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**SOVIET MILITARY DECISIONMAKING:  
A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

Lt. Col. Richard E. Porter

June 1980

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Prepared For

The United States Air Force

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↳ This note explores Soviet decisionmaking on behalf of those with a special interest in the long-term directions of Soviet military policy. Consequently, it approaches the topic from a different perspective and introduces a methodology derived from an analysis of cognitive processes. Using this methodology, it then identifies a structured decisionmaking process based on some novel insights about Soviet decisionmaking and the special political-military relationship that accompanies it. 39 pp. Bibliog. (Author) ~~★~~  
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## **A RAND NOTE**

### **SOVIET MILITARY DECISIONMAKING: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS**

**Lt. Col. Richard E. Porter**

**June 1980**

**N-1515-AF**

**Prepared For**

**The United States Air Force**



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SUMMARY

For those interested in the long term directions of Soviet military policy, this Note explores Soviet military decisionmaking from a different perspective. It introduces a methodology derived from a study of cognitive processes. This approach assumes that if a decisionmaking structure exists, it will reflect and be compatible with its underlying cognitive processes. The assumption appears justified because the methodology suggests the existence of a well-structured decisionmaking process buttressed by some novel insights about Soviet military decisionmaking and the special political-military relationship that accompanies it.

It appears that Soviet military policy is primarily the product of two decisionmaking frameworks--one political and one military. These frameworks are linked in a manner that ensures the primacy of the political framework and safeguards its ideological content. The political framework provides military decisionmaking with its overall goals, of which the triumph of socialism is paramount. The military framework is primarily responsible for the technical aspects of military decisionmaking. Its overriding concern is not the triumph of world socialism but victory on the battlefield. It is inherently conservative and skeptical and lacks the optimism and opportunism of the political framework.

"Military science" and "military doctrine" play a key role in military decisionmaking because they function as institutional buffers between the two frameworks. In this manner, they serve to shield the political framework from any unexpected challenges to its infallibility

and the military framework from excessive ideological dogma which could undermine its effectiveness.

The two frameworks reflect the different decisionmaking responsibilities of the political and military leaderships and yet bind them together in a special relationship of common purpose. This relationship appears to be exceptionally stable, partly because of the stability of the frameworks themselves and partly because of their institutional form. It seems doubtful that even a new generation of Soviet leaders will do much to upset it.

"Military doctrine" is the glue of this relationship. As a definitive body of laws, principles, and rules, it serves to guide military decisionmaking and ensures that it meets the special as well as the mutual interests of each participant. Doctrine suggests the existence of an implied compact between the Party and the military. It assures the Party that military decisionmaking will stay within prescribed ideological boundaries and serve Party ends. It assures the military of the decisionmaking freedom necessary to "effectively" prepare for state's defense and support the Party's political ambitions.

A careful study of military doctrine, therefore, should provide those interested in the long term directions of Soviet military policy with a good insight into what major shifts are likely to occur. It will not trace the Soviets' footprints into the future, but it will provide some indications of where they want to go and how they want to get there.

Of course, the validity of any research approach and its suggested conclusions inevitably depends on the suitability of its methodology and

underlying assumptions. The methodology used here plays a key role because it provides the strategy for "looking" and "evaluating" what would otherwise be an incomprehensible array of evidence. Eventually, however, the burden it carries must be supplanted by a broader foundation of historical evidence. This still needs to be accomplished; the present study is only a beginning and not an end.

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I wish to thank those members of the Rand staff who both knowingly and unknowingly contributed to this study. I am particularly grateful to Bill Jones, who graciously agreed to be the technical reviewer, to Carl Builder and Phil Gardner for their constructive criticism of the manuscript, and to Ralph Strauch and Morlie Graubard for their technical insights on cognitive processes.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This Note seeks to aid those interested in the long term directions of Soviet military policy. Consequently, it explores the realm of Soviet military decisionmaking from a different perspective and introduces a methodology derived from an analysis of cognitive processes.

To begin, Sec. II looks at some problems associated with analyzing Soviet military affairs and why a cognitive approach is worth exploring. The methodology, described in Sec. III, exploits a simple cognitive construct common to all types of decisionmaking. Applied to the Soviet literature, it first permits the identification of two conceptual paradigms essential to Soviet military decisionmaking, and, second, suggests the existence of two institutional frameworks which help these paradigms project themselves into the reality of contemporary decisionmaking (Secs. IV-VII). In Sec VIII, the two frameworks are tied together in a way that offers some novel insights into Soviet military decisionmaking.

## II. ANALYTICAL ISSUES

The empirical evidence of Soviet decisionmaking is massive and yet hopelessly incomplete. The Soviets deny us some of the most basic information about their decisionmaking activity. What does seep out is often fragmented and in some cases may be intentionally distorted.[1]

Our task of understanding is further complicated by the cultural differences that exist between the Soviets and ourselves. The Soviets' unique historical experience is only part of the problem; their Marxist-Leninist philosophy gives them their own particular way of looking at the world. Differences in perspective alter the meaning of words and concepts, further aggravating the problem of understanding. For example, the concept of "war" in the West carries the connotation of intrawar bargaining and restraint which is absent from the Soviets' concept. To them, war is a destructive annihilating affair dominated by nuclear weapons.

