressive amount of evidence has been gathered to support the contention that the political officers of the MPA share the goals and interests of the military establishment more than those of the central party apparatus, and therefore, when conflict arises, they tend to support the position of their military comrades.¹⁸

The Administrative Organs Department is responsible for personnel, and thereby contributes to the system of *nomenklatura* by which the CPSU Central Committee approves appointments to military posts. The Committee's Department of the Defence Industry monitors the compliance of the defence industry with party policy, and its chairman represents the defence industry at the national-party level. The department's functions supplement and perhaps overlap those of the government's Military-Industrial Commission.

Although these party organs supervise and control the activities of the military, this does not constitute evidence that Soviet politico-military relations are generally of a conflictual nature. On the contrary, it appears that in the post-Khrushchev era, the goals and *Weltanschauung* of the top party leaders have been quite close to those of the military. Without such a general commonality of views, the Politburo would never have allocated such a consistently high level of resources to the enhancement of Soviet military power.

Recent events have led some observers to suggest that something

other than a consensus on security policy operates at present in the Soviet Union, that the military now predominates, or at best exerts a dangerously high degree of influence, again raising the spectre of 'red militarism'. In an interview, President Ronald Reagan claimed to worry about Soviet military officials 'seeming to enunciate policy on their own . . . apparently without any coaching or being briefed by the civilian part of the government'. He wondered 'if they have become a power on their own'.¹⁹ Other students of the Soviet Union have expressed the same concern in metaphorical form. They suggest that 'military men may now be in the driver's seat in the Soviet Union' and ask 'Has the Soviet military in recent years become a loose cannon?'²⁰ The remainder of this chapter addresses the question of increased Soviet military influence through an examination of the four issues with which the chapter began – the prospect of military rule; foreign policy; the process of weapons procurement and the formulation of military doctrine; and resource allocation.

Military Rule

The imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981 suggested to many observers that a precedent had been set that could be followed elsewhere in Eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union. The Communist Party, the putative leading force in society, had been compelled, or was willing, to relinquish that role in favour of the army.

Michel Tatu, a long-time student of Soviet politics, argues that the same thing will happen eventually in the Soviet Union. He uses the Polish case as evidence, and in addition claims that the 'sclerosis' within the CPSU could lead its own members to prefer military rule:

Another regime, still authoritarian but rid of the party, would be more efficient in the economic sphere, very probably in the cultural sphere, perhaps also in the military sphere, since it would guarantee a better level of technology. Isn't this the great temptation . . . I believe that the military will one day take over power in the USSR . . . [I]t appears inevitable to me that things will go in this direction sooner or later.²¹

Tatu's reasoning is deficient in two respects. He mischaracterises the Polish situation and he misjudges the Soviet military's desire, or

even willingness, to rule. The military 'solution' to the Polish crisis cannot be understood by looking at Poland in isolation. Soviet pressure at least indirectly played a role in Wojciech Jaruzelski's coming to power, because the threat of Soviet military intervention could not be ruled out if less drastic measures failed to bring the situation under control. In the weeks preceding Jaruzelski's coup, Polish and Soviet military leaders met through the agency of the Warsaw Pact; certainly the Soviets were aware of, if they did not instigate, Jaruzelski's plans.²² But Jaruzelski could not have succeeded if not for the vacuum left by the disintegration of the Polish United Workers' Party. The party was swept aside not only because of its advanced state of decay, as Tatu points out, but especially because of its intrinsic illegitimacy. In Poland, as in most of Eastern Europe, the Communist regime is viewed as alien, imposed from outside, *Russian*. This situation does not obtain in the Soviet Union. Regardless of the state of the CPSU's decay, for Russians it will always retain a certain historical legitimacy as the agent of the world's first socialist revolution, which took place in Russia.

The second point arguing against Tatu concerns the Soviet military's propensity to assume power. The example most often given as evidence of such a possibility (and given by Tatu in his article) is Marshal G. K. Zhukov's role in supporting Khrushchev when a majority of the Politburo (the 'Anti-Party Group') wanted to oust him in 1957. Further support is said to be found in Khrushchev's removal of Zhukov from his post as Defence Minister a few months later, under accusations of plotting a military coup.

