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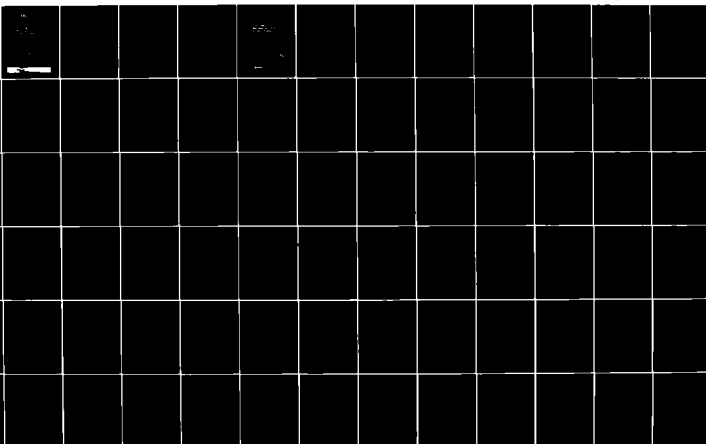
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The Politburo's Management of Its America Problem

Harry Gelman

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4. Draws on the record of Soviet leadership behavior in many areas over the last decade to analyze Soviet assumptions about the relationship with the United States. In most cases the Politburo assumes its interests are incompatible with those of the United States and believes it cannot improve or even defend its geopolitical position unless the American position is further weakened. The Politburo expects lasting struggle with its central antagonist whatever the momentary temperature of the bilateral relationship. It sees itself as defending recent net gains over the United States in the "correlation of forces," which the United States is now trying to undo. Present Soviet policy continues a trend of expanding Soviet influence at U.S. expense since the late 1960s not interrupted by the detente. The Politburo is determined to isolate its external ambitions from the effects of serious Soviet and Soviet-bloc internal difficulties.

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The Politburo's Management of Its America Problem

Harry Gelman

April 1981

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PREFACE

This report attempts to decipher the motivations, assumptions, and stratagems that have driven both Soviet bilateral policy toward the United States and Soviet global policy affecting the United States over the past decade. It was prepared under the sponsorship of the Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, as part of a broader effort to examine and compare U.S. and Soviet assumptions about the long-term competition between the two powers, and thereby to lay the groundwork for an improved American national strategy for organizing and managing the competition. This study is thus intended to be of value to a wide spectrum of readers concerned with the reshaping of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union.

Certain of the patterns of Soviet leadership conduct developed here invite comparison with those depicted by Nathan Leites in his seminal work, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, nearly thirty years ago. Only fragmentary impressions are possible about the extent to which Soviet actions conform to Leites' assumptions, since the major purpose of the report is to induce conclusions from the flow of Politburo behavior rather than to check the body of Leites' propositions systematically. But the present writer, at least, was impressed by the frequency with which certain patterns and reactions postulated by Leites did appear to emerge from the maneuvers of the Brezhnev leadership.

The text is composed in two parts. The first seeks to reconstruct thematically the leadership's goals and fears in its worldwide interaction with the United States, and to isolate those factors that have affected the evolution of Politburo conduct. The second part seeks then to illustrate the inner workings of that evolution in narrative form, and thereby to place the issue of detente within the historical competitive context of Politburo thinking from which it first emerged, and into which it has now returned.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Soviet leadership's strategy toward the United States since the invasion of Afghanistan has become both defensive and coercive. The defensive aspect responds to what the Soviets see as unprecedented U.S. efforts to isolate and surround them. The coercive core of the Politburo's policies reflects the Soviet hope to so shape the international environment as to compel the United States eventually to accept a restoration of those elements of the relationship the Soviet Union still deems useful, but on terms favorable to accelerated Soviet exploitation of competitive advantages.

To this end, the Politburo seeks to escape the isolation Washington wishes to impose on it and to isolate the United States in its turn by appealing to the perceived self-interest of America's allies in the preservation of their separate economic and security relationships with the USSR. In the Third World, the Politburo perseveres in what it regards as a long-term process of extending the Soviet political presence into more and more previously Western-influenced areas. The leadership expects occasional major setbacks as inevitable incidents in this process of advance on a gradually broadening front. The Soviet leaders are well aware that not every U.S. loss produces an immediate Soviet gain and that Soviet accretions of influence may be relative, conditional, and possibly ephemeral. They share a perspective that makes these realities supportable. The Politburo believes that if given trends are not immediately zero-sum in their effects, they will eventually be so in broader or longer-term perspective.

The Soviet decisionmaking horizon is short, and the leadership has no master plan for further advance in the world at U.S. expense. Instead of a blueprint, the Soviet leaders have a consistent world-view centered on the expectation of lasting struggle with the main antagonist, furnishing a sense of self-justification in all circumstances, and providing a stable framework from which to assign priorities in that struggle as avenues of opportunity emerge. They are isolated within a network of advice and information shaped to confirm this attitude of pugnacious righteousness.

The Politburo believes that on balance, the trend of the world "correlation of forces"—an amorphous amalgam of political, social, economic, and military factors—in the last decade has been unfavorable to the United States and favorable to the Soviet Union. The leadership is impressed both by the worldwide train of U.S. political misfortunes

and by favorable relative changes over the last decade in all the principal military arenas. The Politburo believes these changes to have been facilitated not only by Soviet determination, but also by specific social or economic weaknesses of the USSR's antagonists that have diluted and delayed efforts to compete.

In particular, the Soviet leaders have acquired a vivid sense of those constraints upon U.S. behavior associated with the decay of U.S. foreign policy consensus inside and outside the U.S. government and the weakening of the Presidency by competing power centers. They are well aware, for example, that U.S. society lacks consensus as to how much U.S. economic relations with the Soviet Union should relate to U.S. political aims, and that there are no effective U.S. government mechanisms to prioritize and enforce such aims. In general, they are impressed by the manipulative advantages offered them by U.S. reality and the U.S. vulnerabilities created by American pluralism.

Although encouraged by the tendencies of the last decade, the leadership is concerned about the immediate future. The Politburo is aggrieved at what it perceives as U.S. efforts to reverse the trend in the correlation of forces. The prospect of large new U.S. military programs, of European theater nuclear deployments, and of U.S. transfer of military technology to China creates a sense of accumulating new dangers that the leadership believes it will have to fight to overcome as it enters a prolonged period of increasing economic stringency.

More generally, the Politburo regards itself as defending three sets of claims against U.S. attack:

- One is the legitimacy of its efforts to ensure the "irreversibility" of its authority both within the Soviet bloc as already constituted and in such other areas adjacent to the USSR as unpredictable future political changes and the USSR's evolving sense of its security requirements may ordain.
- Another is its intention to make incremental use of emerging opportunities and capabilities to become a fully global actor. Although this is often depicted as a quest for equality, the Politburo in fact regards the continued reduction of U.S. influence in the world as a requirement for Soviet continued advance and seeks not merely to match but to supplant the U.S. presence. The effort to expand the Soviet global role is therefore closely interwoven with an incessant effort to encourage and play upon anti-U.S. sentiment in every part of the world. It is this universal attacking essence of Soviet policy toward the U.S. position in the world that the Politburo wishes the United States to accept as compatible with detente, fully as much as the deployment of Soviet or Cuban forces for combat

or the use of Soviet geopolitical weight to underwrite aggression by others.