Despite its fragmentary character, we must still tie the evidence together if we are to understand the reality from which it comes. But the raw data give us few clues of how to begin. Of the several possible approaches that have been proposed, one asserts that national decisionmaking can be analyzed as if it were that of a rational individual decisionmaker. A second regards national decisionmaking as the product of internal bargaining among interest groups or bureaucratic entities. A

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[1] The Party leadership purposely restricts the flow of information both within and from the Soviet Union. In military affairs, considerable information is compartmentalized within the military establishment and available only to the very senior political leadership.

third combines elements of the two in a single approach.[2]

The disadvantage of these approaches (and others like them) is that they generally focus on particular types of decisionmaking--bureaucratic, economic, political, military. In doing this they arbitrarily exclude certain kinds of evidence which may be crucial to an overall understanding. These approaches also demonstrate a limited capability to look forward and thus offer little insight into long term directions of Soviet military policy.

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[2] For a more detailed description of these approaches, see Karl Spielmann's Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 1978.

### III. METHODOLOGY

An approach based on the decisionmaking process itself appears appropriate. First, decisionmaking is a fundamental responsibility of the leadership. Second, it is justifiable to assume that whatever its form, decisionmaking will reflect and be compatible with its underlying cognitive processes. A careful look at how individuals, groups and institutions make decisions, in fact, reveals a construct common to all three processes. [1] This construct or "decisionmaking framework" has three components; a "conceptual paradigm or cognitive model," an "objective or external reality," and "logical axioms" which bridge the gap between them (Fig. 1). [2] The conceptual paradigm or cognitive model of external reality is essential to all decisionmaking because it permits the practitioner to deal with what would otherwise be an incoherent mass of evidence.

The logical axioms are an extension of the paradigm and reflect its basic values. They add the dimension of experience and help the paradigm project itself into the external world. Objective or external reality represents the world, not as the paradigm sees it but as it

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[1] The scientific community was used for the group analysis because its character is readily identifiable and its paradigm characteristics have been well analyzed. See Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2d ed., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970. The institutional analysis looked mostly at the Soviets since they are the subject of this study.

[2] To go deeper into cognitive processes only serves to overshadow what we do know with a mountain of controversy over what we don't know. The crucial issue is whether or not this framework can function adequately at the level of specificity adequate for the empirical data it addresses. In this study, the construct appears more than adequate. To determine at what level of specificity it might lose its utility requires further cuts through the material at ever increasing depths.

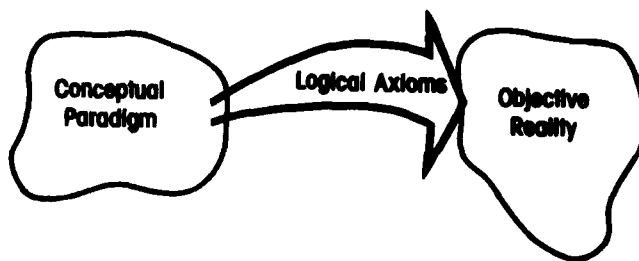


Fig. 1—Decisionmaking framework

truly exists. It encompasses both the totality of available empirical evidence and all the situational pressures which affect the decision-maker. As a historical snapshot, its character continually changes. While it plays a major role in interpreting the present and immediate past, its dependence on empirical data and pressures of the moment limit its ability to look into the future.

In this approach decisionmaking is the continual reconciliation of a conceptual paradigm with an objective reality. As a methodology, it is particularly attractive to those concerned with the long term direction of Soviet military policy because it focuses on the aspect of decisionmaking which is most stable and historically consistent--the paradigm and its logical axioms. Also, it is symmetrical to the Soviet concept of dialectical unity which reconciles a "theoretical vision" to a similar objective reality. The Soviets call this reconciliation the "basic contradiction," or chief lever of creativity and mental progress.[3] This symmetry is not surprising since the concept of a

[3] See V. V. Druzhinin and D. S. Kontorov, Decision Making and Automation: Concept, Algorithm, Decision, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, pp. 17-42.

dialectic (which Marx borrowed from the German philosopher Hegel) was originally formulated as an intellectual construct.

An inherent characteristic of all paradigms is their exceptional stability. Any restructuring impacts throughout the paradigm, generating psychological discomfort for individuals and organizations alike.[4] Group paradigms are more a consensus of shared images, values, and attitudes that serve to identify the group and define the nature of its activity. Because groups must consider the beliefs of all their members, modifying their paradigms is inherently more difficult than for individuals. Institutional paradigms, with their formally established structures, are the most difficult of all.

Once an organizational paradigm loses its utility or becomes discredited, it generates considerable internal stress within itself and must eventually be either modified or replaced with a new paradigm. This often requires major changes to the organization's basic outlook and structure, which in turn severely tests its ability to adapt and survive. If an organizational paradigm is based on an ideology that professes to be infallible, the option of giving way to a new paradigm may not exist.[5] This phenomenon becomes clearer when we look at paradigms that claim to be the source of all "truth."