Recent evidence argues against the standard interpretations of both of these events. Major-General Petro Grigorenko, a Soviet dissident who recently emigrated to the United States, claims in his memoirs that Zhukov's threat to call out the army to support Khrushchev against his colleagues 'was a bluff'. 'I do not believe', he continues, 'the army would have followed Zhukov. But the members of the Politburo who opposed Khrushchev did not know this and they fell for the bluff. Thus the matter was decided in favour of Khrushchev.'²³ Concerning Zhukov's alleged coup attempt, Timothy Colton convincingly argues that this charge was most likely a pretext to allow Khrushchev to remove someone who, although not a direct rival, could prove to be an unreliable supporter. That he was not really planning a coup is demonstrated circumstantially by the fact that he was neither demoted in rank from Marshal nor expelled from the party, and that following Khrushchev's 'retirement', Zhukov 'again

basked in official favour and received a number of public awards'.²⁴ He is currently the subject of a popular Soviet film, and his memoirs have recently been reissued in a three-volume paperback edition.²⁵ Finally, Grigorenko confirms in his own memoirs (published several years after Colton's book) that 'the West is wrong when it attributes special qualities to Zhukov and ascribes to him plans for the overthrow of the existing order'.²⁶

Despite the paucity of evidence of past Soviet military plans to take power, the party apparently remains sensitive to the prospect of 'Bonapartism' (a charge levelled by Stalin at Tukhachevsky as well as by Khrushchev at Zhukov). This vigilance, combined with the military's actual disinclination towards military rule, seems to argue against such an eventuality occurring in the near future.

Foreign Policy

Probably the single most important event that led President Reagan and others to become concerned about the role of the Soviet military was the shooting down of a Korean airliner by Soviet interceptor jets on the night of 31 August–1 September 1983, and the subsequent Soviet response. Much has been made of the likelihood that the military acted without political authorisation – whether at the district level, at the central air defence command in Moscow, or within the General Staff itself – and that this constitutes a dangerous precedent. Attention has also been called to the fact that the main presentations of the Soviet view of the incident were made by the military. These included an article in *Pravda* by Colonel-General G. V. Romanov, Chief of the General Staff of the Air Defence Forces, and a remarkable two-hour press conference conducted by Marshal N. V. Ogarkov, at that time Chief of the General Staff.²⁷

This evidence seems insufficient to substantiate claims of a new leading role for the military in formulating Soviet foreign policy, and could in fact argue the contrary. For one thing, there is nothing new in the military's taking action, without prior political consultation, against intruders into Soviet airspace, especially when such intrusions had frequently occurred in the recent past. Khrushchev recounts in his memoirs his reaction to Defence Minister R. Y. Malinovsky's telephone call on 1 May 1960, informing him that an American U-2 reconnaissance plane was violating Soviet airspace: 'I replied that it was up to him to shoot down the plane by whatever means he could.

Malinovsky said *he'd already given the order . . .*' Khrushchev implies that he had already given broad political authorisation for the Soviet air defence forces to shoot down the U-2 planes, after diplomatic protests at their frequent intrusions had been rejected by the United States.²⁸

Other, lesser-known examples also suggest that military officers act with political sanction in shooting down intruding aircraft without seeking immediate approval from higher party authorities. In one volume of his memoirs, Vladimir Lavrinenkov, former commander of the air forces in the Kiev military district, describes an incident that took place during the summer of 1955. Radar operators woke him in the middle of the night to report that an unidentified aircraft had violated the district airspace and that a MiG-17 jet had been sent to intercept it. When the plane failed to respond to the MiG's signals, Lavrinenkov ordered a second MiG to approach it, fire warning shots, and if the intruder ignored them, to shoot it down. The plane appeared to be a transport type, but the commander thought it might be armed with nuclear weapons. He knew he was taking a big risk and could be ordering the destruction of a Soviet aircraft, but he claimed to be acting within his authority: 'One thing was reassuring: in such cases we are granted the right to take the final decision.' As it turned out, the plane finally allowed the interceptors to escort it to the ground, where it was discovered that the pilot was a Soviet who had accidentally flown far off course. He had ignored the interceptors' warnings up to the last minute because he believed that he had strayed over foreign territory and was trying to evade capture. The MiG pilot who had brought him down was given an award. As Lavrinenkov later wrote: 'It was an awkward occurrence, but it constituted a good check on our military preparedness. Moreover, it confirmed that the air borders of the homeland are firmly locked.'²⁹

The priorities reflected by this incident have probably not changed much, and it would not be surprising if the pattern of delegation of authority in cases of violation of airspace also remained as it was thirty years ago. If these historical precedents are valid, the most recent incident should probably be understood not as an assertion of military initiative against political resistance, but rather as the carrying out of standard operating procedures granted under broad political guidelines. The implications of the latter interpretation are no less dangerous than the former, but they convey a different message about Soviet politico-military relations.