- Third, the Soviets see themselves as defending certain favorable asymmetries in the USSR's security relationship with its antagonists that have evolved incrementally over the years and that the Soviets have come to regard as essential to the defense of their national interests. This includes, among other things, a felt need to maintain a continuously updated if unacknowledged local advantage both in Europe and facing China.

The common element in this family of defensive-offensive concerns is the assumption that if the Politburo does not continue to press for advantage, it may fall back. The adverse implications of these attitudes for others are legitimized in Politburo thinking by the underlying assumption that Soviet interests can be adequately defended only at the expense of the antagonist, and are fundamentally incompatible with his interests.

Although the Politburo is now quite wary of the possibility of a new U.S. assertiveness, it is not yet convinced that the United States will ever satisfy either the political or the military prerequisites for effective opposition to gradual further expansion of the Soviet position.

The Soviet leaders may believe that the differences between the United States and certain of its allies over policy toward the Soviet Union that have emerged in recent years transcend issues of personality and reflect fundamental opposing conceptions of national self-interest that will probably endure. They will continue to test this assumption.

The Soviet leadership probably believes that the contraction of U.S. influence in the Third World as an adjunct of radical or anti-colonial insurgency has not yet run its course and will continue over time to evoke new opportunities—in the Middle East, in southern Africa, and in Latin America—for the expansion of the Soviet presence and influence.

The Soviet leaders may feel that although Sino-U.S. cooperation against the Soviet Union is deeply disturbing, it is not firmly established and may possibly be weakened in time. They surely hope for an exacerbation of Sino-U.S. bilateral difficulties. They may also count upon a combination of growth in Soviet power to intimidate and repeated demonstration of the inadequacy of U.S. counterweight to that power.

In their own sphere, the Soviet leaders know they will continue to face grave and growing difficulties, particularly in regard to stagnating economic growth, a serious energy problem, adverse demographic trends, and the ongoing crisis with Poland. The Politburo seems deter-

mined, however, to attempt to insulate its external ambitions from the effects of its internal troubles. The regime is particularly reluctant to believe that its economic difficulties will ever necessitate what it would regard as major political concessions to the United States. The Soviet leadership is likely to continue to see acceptance of important restraints on its efforts to expand its world role at the expense of the United States as such an unpalatable concession. Although it remains barely conceivable, as it was a decade ago, that the Soviet leadership might nevertheless modify its external behavior somewhat if the truly massive economic benefits originally envisioned as flowing from a Soviet-U.S. relationship were to materialize, this assumption remains highly conjectural. Moreover, economic benefits of this scope are now, in any case, far less likely to be forthcoming than ever before. Similarly, although it is not inconceivable that accumulating economic problems could one day compel the regime to slow the growth of military spending, there is no evidence that this has yet occurred, nor that the leadership believes such a point is near at hand.

The leadership thus does not yet appear to see any reason to scale down its long-term external expectations because of its internal difficulties. Although the Politburo probably recognizes that a decision involving Polish-Soviet bloodshed, should it prove necessary, would seriously impede Soviet efforts to split Western Europe from the United States, the Soviets may assume that even in this case the adverse effects would be transitory. Furthermore, the regime probably does not believe its internal problems over the next decade will seriously hamper its efforts to further improve its presence and influence in the third world at the expense of the United States. On the whole, the leadership has provided little evidence that its internal problems have either tempered the profound underlying hostility that drives Soviet worldwide competition with the United States or have caused the Soviets to revise their estimate of their long-term prospects.

Finally, the Soviets certainly retain enduring respect for U.S. technological capabilities and are surely greatly concerned at the evidence of a rebirth of U.S. nationalism and military spending. They may feel, however, that there is as yet little evidence that the enervating effects of U.S. pluralism upon the U.S. capacity to concert and execute competitive policies have dissipated. They also have little reason to believe that the substantial manipulative advantages the USSR obtains from certain of the asymmetries between the two societies are being reduced.

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I. SOVIET POSTULATES, CONCERNS, AND PRIORITIES

THE PRESENT WORLD HORIZON

The aging and ailing Soviet leadership now perceives itself to be undergoing a broad "counterattack" by its chief opponent.¹

Public use of this term by a Politburo member in this context is somewhat unusual in that it implies acknowledgment of a preceding, equally broad, and hostile Soviet stimulus. But Brezhnev's putative heir-apparent, in thus characterizing U.S. policy toward the USSR at the outset of the new decade, as usual did not elaborate on his hint that a long existing Soviet offensive posture toward the U.S. position in the world may have cumulatively helped to precipitate the U.S. response to Afghanistan. Instead, Kirilenko depicts the United States as seeking, in its efforts to isolate the Soviet Union, to rebel against objective, self-propelled phenomena that are incrementally and inevitably eroding U.S. influence and in the process advancing that of the Soviet Union. In reacting against

the profound consequences of detente and the objective process of progressive social change taking place in the world,²

the United States is vainly seeking to turn back "the laws of history," which, Kirilenko implies, both necessitate and legitimize Soviet advances.

Moreover, in so doing, the U.S. leadership has given vent to "whim, caprice, emotional outbursts."³ These are alleged to contradict genuine U.S. self-interest, which requires graceful adjustment rather than foolish resistance to historical necessity. Soviet pronouncements on this subject are calculated to impress upon foreign audiences—and to some degree may genuinely reflect—a certain anger and contempt at this amateurish yielding to emotion; but the Politburo has no intention of doing the same.⁴

The first imperative for the Party leadership under such an attack

¹Kirilenko address to 12th Hungarian Party Congress, *Pravda*, March 25, 1980.

²*Ibid.*

³Brezhnev TASS interview, *Pravda*, January 13, 1980.

⁴Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, The Rand Corporation, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1951, p. 31.

is to respond vigorously,⁵ yet appropriately, without allowing itself to be "provoked" into abandoning the mixture of policies seen as optimizing Soviet interests.⁶

No one will succeed in provoking us.⁷

No one will push us off this course.⁸

In the world seen from the Politburo, pugnacious struggle so shaped and channeled has the dual advantage of continuing, and even intensifying, that universal offensive against U.S. influence so much resented by unrealistic circles in the United States, while earning whatever political rewards may accrue from professed moderation toward others.

Accordingly, with the Soviet-U.S. bilateral relationship at a standstill, the keynote of Soviet competitive strategies for dealing with the United States in the world arena today remains their continuity with the past. An initial overview of the interacting spheres of Soviet concern today will suggest the nature of the offensive and defensive tactics developed over the last decade, as adapted to the new challenge:

- *In regard to the capitalist industrial world:* By appealing to the perceived self-interest of the allies of the United States in the preservation of their separate economic and security relationships with the USSR; by pressing on the lines of cleavage opened up by the multiple disparities revealed among Western interests; by encouraging and playing upon spontaneous allied reactions to U.S. policy as dangerously unpredictable, immoderate, and inconsistent; and by attacking the domestic base of those individuals and groups most supportive of the United States, the Soviet leadership seeks to escape the isolation sought for it by Washington and to isolate the United States in its turn.
- *In regard to China:* Confronted with an alarming acceleration of Sino-U.S. alignment against them since Afghanistan, the Soviet leaders remain determined to pay no significant price to either antagonist to end it. The Politburo therefore persists in what are thus far unsuccessful efforts to split the weaker opponent from the stronger one. It therefore offers China improvement in selected aspects of the bilateral relationship without relaxing those competitive assaults on Chinese geopolitical interests around the PRC's periphery that continuously refuel Chinese antagonism.