The existence of multiple operative paradigms complicates a paradigm analysis of decisionmaking. Consequently, the key concern of any such analysis is the "location" of truth.[6] In individual decision-making the center of truth varies within the framework depending

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[4] This discomfort is technically called cognitive dissonance.

[5] An excellent insight into the nature of paradigm change is offered in Thomas Kuhn, op. cit., 1970.

[6] Truth is a relative phenomenon. What concerns us is its center of gravity ("center"), not the delineation of its ultimate boundaries.

on the individual and the issue being addressed. Because of this variability, attempts to structure this type of decisionmaking are not practical without a deep insight into the personal beliefs of the individual and the situational factors influencing his actions.

This doesn't hold, however, for groups and institutions that have a dominant paradigm which requires truth to eventually reside within it. Soviet decisionmaking, for example, manifests a paradigm which is ideologically based (Marxism-Leninism) and professes to be the source of all truth. The political legitimacy of the regime is irrevocably tied to this ideological assertion. While other paradigms may initiate the decisionmaking process and offer recommended solutions, the truth on which action is taken must eventually fit within the ideological paradigm to preserve the Party's political legitimacy.[7]

Should the Party shed its ideological paradigm, it would also forfeit its political birth certificate. Thus intellectual challenges to this paradigm tend to be perceived as challenges to the Party's legitimacy. This partially explains the Soviets' sensitivity to ideological issues and why their task of re-interpretation is so difficult and painful. Accordingly, the ability to track the activity within this paradigm promises a good insight into the long term directions of Soviet military policy. To do this, however, we must first know something about the nature and content of the operative paradigms which guide military decisionmaking.

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[7] Most Soviet decisionmaking does in fact begin in other paradigms. Despite its claims of universality, Marxism-Leninism offers only limited substantive insight into the complex technical problems which abound in a modern state.

#### IV. POLITICAL PARADIGM

The historical literature strongly indicates that Soviet decision-making is guided by a political and military paradigm. The political paradigm is conceptually based on Marxism, later "enriched" by Lenin to serve his revolutionary ambitions. The military paradigm remains controversial. The Party ideologues vehemently deny its existence because it suggests a source of truth outside Marxism-Leninism. There is adequate evidence, however, in the Soviet literature to confirm its presence. Conceptually, it is based on Western military thought (as codified by Clausewitz) modified to meet the special requirements of the Soviet state. Since paradigms inherently resist change, it is appropriate to begin our investigation of these two paradigms with the Russian Revolution and the formative years immediately after.

Philosophically, Marxism completely breaks with traditional Western thought and its metaphysical premises. By placing the source of all truth in the material world, it put Man's destiny outside the boundaries of human fallibility. To enable Man to discover truth, Marx provided the concept of the dialectic--an ideological "porthole" through which to perceive and understand.[1] The dialectic had additional utility because it also described the "scientific" process by which the world moved

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[1] The mechanics of the dialectic entail a unity of opposites. A perpetual progression by which the conflict between a synthesis and an antithesis results in a higher order synthesis. Hegel had originally proposed this concept as a cognitive construct. When Marx adopted it to describe the process of social change, he never really re-formulated its basic assumptions. Thus the dialectic's claim of "scientific correctness" and infallibility are not based on empirical observation as Marx suggests, but on Hegel's original laws of logic.

toward its predetermined end. Marx ingeniously correlated the irregular pattern of this progression to historical stages of economic and social development. By defining the next historical stage as communism and giving it utopian qualities, he "scientifically" explained both the past and present and then linked them to an appealing future.

Marxism provided the professional revolutionary with two essential elements for his craft--a new source of legitimacy and a promise of inevitable victory. Its universal scope and utopian end greatly appealed to intellectuals like Lenin who were disenchanted with the present world state and wanted to change it.

Marx left a prophecy, but no timetable for its fulfillment. Lenin and his associates were too impatient to wait for the "mole of history" to do its work and decided to give history a push toward its predetermined end. They asserted that the "conditions" of revolution could be created by an enlightened elite as well as by historical forces.

This assertion had a monumental impact on the subsequent course of Soviet decisionmaking because it gave truth a dual residence--within the material world and within the consciousness of a Bolshevik elite. Where Marx had turned Hegel's concept of the dialectic upside down to suit his purposes, Lenin righted it again to suit his. This dual residence of truth placed deep within the political paradigm a basic contradiction in logic of great practical benefit because it greatly expanded decision-making flexibility. Communism became at the same time an international movement driven by economic laws and a national movement fostered by the ambitions of a well organized elite. Such ideological "enrichment,"

however, could not be justified by words alone--it required a successful revolution.

Marxism provided the Revolution with its philosophical base, but the struggle itself was driven by logic unique to the revolutionary process and the events of the moment. Lenin's role was much like that of a military commander--meticulously calculating the strength of the enemy and then taking appropriate actions. Decisionmaking had to be opportunistic and tactical in nature.[2] An accurate assessment of the balance of power was absolutely essential. To confront the state at an inopportune time could destroy the movement; to pass up a suitable opportunity could break the Revolution's momentum and undermine its chances of success.