The Korean Airlines disaster seems to fit the historical pattern. It

occurred at a time of considerable international tension, and followed a period of increasingly provocative probes by United States reconnaissance planes of Soviet airspace.³⁰ Furthermore, harsh sanctions purportedly were levied against the commanders of the Soviet air defence forces following the poor performance of their interceptors during a previous Korean Airlines incident in 1978; the commanders this time were apparently unwilling to risk a similar mishap by taking time to consult political leaders before acting. Of course the previous incident pales by comparison with the recent disaster. One may expect that the military will have to account for this one as well.³¹

This is indeed an interpretation that could plausibly be put on the presentations by Romanov and Ogarkov. Rather than their taking the initiative to argue the military view, the Politburo may have ordered them, as the ones responsible, to make their case before the international public. Their appearance was not in fact the first Soviet statement on the incident. The Soviet news agency TASS issued a false and misleading report on 2 September 1983, claiming that the airliner continued its flight after violating Soviet airspace. The next day, however, another TASS report still avoided the obvious fact that the Soviet air defence forces had shot down the plane, but did state that 'leading circles of the Soviet Union express regret in connection with the loss of human lives', while condemning the violation as an act of deliberate espionage.³²

It is noteworthy that both Romanov and Ogarkov took care to cite this second TASS report (and in the case of Ogarkov, another previous government statement) at the very start of their respective presentations, evidently in deference to the party's 'line' on the issue. It is also interesting that the presentations of the two military officers were quite detailed and businesslike, largely devoid of rhetoric, in favour of the 'facts'. By contrast, the articles and statements by political commentators were characterised by tendentiousness and extremely sharp language.³³ In general, then, it seems plausible to argue that the political leadership set the tone, while the military fulfilled its assigned task in the most professional manner possible. This is of course only speculation, but it does indicate that the Korean Airlines tragedy is not a clear-cut case of the Soviet military's asserting itself in the direction and presentation of foreign policy.³⁴

Security Policy

Even in the military's own 'sphere of influence' – the formation and

execution of security policy—recent events have posed questions about the precise nature of the military's role. Two issues will be considered here. The first—the apparent debate over the unilateral Soviet pledge of 'no first use' of nuclear weapons—falls within the realm of doctrine and strategy. The second—the Soviet response to NATO's deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles—concerns questions of procurement and deployment of weapons.

In June 1982, at the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko conveyed a pledge from Brezhnev that the Soviet Union would never be the first to use nuclear weapons. This clarification of a long-standing Soviet position was dismissed by many in the West as a meaningless propaganda gesture. Within the Soviet military, however, its implications were apparently taken more seriously.

In an article published in *Pravda* on 12 July 1982, then-Defence Minister Ustinov alluded to a debate within the Soviet leadership over the wisdom of the no-first-use pledge. It is unfortunate, but not atypical of the difficulty of working in this area of Soviet politics, that Western observers have not been able to agree on whether or not Ustinov's article was intended to express support or criticism of the no-first-use pledge. For example, one author claimed that Ustinov's article 'defended the policy against apparent criticism from within the Soviet Bloc, perhaps including the Soviet military', while another writer stated that the fact '[t]hat Ustinov treated this faction so respectfully, considered its concerns to be natural, and expressed its objections in such detail suggests that he is sympathetic to its case'. He added: 'However, Politburo discipline requires that he refute these objections on behalf of the collective leadership.'³⁵

This latter interpretation does not seem as well supported as the former. For while Ustinov did give some consideration to the arguments of the opponents of no first use, he devoted more detail to refuting them. In particular he maintained that the policy would not put the Soviet Union in danger, because no country would be able to launch a preemptive strike without suffering certain retaliation. In a later *Pravda* article, dated 19 November 1983, Ustinov repeated these reassurances without detailing the criticisms. This piece was then published in booklet form with a run of 250 000 copies.³⁶ Furthermore, an English translation of Ustinov's first *Pravda* piece was distributed at an international Pugwash conference during the summer of 1982, presumably in order to attract favourable attention to the Soviet initiative. Both of these facts suggest that Ustinov's

comments were mainly intended to defend the no first use pledge, rather than to denigrate it.