⁵Ibid., p. 78.

⁶Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁷Brezhnev election speech, *Pravda*, February 22, 1980.

⁸Brezhnev TASS interview, *Pravda*, January 13, 1980.

- *In regard to its own sphere:* While pursuing the uninhibited military consolidation of its position in Afghanistan and as a corollary to its continued cultivation of West Europe, the Soviet leadership assures the nervous East Europeans that it has no intention of curtailing their dealings with the West. At the same time, the Politburo struggles with the grave new threat the ongoing Polish crisis poses for its European policies, striving to contain popular pressures in Poland without resorting to punitive measures so drastic as to undermine its strategy toward Western Europe, yet preparing to pay that price should it become necessary. Meanwhile, the Politburo accelerates the consolidation of its position at home against what it has long regarded as Western-sponsored subversion. To this end, since the invasion of Afghanistan, it has adopted measures against Sakharov and other dissidents that were long delayed by concern over the Western response, thus creating *faits accomplis* to be incorporated into the revised definition of detente.
- *In regard to the Third World:* By adjusting and modulating what was already a highly variegated set of policies to meet both defensive needs and offensive opportunities created by the new U.S. posture, the Soviet leadership perseveres in the long-term process of extending the Soviet political presence into previously Western-oriented nooks and crannies throughout the world: exploring avenues of opportunity as they are opened up to Politburo view by the interaction of complex variables and accepting major setbacks as inevitable incidents in the process of advance on a gradually broadening front through the enemy's hinterland. A few representative examples will suggest the flavor of the whole:
 - To Iran, to African and Latin American radicals, to the Arab rejectionists, and even to moderate Arab states unhappy with the Camp David agreement, the Soviets stress the transcendent importance of the grievances each has against the United States. The Soviet leadership thereby seeks to persuade each audience that the Soviet offenses committed in Afghanistan are much less important to its private interests.
 - While using various diplomatic expedients to reassure audiences that merit soothing, such as India and the Arabs, that the invasion of Afghanistan has no threatening implications for them, the Soviets seek tacitly to convey the opposite impression to those audiences for whom intimidation is thought useful—for example, Pakistan and China.

- While playing upon the misgivings of states such as India and Kuwait over reactive U.S. efforts to strengthen its local military presence and capabilities, they quietly take steps to enhance the USSR's own naval presence in the Indian Ocean and its military readiness in the Caucasus.
- While intensifying efforts to defend and consolidate those political and military bridgeheads achieved through a Soviet security relationship over the last five years (e.g., in Angola, Ethiopia, South Yemen, and Indochina), they adjust to what they hope will prove only transitory recent disappointments in other areas, such as Zimbabwe.
- Meanwhile, they seek to preserve and develop a nascent arms-supply relationship with a hitherto Western-oriented African state (Zimbabwe's neighbor Zambia) by redoubling efforts to play upon Zambian fears of South Africa. At the same time, they begin cautious development of a new relationship with Nicaragua, on the main enemy's decaying periphery, while awaiting and loudly applauding the imminent fall of further fruit in El Salvador.
- Finally they continue quietly to expand the multiple military and political uses they have found for their earliest consolidated bridgehead in the Third World, in Cuba. They seek to pacify Castro's annoyance at the Afghanistan embarrassment and to encourage him to repair the damage done by Afghanistan to Soviet and Cuban interests in the nonaligned movement and thus, gradually, to help revive the temporarily diminished intensity of anti-U.S. sentiment in the movement.

This brief tour of the Soviet world horizon suggests that the leadership's strategy toward the United States has become both defensive and coercive. The defensive aspect of Soviet behavior responds to what the Soviets see as unprecedented U.S. efforts to isolate and surround them. The coercive core of the Politburo's policies reflects the Soviet hope to so shape the international environment as to compel the United States eventually to restore those elements of the bilateral relationship still deemed useful to the Soviet Union, but on terms favorable to accelerated Soviet exploitation of competitive advantages.

Viewing the world as a single, interrelated, many-faceted battlefield, the Soviet leaders have for many years regarded the management of their bilateral relationship with the United States as but one aspect, albeit a very important one, of a much broader, indeed universal interaction with the United States, involving a multitude of engagements, sometimes open and sometimes hidden, sometimes sharp and

sometimes subdued, between interests that are in most cases assumed to be incompatible. Although, as we shall see, the Politburo's priorities across this wide canvas have shifted with changing circumstances, a very large proportion of the Soviet energies devoted to coping with the United States have always been channeled through Soviet dealings with others. Since 1974, for reasons to be explored below, this proportion has steadily grown. With the virtual dissolution of the remnants of the bilateral relationship in 1980, the competitive thrust of the Politburo's policies affecting the United States, long dominant in Soviet thinking, has become all-embracing.

This does not mean that the increasingly decrepit members of the Politburo have in their eleventh hour at last acquired a "master plan" for further advance in the world at U.S. expense, capable of magically anticipating the interaction of all the myriad variables they had been unable to anticipate before. On the contrary, despite the obligatory obeisance all Soviet institutions must make to paper plans, the practical decisionmaking horizon of the Soviet leadership, particularly in foreign affairs, is remarkably short.

Instead of a blueprint, the Soviet leaders have a consistent world view centered on the unblinking expectation of lasting struggle with the main antagonist, furnishing a sense of self-justification in all circumstances, and providing a stable framework from which to assign priorities in that struggle as decisions and events emerge. They are totally isolated within a network of advice and information strongly predisposed to confirm this attitude of pugnacious righteousness. Under the Brezhnev regime there has been an expansion in the size of the foreign-policy elite surrounding the leadership and probably some increase in the diversity of views privately held within that elite, but there is little evidence to suggest that heretical notions about the assumptions underlying Soviet policy are exposed to the policymakers. On the contrary, the record of Soviet conduct strongly suggests that this elite in no case provides the Politburo with advisors who have the treasonous temerity to interpret ambiguous phenomena in a fashion likely to challenge the fundamental preconceptions of these old men. In the military sphere, where the General Staff and a few closely associated functionaries enjoy an unchallenged monopoly of esoteric information and advisory rights,⁹ the voiceable view of Soviet needs and interests is even more closely circumscribed.

From this vantage point, thus informed and supported, the members of the Politburo explore their avenues of opportunity as they come into sight, forming tentative expectations and discarding them with

⁹Through the mechanism of the de facto Politburo subcommittee known as the Defense Council.

great dexterity, sometimes blundering, but always subordinating this shuffling of expedients to a central purpose.¹⁰

THE ELUSIVE CORRELATION OF FORCES

The Soviets now say that the United States is attempting to reverse the trend of the world "correlation of forces." This is implied to be illegitimate.