In light of these realities, it is not surprising that the axioms which emerged to guide Soviet decisionmaking were military in nature. Some of the most discernible are:

- o Priority of Power
- o Ends Justify Means
- o Deceit and Camouflage
- o Seize the Initiative
- o Offense over Defense
- o Necessity of Violence

These axioms in various forms are still operative in the political paradigm today. The obsession with power and the meticulous calculation

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[2] Revolutionary decisionmaking has few of the strategic considerations that drive conventional military operations, because it has no requirement to defend territory or a state bureaucracy.

of its sufficiency is endemic to contemporary Soviet decisionmaking. The Soviets rarely just stumble into things--they carefully explore all the ramifications of major policy decisions.[3] Deceit and camouflage are an essential part of the revolutionary art, and few movements achieve power without mastering their use. Seizing the initiative and sustaining the momentum are paramount because they enhance control over events and increase the chances of success. Offensive action keeps the opponent off balance and intensifies morale and dedication. The axiom that violence must accompany major social change ensures that military considerations will weigh heavily in any efforts to advance socialism.[4]

The Bolsheviks achieved power against incredible odds and in the process acquired an unshakable faith in the correctness of their cause and its inevitable triumph. The revolutionary experience provided the crucible in which Marxism was bonded to its logical axioms and forged into a paradigm for political decisionmaking (Fig. 2). Marxist doctrine legitimized the Revolution, and Revolution legitimized the "enrichments" to the doctrine. These "enrichments" rightfully earned Lenin an honored place next to Marx. In its new form Marxsim-Leninism represented something quite different. Philosophically, it established an alternate source of truth and combined the inherent optimism of Marx with the tactical opportunism of Lenin. Doctrinally, it imparted to Soviet

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[3] This is not to imply that they don't occasionally misjudge, which they obviously do. The old nemesis of human fallibility occasionally obscures their vision through the "porthole."

[4] The necessity of violence has been modified due to the appearance of nuclear weapons. See the discussion of The Revolution in Military Affairs, pp. 23-24.

decisionmaking a necessary pragmatism and flexibility.

The Revolution demonstrated that the advancement of socialism could be accelerated. In addition to the acceptance of Marxism, this acceleration required innovative decisionmaking based on accurate "scientific" analysis. The Bolsheviks' political legitimacy lies here-- in their proven ability to read the pulse of history and act accordingly. Unfortunately, this legitimacy is conditional and depends on the Party's continued ability to advance the socialist cause. The Revolution marches on, led by the Party and buttressed by the full powers of the Soviet state. The political paradigm provides this trinity with a vision of its eventual destination and some general prescriptions on how to get there.

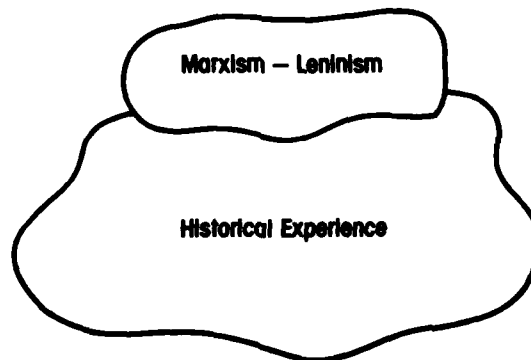


Fig. 2—Political paradigm

## V. MILITARY PARADIGM

The military paradigm's emergence was not as dramatic as its political counterpart. Conceptually based on Western military thought, its fundamental tenets were well established before the Revolution. Its major concern was not the validity of its content, but whether or not it could survive the onslaught of a radically new political philosophy. The Party's recognition of its existence raised uncomfortable ideological issues. It suggested that decisionmaking responsibility in a modern state was necessarily divisible. To explore the conceptual basis for Soviet military decisionmaking, it is appropriate to begin with Clausewitz's role in Soviet military thought.

It is difficult to separate Clausewitz's contributions to Soviet military thought from those of Lenin because they both shared a similar outlook on war. Lenin was an avid reader of military history and Clausewitz. As noted earlier, his role as a revolutionary leader approximated that of a military commander. Clausewitz's ideas about wars were particularly applicable because they reflected his experiences as a member of the Russian General Staff during the Napoleonic campaign of 1812.

Party theorists strongly reject the suggestion that Clausewitz provides the conceptual basis for Soviet military thought.[1] They rightfully acknowledge his foresight in seeing war as the continuation of politics by other means. They fault him, however, for his failure to

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[1] The Soviets are quite sensitive on this issue. See B. Byely, et al., Marxism-Leninism On War and Army, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, pp. 5-23.

recognize the crucial importance of the class struggle from which all manifestations of war must emerge. Indirect challenges to this assertion exist--first from Clausewitz and second from the Soviets themselves.