Another problem of interpretation remains, however. Some observers have suggested that Ustinov's emphasis on raising the combat readiness of the troops and decreasing the benefits of surprise for a potential aggressor constituted oblique references to Soviet interest in a 'launch-on-warning' policy. This is certainly a plausible interpretation – although one that Marshal Ogarkov publicly denied³⁷ – but not necessarily the main focus of Ustinov's argument. Other Soviet military officials have called attention to the notion that a no-first-use pledge 'objectively' renders strong conventional forces more important and necessary for 'the task of preventing a military conflict from growing into a nuclear one'.³⁸ A more definite characterisation of the Soviet debate on no first use must await further evidence.

Problems of evidence are especially acute when considering Soviet decisions on procurement and deployment of weapons.³⁹ A recent example concerns measures that the Soviets characterise as responses to the start of Pershing II and Cruise missile deployment.⁴⁰ These 'counter-measures' include deployment of the SS-21 and SS-23 operational-tactical missiles, which can be fitted with either nuclear or conventional warheads and are replacing the twenty-year-old 'Frog' and 'Scud' systems; and the SS-22 missile, an unambiguously nuclear 'follow-on' to the SS-12 'Scaleboard', a missile with a range of some 900 kilometres. Clearly, all of these weapons were 'in the pipeline' for many years preceding the NATO deployment, and were at least in early stages of research and development when the 'dual-track' decision was taken in December 1979. If these programmes could not have been initiated in response to NATO deployments, then did the NATO action serve merely as a pretext for an acceleration of production and deployment that the Soviet military would have promoted in any case? Does the fact that Ogarkov again played a prominent role in presenting the Soviet point of view on the issue of nuclear weapons in Europe suggest that the military now determines Soviet arms control policy?

Ogarkov himself offered one answer to the first question, when it was asked in a rare interview with a Western correspondent in March 1983.

Told that whether or not new American missiles are deployed in Europe, Administration officials expect Moscow to deploy a new series of short-, medium-, and long-range missiles, he responded: 'If

the Soviet proposal is adopted, the situation will improve for both sides quickly. An important element of confidence will come into the picture.⁴¹

Even if Ogarkov and the military favoured production and deployment of the new missiles on the scale that is now likely, they would be overruled if the political leadership preferred an arms control agreement. None of the many proposals put forward during the past few years by the Soviets would have allowed for deployments of the magnitude currently taking place. At the very least, SS-20 missiles targeted on Europe would have been reduced to about 120 systems, cutting the present force in half. At most, they would have been eliminated.⁴² The military's ambitious deployment plans would have been curtailed.

In fact, some Western observers have suggested that Ogarkov may have opposed rather than supported the forward deployment of more Soviet nuclear weapons in Europe, in favour of emphasis on high-technology conventional weapons systems. An apparent policy dispute over just this issue has emerged as one possible, albeit partial, explanation for Ogarkov's dismissal from the post of Chief of the General Staff on 6 September 1984. This is a plausible interpretation, although the evidence is admittedly sparse. One example is an article by Ogarkov in *Krasnaia Zvezda* ('Red Star') of 9 May 1984, in which he claimed that due to the current state of the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers, neither side could succeed in a first strike without suffering 'unacceptable damage' in retaliation. He went on to stress the importance of keeping up with the latest advances in conventional weaponry, mainly their increased accuracy, long range and destructiveness. He also counselled vigilance in anticipation of 'the emergence in the very near future of even more destructive and previously unknown types of weapons based on new physical principles'.⁴³