The Two Sides of the Ledger

Within this amorphous concept the Soviets subsume, in extremely vague fashion, all the political, social, economic, and military factors they perceive to be involved to some degree in their worldwide competition with their chief antagonists. In this melange the Soviet attainment of a growing edge in ICBM throw-weight has a certain place, but so do such considerations as the successive humiliations of the United States in Vietnam and Iran, the baneful effect of the OPEC cartel upon Western economies, the successful Soviet-Cuban operations in Africa, the internal political and economic disarray in the United States, and the decline of moderating Yugoslav influence and rise of that of Cuba in the Nonaligned Movement. Thus all trends are relevant, nonmilitary fully as much as military, that affect the relative status of the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, events that further weaken the antagonist may be as important as Soviet victories.

The Soviet leaders are well aware that there is an opposing side of the ledger. Among the negative trends in the correlation of forces, an objective Soviet observer would list, above all, such factors as the fragile, dangerous, and unreliable Soviet relationship with Poland; the grave and growing Soviet economic difficulties and the long-term decline in the rate at which the Soviet economy has been overhauling that of the United States; the growing costs of the Soviet empire, both in East Europe and elsewhere; Chinese implacable hostility and the growing Sino-U.S. military association; the negative reaction in the Moslem world to the invasion of Afghanistan; and, most worrisome, the possibility of a revival of military expenditures and deployments in the West.

The tension between the two sets of phenomena causes the Soviet

¹⁰This central purpose has been defined succinctly by Galina Orionova, a recent defector who has worked in the Moscow Institute of the USA, as determination "to extend Soviet power, by detente or any other means, wherever or whenever such expansion is neither too costly nor too dangerous." See Nora Beloff, "Escape from Boredom: A Defector's Story," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1980.

leadership to be at the same time confident and increasingly assertive in exploitation of opportunities created by favorable trends, and indignant and defensive about threats to Soviet interests evoked by the reaction to that exploitation.

The Emotional Effects of U.S. Disasters

There is in Moscow no objective standard by which to weight the factors just listed, and different Soviets almost certainly balance them differently. But although the frequent complacent assertions of Soviet propaganda must to a certain extent be discounted,¹¹ it is probably true that most Soviet leaders have seen favorable trends as considerably outweighing unfavorable ones over the last decade and now see the United States as frantically seeking to reverse this ratio.

The rapid accretion of favorable milestones in recent years has cumulatively assured the Soviet leadership that notwithstanding many particular Soviet defeats, difficulties, and dangers, underlying trends have on balance been working in Soviet favor. The members of the Politburo, no less than the leaders and populace of the United States, are sensitive to the emotional effects of symbolic events. The replacement of Batista by Castro has been followed two decades later by the replacement of Haile Selassie with Mengistu; the humiliating U.S. flight from Saigon has been followed by Soviet entry into Cam Ranh Bay; the Shah of Iran and Somoza have fallen.¹²

Again, these images are counterbalanced to a considerable degree in the Soviet mind by the aforementioned accumulating misadventures and worries affecting Soviet policy, particularly by the ongoing crisis in Poland. But despite these and other grave concerns, the Soviet leaders are unlikely to have serious doubts, on balance, as to who has been in retreat over the last decade and who has been pressing ahead.¹³

¹¹Soviet media have over the years very commonly proclaimed a changing correlation of forces, in periods of Soviet good fortune and bad fortune alike, including periods (such as that of the illusory missile gap) when the Politburo has wished to convey a misleading impression of its strength. The manipulation of this concept is, in fact, an instrument of Soviet political warfare. This does not mean that the Politburo does not believe in its underlying reality.

¹²The overthrow of the Shah, exulted Gromyko in an election speech in February 1980, has created "a gaping hole in American foreign policy." *Pravda*, February 19, 1980.

¹³

The capitalist world is in a fever. . . . Among the many signs of an exacerbation of the general crisis of capitalism, particular importance is being assumed by the obvious decline of the neocolonialist system.

M. A. Suslov, speech to Polish party congress, Moscow radio, February 12, 1980.

Socialism's positions in the world are steadily strengthening. The change in the correlation of forces in favor of socialism has created favorable conditions for

Soviet assumptions on this score are strongly reinforced by Soviet perceptions of the opinions of others. The Soviet leaders surely agree with commonly expressed Western judgments that the last decade has been characterized by increasing Soviet emergence as an actor on the world scene. They are well aware of the widespread view, both in Western Europe and in the United States, that U.S. leverage and influence in Europe has been eroding over the last four years, partly because of leadership personality differences and different perceptions of national interest, but also to some extent because of underlying secular shifts in relative economic strength.¹⁴ And they are equally well aware of the common U.S. perception that the last few years have been characterized by a succession of far-reaching U.S. disasters in the Third World, beginning with the humiliating flight from Saigon.¹⁵

The Soviet leaders regard this worldwide train of U.S. misfortunes as invigorating to observe and important to encourage not only for its own sake (the weakening of the U.S. position being an objective good in itself, because it changes the *relative* position of the Soviet Union and its main adversary), but also because of the possibilities, however chancy, thereby opened up for the implantation of Soviet influence. The

the growth of the peoples' liberations struggle. Major victories have been won in recent years by the forces of national liberation and social progress in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The progressive changes in the world and the growth of real socialism's strength and influence are provoking frenzied resistance from imperialist reaction.

M. A. Suslov, election address, *Pravda*, February 21, 1980.

The source [of U.S. policy] is U.S. reactionary imperialist circles' discontent with the strengthening of the socialist community, the growth of revolutionary processes and the upsurge of the anti-imperialist struggle. The very course of world events does not suit them.

A. P. Kirilenko election speech, *Pravda*, February 20, 1980.

¹⁴ Even its [the U.S.] position as leader of the capitalist world has been considerably undermined. . . . The changes in the position of the USA's allies are not just derivative of the intensifying trade, economic and monetary financial rivalry among the major capitalist powers. As a result of the positive changes in international relations, the USA's partners have acquired much greater scope for foreign policy maneuvers and for ridding themselves of the USA's much too rigid tutelage.

L. Vidyasova, "U.S. Imperialist Foreign Policy and the Modern World," *International Affairs*, January 1980.

¹⁵ Representatives of U.S. political and military departments say that the changes that have occurred in Asia, Africa and Latin America over the past few years, especially in countries like Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and South Yemen, and recently also in Iran and Nicaragua, have "upset the balance of forces" to the detriment of the United States. They regard these rapid changes as a "looming tragedy" for the West. This "tragedy" is exacerbated, from the standpoint of U.S. politicians, by the energy and raw material crises.

(Ibid.)

Politburo takes for granted that such influence, particularly in areas not contiguous to the Soviet Union, may be relative, conditional, possibly ephemeral. The leadership discounts this fact. Painfully aware that not every U.S. loss produces an immediate Soviet gain and that not every Soviet gain endures, the Soviet leaders share a perspective that renders these realities patiently supportable. If given trends are not immediately and obviously zero-sum in their effects, there is reason to believe that they will eventually be so in broader or longer-term perspective.