Clausewitz established the special nature of military operations when he wrote that war had its own grammar. To him, it was a part of politics and at the same time separate from it. He used the analogy of the womb, and the fetus. Politics, as the womb, nurtures the fetus and defines its nature. The fetus, however, although a part of the womb is an entity in its own right.[2] Prior to the Revolution, the Marxist community recognized war as an art governed by its own imperatives. Engles' writings are often quoted by military writers to underline its "unique" nature. In Soviet Military Strategy, Sokolovskiy echoes the theme: ... "once the military movements on land and sea have been started, they are no longer subject to the desires and plans of diplomacy, but rather to their own laws which cannot be violated without endangering the entire expedition." [3]

To establish the origin of a military paradigm, one needs to look beneath the polemics of the ideological rhetoric to the fundamental perceptions that guide military decisionmaking. Here the difference between Lenin and Clausewitz is more discernible. Lenin's outlook reflects the basic optimism of Marx, later confirmed by a triumphant revolution. Clausewitz's beliefs about war were the product of

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[2] See Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, Michael Howard and Peter Paret (eds. and trans.), Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1976, p. 149.

[3] See V. D. Sokolovskiy, Soviet Military Strategy, 3d. ed., Harriet F. Scott (ed.), Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., New York, 1975, p. 19.

considerable personal experience--strongly colored by great defeats rather than great victories. Consequently, his outlook is inherently conservative and skeptical, reflecting the primordial passions and brutality of the Napoleonic battlefield. To Clausewitz, war was anti-science, filled with imponderables.

The issue of a military paradigm was settled pragmatically by the exigencies of the times. The initial seizure of power confronted the Party with a new responsibility of defending the state instead of destroying it. This task was beyond the capability of their small, ill-equipped, paramilitary units. The "primacy of power" axiom dictated a reversal of policy, and the Party attempted to reconstitute the Tsar's old army. Tsarist officers were invited to return and serve the new state. Those who accepted brought back with them a familiarity with large scale military operations and a schooled knowledge of Clausewitzian warfare.

This resurrection of the old soon embraced all state bureaucracies. Lenin and his associates had seriously blundered in their perception of the level of technical decisionmaking required (even in backward Russia) to run a large state. Prior to the Revolution, Lenin wrote little that looked beyond the seizure of power. What he did write was largely shaped by ideology and not any appreciation of practical realities.[4] Lenin had never held a bureaucratic position; he naively believed that bureaucratic decisionmaking was relatively simple and could be easily assumed by the "workers." The folly of this conviction became readily

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[4] See V. I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in Irving Howe (ed.), Essential Works of Socialism, Bantam Books, New York, 1971.

apparent when the entire bureaucracy ground to a halt in the civil war which followed the Revolution.

Objective reality substantially altered the Party's intended role in state decisionmaking. Marxism-Leninism was ill suited to resolve the host of technical problems that confronted the new state. It was as if a small group of commandos had taken over General Motors. They were experts in seizing control, but knew nothing about making automobiles. Consequently, the Party quickly confined its activities to defining institutional goals and pushing hard for their fulfillment--leaving the responsibility for technical decisionmaking to the qualified experts.

This pragmatic adjustment represented a significant ideological accommodation, because it formally recognized the existence of other paradigms and other sources of truth. Dominance of the political paradigm was still essential for legitimacy, so the Party's new challenge was to ensure the technical sufficiency of state decisionmaking, yet keep it within prescribed Marxist-Leninist boundaries.

The adaptation of Western military thought to the Soviet state took place in the period between the Russian civil war and the Great Patriotic War (World War II). The Party initially found itself strongly divided over the type of military establishment it needed. The issue had major political implications and ultimately became entangled in the power struggle to succeed Lenin. The emergence of Stalin brought a commitment for a large defense establishment, and the Party launched a major industrialization program to achieve it.

The Soviet Army was firmly established by the outbreak of war in 1939. Most doctrinal questions were resolved, but doubts persisted

because there still had not been a "real" test of the new concepts in a major conflict. This occurred in the Great Patriotic War, and it was this experience that solidified Soviet military thought. The logical axioms which guided military decisionmaking became clearly discernible. They include:

- o High State of Readiness
- o Seek Surprise
- o Seize the Initiative
- o Sustain Momentum
- o Numbers Count
- o Total Victory

These axioms are consistently reflected today in the Soviet military literature. They project a strong predeliction for pre-emption. The ingredients for a decisive campaign are to be first off the mark, seize the initiative, build momentum, and crush the enemy with massive firepower.

The military paradigm emerged from the Great Patriotic War a proven commodity (Fig. 3). Its overriding concern is not the triumph of world

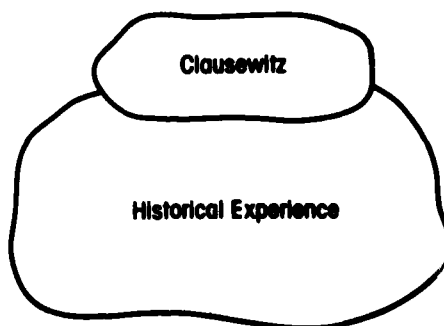


Fig. 3—Military paradigm

socialism, but defense of the state and victory on the battlefield. It projects the same deep conservatism and skepticism that permeated Clausewitz's writings. War is filled with the unexpected, and the unexpected can determine its outcome. Consequently, the prudent are compelled to study war in its smallest detail--testing and re-testing all plans, equipment, and personnel. Security is paramount; the slightest indiscretion may eventually lead to a major defeat.