The other bit of evidence, more tenuous, concerns deployment of the new Soviet SS-22 operational-tactical missiles in Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Some observers believe that, although anticipated for many months, these missiles were not finally deployed until just after Ogarkov was relieved of his command. The argument, then, is that he constituted the main obstacle to the new Soviet nuclear deployments. If this interpretation is correct, it renders unconvincing – for two reasons – the claim that the Soviet military is asserting a dangerously high degree of influence on political leaders, and pushing them towards more militaristic stances. First, the policy

that Ogarkov supposedly favoured was the more moderate one—dispensing with the sabre-rattling of new nuclear missiles for political purposes, because deploying them forward would be unnecessary or even militarily counter-productive (owing to their vulnerability). Second, Ogarkov was apparently overruled on this issue, which suggests that on such important policy questions in the military sphere, the party leadership (including perhaps Defence Minister Ustinov in this case) can prevail over military objections.⁴⁴

Although this explanation is highly speculative, its leading contender equally well disputes the notion of increasing Soviet military influence. This argument holds that Ogarkov was removed because he lobbied too hard for increased military spending, while the party leadership wanted to devote more resources to the civilian economy.⁴⁵ If such was the case, recently revised estimates from the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the fact that Ogarkov lost his job, reinforce the conclusion that the civilian leaders have not abdicated their responsibility for the overall direction of military affairs, and particularly not in the crucial area of resource allocation.

Resource Allocation

The revised CIA estimates raise important questions about party–military relations in the Soviet Union, as well as about the relation of Soviet military spending to external influences. Whereas the CIA had earlier estimated that Soviet allocations to the military had been growing at 4 to 5 per cent per year since 1966, it now claims that the growth rate from 1976 to 1981 (and apparently up to the present) has been slower—about 2 per cent per year. The main reason given for the lower growth rate (and the reason the CIA recognised the need for a revised estimate) was that

procurement of military hardware—the largest category of defence spending—was almost flat in 1976–1981 . . . New information indicates that the Soviets did not field weapons as rapidly after 1975 as before. Practically all major categories of Soviet weapons were affected—missiles, aircraft, and ships . . . The extended nature of the slowdown . . . goes far beyond the normal dips in procurement cycles.⁴⁶

The CIA does not explore in any detail the possible reasons why the

Soviet Union stopped increasing production of new weapons for more than six years. Three possibilities come to mind. The decision to cut the growth rate of military spending may have been a routine economic measure; since the overall growth of Soviet GNP had fallen to about 2 per cent per year, it may have been a standard procedure in the planning process simply to cut the growth of all sectors of the economy to that level. A more likely explanation is that some political bargaining was involved, but that ultimately the prevailing argument was that if the rest of the economy must suffer, the military should not be an exception.

The most intriguing possibility is that the decision to reduce the growth rate in weapons procurement was in some respect a Soviet response to external factors—in particular to the atmosphere of *détente* and to the process of arms-control negotiation with the United States. This explanation would contradict former US Defense Secretary Harold Brown's widely quoted claim that 'when we build, the Russians build; when we stop, the Russians build'.⁴⁷ This interpretation of the new evidence is based only on speculation, of course, but it is worth pursuing in order to consider the implications it may have for Soviet politico-military relations.

If Brown and other members of the Jimmy Carter administration had recognised that the production rate of new Soviet weapons was no longer increasing, and had chosen to respond with restraint in US weapon programmes, this action may have reinforced the position of those in the Soviet Union who had argued for reducing the military growth rate in the first place. And if indeed the Soviet motivation for restraint had been to 'signal' the United States that it was willing to cooperate in bringing the arms race under control, the prospects for further progress in this area would have been enhanced.⁴⁸

As it turned out, the Carter administration did not exercise restraint, while the Reagan administration—even with the new CIA estimate in hand—continues to request higher rates of growth in US military spending each year. How is this behaviour likely to affect Soviet politico-military relations? This question will be addressed next, by way of conclusion.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued, contrary to some currently popular views, that the military will not soon come to power, in the Soviet Union;

that it is not the sole determinant of weapons procurement and security policy; that its influence in the formation of foreign policy has not increased appreciably in recent years; and that it still must accede to the priorities of the political leadership, especially on such a central issue as the allocation of economic resources. The main point, however, is that the party's priorities are not by and large very different from those of the military, and are certainly not opposed to them in the way that most Western scholarship on Soviet civil-military relations has assumed.