The Enemy's Weakness, Frivolity, or Sloth

These considerations are reinforced in the Soviet mind by a simultaneous Soviet achievement of recent years whose success the Politburo assumes to be not fortuitous. Side by side with the contraction of U.S. influence and the emergence of unprecedented Soviet power projection opportunities abroad, the Soviet leaders have lived through a decade of favorable changes in the relative Soviet position in the three chief military arenas: the strategic matchup with the United States and the regional confrontations with NATO and China. In the Soviet view, these modifications in military balances were facilitated not merely by the energy and determination of the Soviet Union, but equally by the various social or economic weaknesses of the USSR's antagonists. These weaknesses have diluted and delayed efforts to compete, again testifying to a changing correlation of forces.

Among some Soviets with an institutional vested interest in the pursuit of maximum advantage in the arms competition, this heady experience has diminished even the traditional Soviet awe of the superior size, technological level, and productive potential of U.S. industry. As one Soviet writer asserted, in the areas of production that really matter in military terms—that is, heavy industry—the U.S. advantage is rapidly dwindling; in fact, he suggests that it has almost vanished. The United States fritters its undoubted economic advantages away in areas of self-indulgence that contribute nothing to the correlation of forces.

In analyzing the economic potential of a state it is necessary also to consider the characteristics of the country's industrial production. In the USA the production of such items as objects of luxury, means for advertising, automobiles, household appliances, etc., which cannot be converted in practice to satisfy military needs or have limited significance in this area, makes up a significant proportion of total industrial output. If industrial production in the USSR currently constitutes more than

75 percent of the American level (in 1950 it constituted less than one-third of the USA level), the quantity of production of means of production is not less than 90 percent of comparable production in the USA. It is clear that this has not only tremendous general-economic but also military-economic significance.... The coefficient of superiority of the socialist commonwealth over the aggressive imperialist bloc in the area of assuring the material needs of military construction is currently considerably more weighty than the corresponding index of the USSR in comparison with Hitlerite Germany during the past war.¹⁶

Although these assertions are probably regarded as one-sided and tendentious even by other Soviets,¹⁷ this hint of a certain contempt for the lagging and frivolous behavior of the competitor is probably reflected to some degree in Kremlin attitudes.

It is not for the sake of our blue eyes, as a Soviet leader might say, that the Americans froze their ICBM and SLBM launcher totals for a decade while we rushed past them, relying instead upon qualitative advantages that we have now also largely eliminated.

Nor is it considered a matter of good will that the West has failed to attempt to compensate for the Eastern preponderance of tanks in Europe and had no deployment programs in train to anticipate and compensate for the SS-20 as it emerged. Certainly it was not because of Chinese good will that the pace of modernization of Chinese conventional forces facing the USSR has fallen behind the rate at which the Soviet Union has continued to strengthen its forces on the Chinese border. These historic omissions are the result of specific deficiencies in the Politburo's antagonists: In the U.S. case, they reflect the enervating effects of the Vietnam War upon the U.S. will to compete, even in weapons production; in the NATO case, the extreme reluctance of the alliance members to make sacrifices commensurate with Soviet force improvements and their inability to agree on any countermeasures until long after the particular Soviet stimulus has materialized; and in the Chinese case, profound and enduring economic and technological weakness. All this is surely very encouraging to the Politburo.

¹⁶V. Rut'kov, "The Military Economic Might of the Socialist Countries—A Factor in the Security of Nations," *Kommunist Voruzhenikh Sil* (Communist of the Armed Forces), No. 23, December 1974, pp. 19-20.

¹⁷The presentation cited was clearly meant as an argument for maximum Soviet perseverance in allocating resources in the desired direction and for avoiding temptations to fall into the U.S. consumerist trap. Some Soviets today would disagree with certain of its assumptions, especially the tacit suggestion that military industry and heavy industry in the USSR do not compete for resources, or that the U.S. standard of living has no significant effect upon the world correlation of forces.

Disquieting Reservations

And yet, a note of less than complete assurance about the continuity of these phenomena is detectable in much of Soviet comment in 1979 and 1980. The prospect of large new U.S. military programs, of European theater nuclear deployments, and of U.S. transfers of military technology to China undoubtedly creates a Soviet sense of accumulating new dangers that the leadership will have to fight to overcome as it enters a prolonged period of increasing economic stringency. The revival of American nationalism, the threat of heightened encirclement, and the extreme volatility of the Third World forces the leadership has sought to manipulate in the 1970s multiply the latent uncertainties with which the Politburo must contend. Clearly, more arduous struggle is in prospect if the Soviets are not to surrender the advances of the 1970s.

THE OFFENSIVE ESSENCE OF SOVIET DEFENSIVE CONCERNS

Throughout the Soviet public and private reaction to the U.S. response to Afghanistan is a note of righteous grievance. The Americans, it is implied, are unreasonably trying to deprive the Soviet Union of what rightfully belongs to it by virtue of geopolitical achievement and historic mission.

What is it that the United States seeks to take from the Politburo, and that the Soviet leaders see themselves as defending? Three sets of claims are at stake. They concern the legitimacy of an expandable Soviet empire, of an expanding Soviet world role, and of asymmetrical Soviet rights in the field of military security.

The Expandable Empire

The first claim is the legitimacy of the Politburo's determination to ensure the "irreversibility" of its authority—defined as "socialist gains"—in its own sphere. The leadership sees this right as valid not only inside the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, but also in such other areas, particularly adjacent to the USSR, as history and the balance of forces may from time to time reveal. In defending this dual claim, the Soviets tend to appeal for empathy with the Politburo's right to maintain internal stability within the imperial boundaries previously staked out. At the same time, they demand respect for those natural changes dictated by geography—that is, for what are intimated to be

the Soviet Union's natural gravitational rights as a great power.

The Politburo thus expects from its adversaries both tacit acquiescence in its right to use force if deemed necessary to preserve Soviet domination over Poland and acceptance of a similar right to use force to consolidate and extend Soviet domination over Afghanistan.

An Expanding (Supplanting) World Role

The second claim is the legitimacy of the Politburo's intention to make incremental use of emerging opportunities and capabilities to become a fully global actor.

The Right To Emulate

This is generally defended by Soviet spokesmen as the Soviet right to play a role the United States had previously reserved for itself. Particularly in private conversation, this argument is sometimes supplemented with the accurate observation that the Soviet Union even now has not yet achieved either the far-flung political presence or the distant power-projection capabilities long enjoyed by the United States. U.S. objections to Soviet overseas operations are therefore said to be reflections of a continuing hypocritical U.S. refusal to accept the Soviet Union as a real equal. Some sympathetic non-Soviet observers see this tendency as exacerbating historical Russian feelings of inferiority and wounding the Politburo's *amour-propre*, thus encouraging bad Soviet behavior (which is therefore, at root, the fault of the United States).