## VI. POLITICAL DECISIONMAKING

The political paradigm serves as the conceptual basis for all state decisionmaking. Like all bureaucratic paradigms, it also provides a means of organizational control. In the Soviet case, this occurs with the help of a discernible cognitive structure which guides the institutional projection of the political paradigm. This structure is an external, institutional counterpart of the logical axioms.[1]

For the political paradigm it introduces the concepts of the Correlation of Forces (COF) and Centralized Planning (Fig. 4). The COF is a continuous calculation of the relationship of forces between socialism and capitalism. It is like a balance of power computation, but encompasses every aspect of state policy. The Soviets divide it into four major categories: political, economic, military, and international. The "political" provides the basis for foreign policy; the "international" addresses the world socialist movement. The COF is an extension of the Party's Revolutionary decisionmaking, where making a "scientific" analysis was the first step toward taking an appropriate action.

The COF is a "navigational fix," not a trend analysis. Measured within prescribed historical periods, it gives the Soviets "real world" flexibility and makes policy reversals like Brest Litovsk and Peaceful Coexistence doctrinally possible. It imparts to Soviet decisionmaking a connotation of optimism and assurance by saying that the directed course of action is the "scientifically" correct one. Additionally, it

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[1] It is important not to confuse this structure with organizational structure. It is cognitive and lies beneath the formally delineated bureaucratic decisionmaking process.

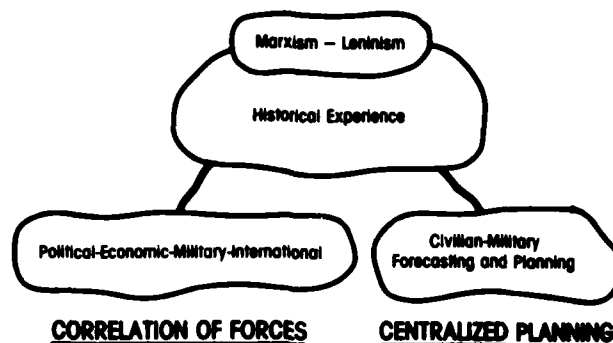


Fig. 4—Political decisionmaking framework

provides a useful means of integrating the formulation and implementation of state policy.

While the COF focuses on conceptualization, Centralized Planning deals with implementation. Centralized Planning is the Soviets' substitute for the West's free market system. It is an essential part of a nationalized economy. Its true attractiveness, however, lies not with its false claims of superior efficiency, but its proven ability to control decisionmaking and marshal state resources toward specified goals. It does this better than any other system.[2]

For discussion, it is convenient to address Centralized Planning as long term (five years and beyond) and short term (less than five years). The political paradigm affects long term planning the most because it

[2] Lenin had not foreseen the need for a centrally planned economy. In 1917 there was no Russian word to describe this concept. Lenin believed that the role of the state would decline after the seizure of power. See V. I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution," in Irving Howe, (ed.), Essential Works of Socialism, Bantam Books, New York, 1971, pp. 300-318.

provides the vision of the Party's long range goals. Unfortunately, it is this area of planning we know the least about. The little we do know comes from information released about planning in the civilian sector. The Soviets appear to do scientific-technical forecasting which looks ahead 20 years, and they claim to write "perspective" plans which reach out 15 years. It is doubtful, however, that there is much specificity beyond the established Five Year Plans.[3]

The objective reality dominates short term planning. Its major considerations are more concrete--the availability of resources, the suitability of current technology, bureaucratic imperatives, and other national priorities. Much of this decisionmaking is technical. The Party functions more as an overseer, ensuring that the system doesn't get bogged down and that production quotas are met.

It is from this area of short term planning that we get some of our best insights into what the Soviets are up to. The implementation of policies into hardware produces fragments of physical evidence. When properly tied together by a skilled analyst, these fragments can either confirm old policy directions or suggest new ones. For Western defense planners, however, these insights often come too late to contribute to their own efforts.[4]

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[3] Like us, the Soviets have not unraveled the mysteries of long range planning. They still seem to rely heavily on the collective judgments of "experts," although the emphasis on trend projection and futuristic modeling appears to be increasing.

[4] One of the most comprehensive yet succinct discussions of this aspect of decisionmaking is Arthur Alexander, Decision-Making in Soviet Weapon Procurement, Adelphi Paper #147, Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Winter 1978-1979.

## II. MILITARY DECISIONMAKING

A similar framework exists for military decisionmaking (Fig. 5). Its institutional form is centered in the concept of "military art," which is divided further into "tactics," "operational art," and "strategy." The Soviets' concept of tactics is somewhat similar to our own and concerns actions at the Division level and below. Their concept of operational art, however, is unique. It addresses actions at the operational level between Division and Theater.[1]

Strategy is the highest form of military art. It unifies the objective requirements identified within tactics and operational art to ensure that military operations will be both conceptually and organizationally integrated.[2] In the formulation of strategy, Soviet military



Fig. 5—Military decisionmaking framework

[1] The Soviets' use of the word "doctrine" is quite different from ours and should not be substituted within the boundaries of "military art." The Soviet concept of doctrine will be discussed later.