What does this say, then, about the prospects for change and innovation in Soviet politico-military relations? The barriers are formidable. The Soviet Union is a highly militarised state, and defence – past and present – is still the major legitimising force for the Communist Party leadership.⁴⁹

The strong position of the Soviet military does not indicate – as some observers have implied – that greater moderation in Soviet policy is impossible, or that the prospects for cooperation and accommodation between the superpowers will remain as dim as they currently are. There is, however, one notable prerequisite for improvement in the current situation. As David Holloway succinctly put it: 'If the West seeks restraint, co-operation and effective arms control from the Soviet Union, then it must adopt these policies itself and at least provide for the possibility that the Soviet Union may pursue them too.'⁵⁰ It is certainly possible that restraint on the part of the West is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for better relations with the Soviet Union. The current state of politico-military relations in the Soviet Union should not, however, constitute a barrier to improvement in the superpower relationship, should the United States choose moderation.⁵¹

Notes

1. Nils H. Wessell, opinion piece, *Washington Times*, 14 March 1984.
2. The most prominent exponent of this view is Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1967); for a concise and somewhat revised statement of his position, see Kolkowicz's chapter in H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (eds), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1971).
3. The most important work is Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1979); another strong statement of the argument is William E. Odom, 'The Party Connection', *Problems of Communism*, vol. xxii, no. 5 (September–October 1973) 12–26.

4. Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York, 1983). For a combination of both approaches, see Edward L. Warner III, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics: An Institutional Analysis* (New York, 1977).
5. On these early debates, see two chapters by John Erickson, 'The Origins of the Red Army', in Richard Pipes (ed.), *Revolutionary Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968) pp. 224–56; and 'Some Military and Political Aspects of the "Military Army" Controversy, 1919–1920' in C. Abramsky (ed.), *Essays in Honour of E. H. Carr* (London, 1974) pp. 204–28. See David Holloway's discussion, 'Military Power and the Soviet State', the first chapter in his *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1983) pp. 3–14.
6. I. V. Berkhin, *Voennaia reforma v SSSR (1924–25 gg.)* [Military Reform in the USSR (1924–5)] (Moscow, 1958); and Holloway, 'Military Power', p. 4.
7. Colton, *Commissars*, p. 9.
8. *Military Writings* (New York, 1969) pp. 29–46.
9. See M. V. Frunze, 'Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armiia' [A Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army] in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* [Collected Works] (Moscow, 1957) pp. 4–22; for a contemporary Soviet discussion, see ch. 3 in I. A. Korotkov, *Istoriia Sovetskoi voennoi mysli* [History of Soviet Military Thought] (Moscow, 1980). For a recent Western treatment see Condoleezza Rice, 'The Makers of Soviet Strategy', in Gordon Craig and Peter Paret (eds), *The Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1985).
10. Benjamin Miller, 'The Birth of the Soviet Armored Forces and the Theory of Deep Operations', unpublished manuscript, Cornell University, 1982; and Rice, 'Makers of Soviet Strategy'.
11. Holloway, 'Military Power' and Vernon Aspaturian, 'The Stalinist Legacy in Soviet National Security Decisionmaking' in Jiri Valenta and William C. Potter (eds), *Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security* (London, 1983) pp. 23–73.
12. V. Tolubko, *Nedelin: Pervyi glavkom strategicheskikh* [Nedelin: First Commander of the Strategic (Rocket Forces)] (Moscow, 1979) esp. pp. 181–8.
13. Dimitri K. Simes, 'The Military and Militarism in Soviet Society', *International Security*, vol. vi, no. 3 (Winter 1981–2) 132.
14. This section draws on David Holloway, 'Decision-making in Soviet Defence Policies', in International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Prospects of Soviet Power in the 1980s, Part II*, Adelphi Paper no. 152 (London, 1979) pp. 24–31.
15. For further speculation on its membership, see Ellen Jones' chapter in Valenta and Potter (eds), *Soviet Decisionmaking*, esp. pp. 122–3.
16. Holloway, 'Decision-making in Soviet Defence Policies', p. 25.
17. *Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [Military Encyclopedic Dictionary] (Moscow, 1983) p. 195.
18. Colton, *Commissars*, passim.
19. Quoted in the *Washington Post*, 27 December 1983.
20. The first metaphor is from Gary Thatcher, 'Soviet Policy Bears a Military