This line of justification and self-justification generally ignores the fact—frequently cited in other contexts—that the global U.S. role is widely perceived as gradually diminishing and that the Politburo sees the USSR's efforts to expand its own role as heavily dependent on this trend. The corollary is that the Soviet leadership in fact seeks not merely to match but incrementally to supplant U.S. presence and influence. Although the Politburo takes for granted that the erosion of U.S. influence does not guarantee a corresponding Soviet gain, or the permanence of any such gain, it is seen as a prerequisite. The effort to expand the Soviet global role and to prevent the evaporation of recent Soviet accretions of influence is therefore closely interwoven with an incessant effort, involving very large Soviet resources, to encourage and play upon anti-U.S. sentiment in every part of the world.

To the Soviet leadership, the decisive test of the antagonist's readiness to accept the inevitability and legitimacy of the emerging Soviet role is his willingness to maintain a mutually profitable bilateral relationship with the USSR while the supplanting process is going on. The Politburo regards the United States as never having fully accepted the

necessity of maintaining this wall between Soviet-U.S. dealings and Soviet policy affecting the United States elsewhere, and as having finally rejected it in 1980, seizing on the invasion of Afghanistan as a pretext.

You Do the Same to Us

Soviet representatives privately say this, again, is hypocritical because, in their view, the United States has never ceased to attempt to damage Soviet interests abroad. Examples sometimes cited include the Middle East, where the United States helped facilitate a major reduction in Soviet influence after the 1973 war, and China, with whom the United States is seen as constructing a security relationship to "encircle" the Soviet Union.

It is possible that some members of the Soviet leadership may indeed find additional justification in these terms for what they have felt impelled to do in any case. The Politburo, however, has an asymmetrical view of these matters. Although the leadership insists on the isolation of the bilateral relationship from the effects of their competitive operations against U.S. interests in the Third World,¹⁸ it maintains another standard regarding U.S. association with China against Soviet interests. It does not agree that this association can also be insulated from U.S.-Soviet dealings. On the contrary, over the years the Soviet leadership has responded to the unfolding of the U.S.-Chinese relationship with repeated warnings that it could have major effects upon U.S.-Soviet bilaterals, including arms control negotiations.¹⁹ Here they have professed to believe in "linkage."

More fundamentally, the Politburo has never provided reason to

¹⁸Those operations are generally justified in lofty terms, as reflecting the unalterable and inevitable Soviet duty to come to the aid of "revolutionary and national liberation movements." This justification is taken much more seriously by some Western observers than by the Soviet leaders. The Politburo has a highly selective sense of this obligation, which is measured in practice almost exclusively in terms of *realpolitik* and the net Soviet advantage in the worldwide struggle with its main antagonists. Even the ideological leanings of a given movement are significant to the Soviets only to the extent that they promise to serve the larger geopolitical interests of the USSR. Although the Marxist MPLA in Angola and the less radical ZAPU of Zimbabwe were deemed worthy of Soviet support in the last decade, ZAPU's more radical (but Chinese-contaminated) rival ZANU was not, nor were assorted Kurds in Iraq, Eritreans in Ethiopia, and Biafrans in Nigeria (to say nothing of the Afghan tribesmen and the Cambodian ultra-Marxists).

¹⁹

Certain leaders who hold high posts in Washington . . . close their eyes to the fact that alignment with China on an anti-Soviet basis would rule out the possibility of cooperation with the Soviet Union in the matter of reducing the danger of a nuclear war and, of course, of limiting armaments.

Pravda, June 17, 1978. The Soviets have never specified the degree of U.S. association with China that would trigger this effect; the Politburo is itself probably still undecided in this regard.

believe that it was prepared to offer reciprocal concessions to the United States in the Third World. It has not shown willingness to reciprocate for major U.S. concessions to Soviet interests in areas of relative Soviet weakness—such as those the United States momentarily seemed ready to extend to Moscow at the time of the October 1977 Soviet-U.S. communique on the Middle East—with comparable great Soviet concessions to U.S. interests elsewhere, in areas of relative U.S. weakness. Still less has the Soviet leadership indicated readiness to respond to such U.S. concessions with a general relaxation of the Soviet offensive posture against the United States in the Third World. In obedience to the taboo against unprincipled fundamental concessions constricting the Party's freedom of maneuver and its room for future advance,²⁰ the present Soviet leadership recognizes no region of the world—and no country within any region—as a legitimate U.S. sphere of influence exempt from Soviet efforts to eliminate and supplant U.S. ascendancy.²¹ The Soviets are, indeed, indignant at the notion that they might be asked to provide such an exemption.²²

In sum, the merging of the ostensible quest for equality with the compulsion to seek to supplant is a constant motif in Soviet thinking, although it is fully verbalized only in rare moments of brutal candor:

We want to be treated as equal partner in the world. What we want is equality, the status of equal rank. In the Middle East we are visualizing a draw. Sadat, however, is committing a grave mistake if he allies himself so closely with the losing

²⁰*Code*, p. 90.

²¹To take an extreme example: The Soviet media in recent years have given increased support to a long-established Cuban campaign of denunciation, conducted in the UN and elsewhere, of the U.S. relationship with Puerto Rico. On December 18, 1979, less than two weeks before the invasion of Afghanistan, *Pravda* depicted the United States as having hastily dispatched military forces to this island "in recent days" to put down "the Puerto Rican people's protracted struggle" and to safeguard the use of the island's "advantageous strategic location in the Caribbean." *Pravda* condemned in advance the results of any new plebiscite the United States might hold in Puerto Rico, depicting any such vote, regardless of the outcome, as intended "to perpetuate the present situation." In view of the obvious parallels between this largely fictitious representation of the U.S. position in Puerto Rico and the actual Soviet position at the moment in Afghanistan, it is conceivable that the timing of the article was not fortuitous and may have been intended to imply that U.S. complaints about Soviet actions in Afghanistan could only be hypocritical. Whatever the tactical purpose, however, the article is striking testimony to Soviet attitudes regarding the legitimacy of a U.S. sphere.

²²Such an understanding, they argue, would be equivalent to translating detente into the "preservation of the status quo," whereby "imperialism could continue unhindered its tyranny in the areas remaining in its sphere of influence." B. Pyadyshev, "Opponents of Detente from Miami," *Za Rubezhom*, No. 45, October 30, 1975, pp. 15-16. This Soviet position is also asymmetrical; the Soviets argue the opposite case when defending on geopolitical and security grounds their inherent right to insure continuation of a friendly regime in Kabul.

party, the Americans. . . . The United States has no business in the Middle East.²⁴

The Compulsion To Attack

This universal attacking (*nastupatel'nyy*) essence of Soviet policy toward the U.S. position in the world is the central underlying reality the Politburo wishes the United States to accept as compatible with detente. Such spectacular events of the last decade as the deployment of Soviet or Cuban forces for combat (in Africa or Southwest Asia) or the use of Soviet geopolitical weight to underwrite aggression by others (in Southeast Asia) are therefore not isolated aberrations in the Soviet interpretation of detente, but rather special manifestations of a continuous flow of policy. Although particular kinds of Soviet behavior may or may not be repeated, depending on circumstances, the propensity to seek to supplant, which drives the whole, is unabating and uncompromisable.