[2] The Soviets reject our contention that integrated military action can be effectively achieved by combining different operational doctrines under a unified command structure.

thought gets its first substantive political guidance. Strategy is the the direct instrument of politics, but still retains its unique "grammar" and fundamental concerns. It is operationally oriented--based on the realities of the battlefield and the primacy of victory--and contains few of the political-military concepts necessary to support strategies like flexible response or mutually assured destruction.

A considerable amount of the activity within military art is directed at technology and its impact on the changing nature of war. In Soviet decisionmaking, theory seldom lags technology. In many instances it is because they see new technologies first in the West. But regardless of their source--external or internal--all new technologies require a doctrinal screening. The military has this responsibility and ensures that newly proposed systems will be compatible with current military thought and properly integrate into the current force structure. While the cognitive structure of military decisionmaking is somewhat rigid, its response to the demands of external reality is flexible and dynamic.

Decisionmaking frameworks, like their paradigms, manifest considerable conceptual stability. The "Revolution In Military Affairs" offers a good insight into this phenomenon because it indicates what happens in the Soviet system when paradigms become noticeably out of step with their objective realities.[3] The introduction of nuclear weapons and

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[3] The Revolution In Military Affairs is the slogan the Soviets attached to the institutional debate over the impact of nuclear warfare on state policy. The debate was suppressed during Stalin's lifetime and didn't formally begin until 1956, over 10 years after Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The sensitivity of the issues raised and the concurrent struggle within the Party for the reins of power perpetuated the debate well into the Sixties.

their supporting systems into warfare challenged some of the fundamental tenets of the political and military paradigms. For example, the political paradigm proclaimed that all great social change must necessarily be accompanied by violence. If this violence, however, meant a nuclear war destroying most of the Soviet's major cities and much of their economic base, it was no longer an acceptable consequence. The military paradigm asserted that future war would begin at the frontier and be decided by an accumulation of tactical and theater victories. But the nuclear age suggested that war might begin with deep strikes into the heart of a nation, destroying its ability to wage war without the traditional land engagement.

What emerged from this debate was not (as one would expect) a fundamental restructuring of the two paradigms, but their convenient expansion to accommodate a dramatically altered reality.[4] The political paradigm now held that violence "might" still accompany great social change, but added that other means existed, such as peaceful coexistence, by which socialism could prove its superiority over capitalism. In similar fashion, the military paradigm claimed that war could begin at the frontier or with deep nuclear strikes and either possibility could decide its final outcome. The military suggested that the nuclear age required larger rather than smaller conventional forces.

This pattern repeated itself organizationally and conceptually throughout the military establishment. For example, the Soviets created a nuclear capability, but didn't truly integrate it (in the sense we use

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[4] Lenin first introduced this technique in his "enrichment" of basic Marxism over 60 years ago. It has served the Soviets well ever since.

the word integrate) into their conventional force structure. They formed special units to employ nuclear munitions, but attached them as separate entities to the existing organization. At the strategic level, they established the Strategic Rocket Forces as an independent command. At the tactical level, they placed their special units next to their conventional counterparts, but kept their operational functions and chain of command separate.

Conceptually, the tested principles of military thought also changed little. What changed significantly was the nature of their application. For example, prior to the debate, the principle of "readiness" was the primary concern of the armed forces. The possibility of deep nuclear strikes, however, made it an urgent concern of the entire state and fostered a massive commitment to civil defense.

### VIII. POLITICAL-MILITARY DECISIONMAKING

The existence of two decisionmaking frameworks requires that the Soviets suitably link them together. It is imperative that this linking ensure the dominance of the political paradigm and safeguard its ideological content.

Theoretically, this is easily accomplished by establishing the political framework as the guiding paradigm and the military framework as its complementing objective reality. This structural "realignment" is justifiable because successful revolutions automatically legitimize all previous actions. If such actions were not "scientifically" correct, then the revolution would have failed. But this solution is only partially acceptable because it does not provide for an important third consideration--effective decisionmaking within the military framework. The military paradigm must be allowed to function unencumbered by excessive ideological dogma.

The Soviets accommodated this third consideration by integrating the decisionmaking process and not the individual paradigms.[1] They overlaid both frameworks with a network of objective laws, principles, and rules (Fig. 6). Between the frameworks, they positioned two institutional buffers--"military science" and "military doctrine." These two buffers ensure the dominance and security of the political paradigm while permitting the military paradigm to function with relative efficiency.

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[1] The integration of paradigms is more typical of Western decisionmaking. It is not an alternative for the Soviets because it gives decisionmaking too loose a rein and doesn't ensure that truth will ultimately reside in the political paradigm. The overriding concern of all ideologically based paradigms is that they avoid crises and take every precaution to ensure that decisionmaking gravitates toward established doctrine rather than away from it.