- Stamp', *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 November 1983; the second from Benjamin Lambeth, 'An Unrestrained Soviet Military Would Be a Threat to World Peace', distributed by the *Los Angeles Times* news service, 30 October 1983.
21. Michel Tatu, 'Les institutions communistes face aux crises: les militaires seront-ils le recours?', *Défense nationale* (November 1981) 51–2.
 22. Richard D. Anderson, Jr, 'Soviet Decision-making and Poland', *Problems of Communism*, vol. xxxi, no. 2 (March–April 1982) 22–36; and David Holloway's introduction, esp. pp. 31–4, in Holloway and Jane Sharp (eds), *The Warsaw Pact: Alliance in Transition?* (Ithaca, New York, 1984).
 23. Petro G. Grigorenko, *Memoirs*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York, 1982) pp. 224–6.
 24. Colton, *Commissars*, ch. 8, esp. p. 179.
 25. Marshal G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia* [Reminiscences and Reflections] 3 vols, (Moscow, 1983).
 26. Grigorenko, *Memoirs*, p. 224.
 27. See *Pravda*, 5 September and 10 September 1983.
 28. *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, trans. Strobe Talbott (Boston, 1974), ch. 18, esp. p. 443, emphasis added. A later incident, described in recently declassified documents, reveals a similar pattern. On 1 July 1960, the Soviets shot down an American RB-47 reconnaissance plane which had penetrated Soviet airspace over the Kola Peninsula. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, in a note to the American ambassador in Moscow, claimed that the spy plane had ignored signals from Soviet fighters. He reported that 'In accordance with standing order of Armed Forces of Soviet Union concerning defence of Soviet borders aircraft-violator was brought down . . .', telegram from Moscow Embassy, 11 July 1960. Records of the White House Office, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 15, Folder: USSR [July 1960–January 1961], Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.
 29. Valdimir Lavrinenkov, *Bez voiny* [Without War] (Kiev, 1982) pp. 215–17.
 30. T. Edward Eskelson and Tom Bernard, 'Former RC-135 Crewman Question US Version of Jetliner Incident', *Baltimore News American*, 15 September 1983; and Duncan Campbell, 'Spy in the Sky', *New Statesman*, 9 September 1983.
 31. For a discussion of the earlier incident see Cockburn, *The Threat*, pp. 227–8. An article in the *Baltimore Sun* of 12 October 1983 mentions unconfirmed reports that some air defence officials at Kamchatka were in fact fired.
 32. *Pravda*, 3 September 1983.
 33. See, for example, several articles in *Izvestiia*, 7 September 1983.
 34. For broader considerations of the Soviet military's role in foreign policy see Malcolm Mackinstosh, 'The Soviet Military: Influence on Foreign Policy', *Problems of Communism*, vol. xxii, no. 5 (September–October 1973); and Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, pp. 81–108.
 35. Ustinov's article was entitled, 'Otvesti ugrozu iadernoi voiny' [To Avert the Threat of Nuclear War], *Pravda*, 12 July 1982; the first interpretation is Ronald G. Purver, 'Soviet Arms Control Policy in 1982' in David R.