The requirements of the attacking compulsion are thus in principle insatiable; they appear to be incompatible with acceptance of any point of final equilibrium with the United States. Periods of pause and retreat that appear to imply such acceptance, however necessary, are disturbing anomalies that must be justified, to oneself and one's associates, as consolidating interludes within some broader framework of unabated offensive. It is for this reason that Brezhnev felt obliged to privately reassure some militant followers in the spring of 1973 that the improvement of bilateral relations with the West was a stratagem intended to enable the Soviet Union to improve its relative position to the point where by 1985 it could deal with the West more forthrightly.²⁴

When advantages are at hand, they must be pursued.²⁵ It is not enough that the post-Shah regime in Iran strives to perpetuate Iranian hostility toward the United States by seizing U.S. diplomats. The Soviet leadership, lacking a good opening to that regime, must seek one by fanning the flames of that hostility by praising and justifying the takeover of the U.S. embassy, at first explicitly²⁶ and thereafter

²³Statement by an unidentified "high-ranking official" of the Soviet Embassy in Washington who has been posted there continuously since 1960, in an interview in *Die Welt*, January 14, 1980.

²⁴A credible account of this incident appears in *New York Times*, September 17, 1973. I shall defer to another context a more detailed discussion of the peculiar factors that impelled Brezhnev to make this statement, and the extent to which he believed it.

²⁵*Code*, pp. 66, 75.

²⁶"In Tehran, struggling and enthusiastic young people occupied the building of the U.S. Embassy, this center of corruption and anti-Iranian conspiracies, and in this way they reflected the anti-imperialistic feelings of our homeland's people." Baku [clandestine] National Voice of Iran Radio, November 5, 1979. "The task which the provisional government could not and did not want to implement . . . the enthusiastic and struggling young people of our country implemented with boldness and sacrifice. By occupying the espionage nest of the U.S. in Tehran . . . they proved to the world the conspiracies and

implicitly.²⁷

It is not enough that the United States has been ignominiously expelled from Vietnam with the aid of Soviet-supplied material. To consolidate a position of advantage, the Politburo must seek to divert Vietnam from pursuing a nonmilitary solution to its border problems with Pol Pot's Cambodia that could reduce Vietnam's need for the Soviet Union. To that end it must make feasible a military solution—the conquest of Cambodia—that could perpetuate Vietnamese dependence on the USSR.²⁸ It is not enough that the United States has been forced to accept the permanence of a Soviet military alliance with, and military presence in, a close neighbor of the United States. The Cubans must be encouraged and discreetly assisted to seize emerging opportunities to further erode the U.S. position in the Caribbean and Central America.²⁹

The unspoken assumption in all such behavior, in each of these arenas, is that if the Soviet Union does not press to advance further in the universal struggle against the United States, it may fall back. In view of past Soviet experience and the economic pulling power of the West, the Soviet leaders are acutely aware of the potential fragility of their influence on noncontiguous clients, whatever their ideological makeup (or, indeed, on contiguous ones, except when the Soviet hold can be enforced by military occupation, as Tito, Mao, Kim Il-sung, Ceaucescu, Dubcek, and Amin have variously shown). Precisely be-

intrigues of U.S. officials." Baku [clandestine] National Voice of Iran Radio, November 10, 1979. (In compilation, *National Voice of Iran: November 1978-November 1979*, Foreign Broadcast Information Service Special Report, December 10, 1979, pp. 286, 290.)

Such statements are far more characteristic of "unofficial" radios broadcasting under Soviet control from the USSR or Eastern Europe than of Radio Moscow or other media explicitly identified with the USSR, which tend to be more circumspect. Both classes of Soviet propaganda are, of course, equally instruments of Soviet policy.

²⁷For example, in a March 1980 speech at a luncheon for the visiting Hungarian foreign minister, Gromyko cited Iran as having recently "provided an example of staunchness in defending its national interests against imperialist pressure, blackmail and threats." *Pravda*, March 18, 1980. The pressures in question, of course, had been organized by the United States in an effort to secure release of the U.S. diplomats being held hostage, while what was being so staunchly upheld against those pressures was Khomeini's unwillingness to release the diplomats.

²⁸This was accomplished by the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese treaty of November 1978, which was a prerequisite for the Vietnamese attack on Kampuchea in December.

²⁹For nearly a decade, the Soviet leadership has been urging Soviet foreign policy institutions and organizations to work to reduce the U.S. special advantage in Latin America. Immediately after the fall of Somoza, the Soviet press exulted in unusually strong terms, asserting that U.S. influence over Latin America was decaying rapidly and that Cuban influence was growing, as demonstrated by the U.S. inability to get OAS support to head off a Sandinista victory, as well as by the "ever-increasing participation of Latin American countries in the nonaligned movement." The Soviets noted that the United States has traditionally regarded Latin America as some kind of "internal security zone of its own," and expressed gratification that "the Americans are feeling increasingly uncomfortable in their 'internal security zone.'" *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, July 20, 1979.

cause the permanence of both gains and opportunities must be considered uncertain, despite all favorable trends, consolidation can be sought only by pressing on.³⁰

In sum, the Soviet offensive posture is dictated by a confluence of judgments, assumptions, and emotions: the sense of beckoning opportunities created by U.S. misfortunes and a changing "correlation of forces," the Leninist compulsion to pursue potential gains to the limit of prudence, awareness of the emergence of strategic parity and of the growth of Soviet force-projection capabilities, the rationalization that the United States behaves similarly, and the fear that the gains of recent years may be reversed if not reinforced with others.

Asymmetrical Security

While the Soviet leaders see themselves as defending the legitimacy of their efforts to expand their world role at U.S. expense, closer to home they sense themselves to be defending certain favorable asymmetries in their security relationships with their antagonists that have evolved over the years and are now also under attack. These the Soviets have come to regard as prescriptive rights genuinely essential to the defense (and therefore to the advance) of their national interests, although they are in fact simultaneously prejudicial to their opponents' interest and in some cases have repeatedly been objected to as such.

The assumption of such asymmetrical—that is, unequal—rights and needs is implicit in many of the circumstances in which the Soviet leaders use the term "equal security." Although the Soviets do not usually spell out the claim, the common denominator in different contexts appears to be the conviction that because of geography and other unique geopolitical burdens, the Soviet Union requires greater force levels in each arena than its antagonists to end up with equivalent security, or "equilibrium."

Occasionally, this is made explicit. Most broadly, the overall size of the Soviet armed forces in comparison with those of the United States is publicly justified on the grounds that the Soviets must defend on two fronts, against China as well as Europe.³¹ What is not acknowledged is an apparently equally strong conviction of a Soviet need to maintain

³⁰*Code*, p. 79. Alluding to Soviet policy of the last decade in the Third World, the former USA Institute staff member Galina Orionova thus comments that "the Soviet government behaves like any ordinary Soviet consumer. He grabs anything which happens to be on the counter, even if he doesn't need it, knowing that tomorrow it may no longer be available." See Beloff, "Escape from Boredom."

³¹See, for example, statements by Ponomarev on April 25, 1978 (TASS, April 25, 1978) and Kirilenko on February 27, 1979 (*Pravda*, February 28, 1979).

a continuously updated local advantage in each of these theaters.