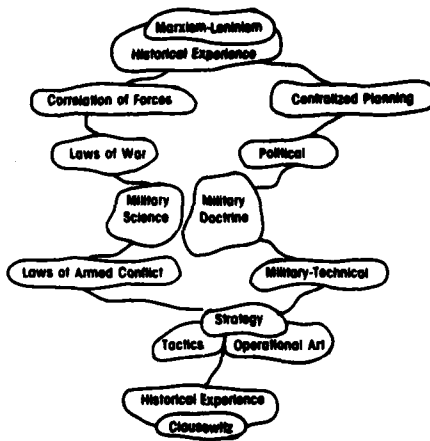


Fig. 6—Political-military decisionmaking framework

Military science provides the institutional forum for the further development of military thought. The Soviets state that it addresses the:

aggregate of diverse material and psychological phenomena of armed combat being studied and analyzed for the purpose of elaborating practical recommendations for the achievement of victory in war....[2] [emphasis mine]

This definition clearly makes military science a primary concern of the military. It authorizes them to study any phenomenon which promises to enhance military capability. The call for "practical recommendations" strongly suggests that the "objective laws of war" and the "laws of

[2] S. N. Kozlov, The Officer's Handbook, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1971.

armed conflict" come from the military paradigm with its direct concern for battlefield effectiveness. The study, within military art, of the changing nature of war appears to produce the majority of these recommendations. They are then staffed up the organizational chain to confirm their validity and appropriateness. The truly important ones are then tossed into the forum of military science for Party consideration and approval. Those approved subsequently are linked in some unknown way to the objective laws of war and the laws of armed conflict which in turns links them to both decisionmaking frameworks.[3]

The actual linkage of these laws is a great mystery. The Soviets say they "closely interact, interwine and penetrate each other mutually, each within its own system as well as between systems." [4] Such complexity obviously requires considerable study to sort out. This built-in delay is a major benefit of the process because it protects the political paradigm against any unwanted surprises.

If the Party finds a recommendation to be non-controversial and worthy of acceptance, it is approved, "linked(?)" and canonized as official decisionmaking guidance. If the Party determines a recommendation to be unacceptable, then it easily ejects it from military science before it becomes part of the official decisionmaking guidance. It is the recommendation that is both controversial and necessary that makes extended debate within military science so essential. The military sci-

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[3] To the Soviets, a law is that "which is continually repeated and reproduced in a phenomenon." The objective laws of war deal with issues at the national strategic level, while the laws of armed conflict concern those of the battlefield. For a further explanation of these laws, see V. YE. Savkin, The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics, Military Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, pp. 52-152.

[4] Ibid., p. 87.

ence "buffer" holds the controversial recommendation until the political paradigm can be properly re-interpreted to accomodate it.[5]

Military doctrine also functions as a buffer between the two frameworks. Its basic concern is implementation. The Soviets define doctrine as the:

state's system of views and instructions on the nature of war under specific historical conditions, the definition of the military tasks of the state and armed forces and the principles of their development....[6] [emphasis mine]

Military doctrine belongs to the Party. It provides the military with its overall guidance. It outlines the nature of future war, who the enemies will be, and what general capabilities will be necessary. With this guidance, the military determines the appropriate military strategy and force structure which it then recommends to the Party for approval. Doctrine is the institutional forum in which these recommendations are debated. The Party reviews and then reconciles them against a host of other national concerns. The remnants of this process are then submitted as "scientifically" determined directives to the various state agencies for immediate implementation.

While the Party always has the last word, underlying the concept of military doctrine is a fundamental issue of political control versus military efficiency. The central question is not organizational authority but decisionmaking responsibility. When the Party placed "political officers" throughout the military establishment to monitor its activi-

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[5] The forum of military science is additionally useful because it forces military thinkers to continually rephrase their thoughts in Marxist-Leninist language and thus stay conceptually close to Party doctrine.

[6] Kozlov, op. cit., p. 62.

ties, it placed, in effect, two operative paradigms at each organizational level. Two decisionmaking paradigms cannot function side-by-side at the same bureaucratic level without a definitive network of laws, principles, and rules to govern their activity. Without such a network, one paradigm inherently asserts itself over the other, eventually undermining (possibly even destroying) its effectiveness.[7] This is essentially what happened in the Thirties. The Party, in an effort to consolidate its control, excessively interfered with military decisionmaking and extensively purged the officer corps. While these actions enhanced Party control, they also contributed significantly to the country's near defeat by Germany in 1941. It was a painful lesson that both the political and military leaderships still remember. As a result, doctrine today represents an implied compact between the Party and the military. It assures the Party that military decisionmaking will stay within prescribed ideological boundaries and ultimately serve state ends. It assures the military of the decisionmaking freedom necessary to effectively prepare the nation's defense and support the Party's ambitious political goals.

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[7] The ability to function effectively on the borders of different decisionmaking frameworks requires considerable skill. Individuals who have this skill usually have a much better chance of reaching positions of high responsibility than those who do not.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

For those interested in the long term directions of Soviet military policy, the doctrinal literature is a good indicator. Practical recommendations and doctrinal positions, once taken, are "scientifically" correct and obligatory norms to which all Soviet decisionmakers must conform. Soviet military decisionmaking is presently founded on a highly stable political-military relationship which is unlikely to change drastically in the years ahead. Doctrine, buttressed by a well institutionalized cognitive structure, is the glue that holds this relationship together. As a consequence the transition to a generation of new leaders may cause perturbations, but little more.

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