- Jones (ed.), *Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual* (Gulf Breeze, Florida, 1983) pp. 399–401; the second is Dan L. Strode and Rebecca V. Strode, 'Diplomacy and Defense in Soviet National Security Policy', *International Security*, vol. viii, no. 2 (Fall 1983) 101–2; for another discussion, see Stephen M. Meyer, *Soviet Theatre Nuclear Forces, Part I: Development of Doctrine and Objectives*, Adelphi Paper no. 188 (London, 1983) pp. 27–30.
36. D. F. Ustinov, *Borot'sia za mir, ukrepiat' oboronosposobnost'* [To Fight for Peace, To Stengthen Defense Capability] (Moscow, 1983).
 37. Leslie Gelb, 'Soviet Marshal Warns the US on Its Missiles', *New York Times*, 17 March 1983.
 38. N. Tetekin, 'Glavnyi pokazatel' kachestvennogo sostoianii voisk' [The Main Index of the Qualitative State of the Forces], *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 10 November 1982.
 39. See the chapters in Valenta and Potter (eds), *Soviet Decisionmaking*, and my review article, 'Why the Soviets Buy the Weapons They Do', *World Politics*, vol. xxxvi, no. 4 (July 1984).
 40. For a more detailed consideration see Jane Sharp, 'Soviet Response to Cruise and Pershing', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (March 1984) 3–4. For evidence on the sensitivity of Soviet missile deployments to the political objectives of earlier arms-control negotiations, see Raymond L. Garthoff, 'The Soviet Military and SALT' in Valenta and Potter (eds), *Soviet Decisionmaking*, esp. pp. 146–52.
 41. Gelb, 'Soviet Marshal Warns the US.'
 42. For a comprehensive review of Soviet proposals see the monthly journal edited by Chalmers Hardenbergh, *The Arms Control Reporter*.
 43. Ogarkov interview in *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 9 May 1984.
 44. Speculation along these lines may be found in articles in the *New York Times* for 7 September, 13 September and 22 October 1984, and in Leslie Gelb, 'What We Really Know About Russia', *New York Times Magazine*, 29 October 1984, p. 67. A major problem with the explanation focusing on Ogarkov's putative opposition to forward deployment of the SS-22 is that there is some evidence suggesting that the missile was already being deployed in East Germany as early as January 1984. See *New York Times*, 26 January 1984; and Lieutenant M. Ponomarev, 'V otvet na vozroschuii ugrozy' [In response to the growing threat], *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 18 January 1984. The latter describes a visit by the correspondent to a Soviet missile unit recently deployed to East Germany, although it is not absolutely certain that the author is claiming that the missiles themselves have arrived, nor does he specify the type of missile in question. It could be the SS-21, some thirty to fifty of which were reported to be deployed in East Germany in October 1983. See Michael Getler, 'New Generation of Soviet Arms Seen Near Deployment', *Washington Post*, 11 October 1983.
 45. This explanation is put forward in Gelb, 'What We Really Know About Russia', p. 67.
 46. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Office of Soviet analysis, *USSR: Economic Trends and Policy Developments* (Joint Economic Committee Briefing Paper, 14 September 1983) pp. 7–11. See also Richard F.

- Kaufman, 'Causes of the Slowdown in Soviet Defense', *Soviet Economy*, vol. i, no. 1 (January–March 1985) 9–31.
47. See Raymond Garthoff's discussion, 'The "Spending Gap"', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (May 1984) 5–6; and John Steinbruner, 'Comments on Richard Kaufman's Article', *Soviet Economy*, vol. i, no. 1, pp. 32–6. David Holloway has argued that since the slowdown in procurement growth has apparently centred on strategic nuclear systems, it is consistent with Soviet doctrinal statements. During the period of the SALT negotiations these began to focus on the notion of parity rather than superiority as the goal of Soviet nuclear policy. See his 'Economic Factors and Soviet Strategic Forces', a paper presented to the Sixteenth National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS), New York City, 1–4 November 1984; and his 'Comments on Richard Kaufman's Article', pp. 37–41. For recent CIA and Defense Department comments on Soviet military spending, see Bill Keller, 'CIA and Pentagon Report Rise in Soviet Arms Budget', *New York Times*, 26 February 1985, an attempt to play down the significance of the earlier findings.
 48. This begs the question, however, as to why, if the Soviet leaders wanted to send a signal, they did not make a public announcement of their intention to slow the growth of military spending, and request the United States to reciprocate. One may speculate that the competing goals of wanting to appear strong and somewhat conciliatory at the same time resulted in inaction – a not uncommon situation in the Soviet Union. Much the same argument is made by Robert Campbell in 'Economic Stringency and Soviet Military Strategy', a paper presented to the Sixteenth National Convention of the AAASS, New York City, 1–4 November 1984, pp. 10–11, 15–16.
 49. See David Holloway, 'War, Militarism, and the Soviet State', *Alternatives* (March 1980) 59–92.
 50. Holloway, 'Decision-making in Soviet Defence Policies', p. 31.
 51. This is a revised version of a paper prepared for the conference on 'Politico-Military Relations: Who Makes Security Policy', sponsored by the Arms Control Association and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and held in Bellagio, Italy, in July 1984. The author would like to acknowledge the helpful comments received from the participants at that conference as well as those at the ISODARCO school in Venice. He would also like to thank Jane Sharp, David Holloway and Raymond Garthoff for comments on previous versions of the paper.