In the case of China, the Soviets maintain what they consider sufficient local forces and firepower to overmatch the Chinese at every step up the escalatory ladder, with the measurement of sufficiency heavily influenced by the need to offset Soviet dependence upon a long rail line for reinforcement. By the standards of most Western observers, they have greatly overcompensated even for the defensive needs created by this handicap. The Chinese therefore see the stationing of these powerful forces in Siberia and Mongolia as intended simply to intimidate them. The Soviets, however, see this as justifiable insurance through superiority, particularly because these forces can also be used to exert geopolitical leverage on Chinese behavior elsewhere—e.g., in Indochina. The Politburo is accordingly indignant at the possibility that the United States might provide China the wherewithal even to dilute this superiority.

The Politburo's underlying attitudes regarding sufficiency appear roughly similar in Europe. Although the Soviets have offered no justification for the Warsaw Pact's sizable advantages in manpower and tanks (since they do not admit these exist), it is conceivable that they may at one time have privately regarded them as necessary to compensate on the one hand for the uncertain reliability of some East European troops, and on the other hand for the once important NATO advantage in tactical nuclear weapons. Despite the reduction of the latter handicap in recent years, the Soviets cling to their very large advantage in tanks, unwilling to forgo the measure of extra military insurance it confers, the bargaining advantage it presents in arms control forums, or the intimidating weight it gives the Politburo in dealings with West European states and populations.

In addition, having sought and failed in SALT I and II to secure compensation from the United States for the so-called "Forward Based Systems,"³² the Politburo has produced and deployed systems³³ in Western Russia that again, in the Western view, greatly overcompensate for this Soviet handicap. The Soviets profess to believe that these systems have merely restored an "equilibrium," and profess to be indignant that the West plans to deploy in reply theater nuclear

³²The French and British nuclear delivery systems and the U.S. land and carrier based nuclear weapons in the European theater. The USSR probably received tacit, partial, and temporary compensation for FBS in the U.S. acceptance and legitimization of unequal SLBM ceilings in SALT I. This was obviously considered inadequate, however, particularly because those ceilings were to be rendered moot in the broader framework of the SALT II agreement, which permitted both sides to mix and match disparate systems to common ceilings.

³³The SS-20 IRBM and the Backfire bomber.

systems capable of reaching the Soviet Union.³⁴ Having established a unilateral, nonnegotiated *fait accompli*, they insist on a right to participate in the determination of the Western response and have indicated their intention to make additional deployments, in advance of the arrival of the new Western systems, in reaction to the Western refusal to halt deployment pending negotiations. Once again, the Soviet leaders regard the United States as the chief cause of the Western failure to accept the legitimacy of the asymmetrical security established with the advent of the SS-20.

Finally, in the strategic sphere, Soviet vital interests appear to the Soviet leadership to require pursuit of a war-fighting capability that is supplementary and additional to that required merely to deter the United States from attack. The quest for this additional capability is evidently regarded as a search for insurance against the possibility that deterrence might fail³⁵ and thus as legitimate reinforcement of the Soviet sense of security, like the unacknowledged advantage in tanks and manpower maintained in Europe. At the same time, just as they are unwilling to acknowledge the degree of insecurity created in the West by their pursuit of maximum security for themselves in Europe, so the Soviets are unwilling to come to grips with the U.S. perception of menace to *its* deterrent—and thus to U.S. security—created by Soviet strategic overinsurance. Because the Soviets are unwilling to accept any formulation that would cast doubt on the legitimacy of this overinsurance, during the SALT negotiations they explicitly rejected the principle of mutual assured destruction.³⁶ They have thus, in effect, disowned any responsibility on their part for the preservation of the U.S. deterrent.

In recent years, they have sought to compensate for this refusal with a variety of statements claiming the existence of a strategic parity or "equilibrium" and vigorously denying any intention to upset this

³⁴During Gromyko's visit to Germany in November 1979, he characterized the Western resolve to proceed with theater nuclear deployments as an unacceptable attempt to set "political preconditions" for negotiations. However, he suggested that the Soviet deployments to which NATO now finally proposes to respond did not represent such an effort to establish preconditions, precisely because they had been going on for some years without response. He appeared to be implying that the force matchup established with the advent of the SS-20 had been legitimized by Western inaction and must be recognized as "equilibrium." Moscow Radio, November 24, 1979.

³⁵An alternative view is that the Soviet leaders regard a strategic war-fighting capability as itself an essential part of the Soviet deterrent and that the leadership has come to believe that the United States will never be sufficiently deterred to satisfy Moscow until the United States is persuaded that the Soviet Union can fight and win a war against it.

³⁶See Thomas A. Wolfe, *The SALT Experience*, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, 1979, pp. 107, 111.

alleged equilibrium or to seek superiority.³⁷ These statements bear a strong resemblance to the analogous Soviet assertions that the advent of the SS-20 has brought about an "equilibrium" in Europe. Because such general reassurances do not address the destabilizing capabilities created by the trend of Soviet weapons deployments in question, they do not remove the insecurity created by Soviet actions.³⁸

The Family of Defensive-Offensive Concerns

A family resemblance in Politburo attitudes thus exists in diverse spheres of Soviet policy. Determination to insure adequate defense of Soviet interests is seen as simultaneously requiring and justifying the forcible addition of Afghanistan to the inner sphere of Soviet control, the continuous outward pressure against the U.S. position in the world, the vigilant preservation of unequal security balances in regional theaters, and the pursuit of a strategic war-fighting capability against the United States.

The adverse implications of these attitudes for others appear to be legitimized in Politburo thinking by the underlying assumption that Soviet interests can be adequately defended only at the expense of the antagonist and are fundamentally incompatible with his interests. It is thus taken for granted that if the Politburo allows constraints to be placed on its behavior by foolishly accepting the possibility of a real and lasting middle ground, this can only give unilateral advantage to the opponent.

FACTORS IN THE EVOLVING SOVIET POLICY MIX

Within the framework created by this strong Politburo compulsion to maximize gains to the limits of prudence, there is reason to believe that the leadership's evaluation of disparate alternative advantages has fluctuated somewhat with changing circumstances. Over the last decade, several interacting factors have to some degree affected the evolving Soviet calculation of costs and benefits.

³⁷L. I. Brezhnev, "The Great October Revolution and the Progress of Mankind," *Radio Moscow*, November 2, 1977; and *Prauda*, November 3, 1977, cited in Raymond L. Garthoff, "Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Summer 1978. Garthoff cites a number of other such Soviet assertions of recent years.

³⁸Instead, Soviet overinsurance evokes a reciprocal deployment response, including, in the strategic sphere, a reciprocal decay in U.S. adherence to the notion of mutual assured destruction.

The Scope of Third World Opportunities

Certainly the single most important factor has been the scope of evolving opportunities in the Third World. This is itself the product of both the shifting situation on the ground, in specific Third World arenas, and changing Soviet and U.S. political and military capabilities. For reasons that will be enumerated later, changes in all of these respects began to accumulate rapidly after 1974-1975 and together greatly increased Soviet incentives for assertiveness.

The Scope of Alternative Benefits from Detente

Despite all Soviet rhetoric about the impossibility of "linkage," the Soviet leadership has never been indifferent to the size of the prospective payoff in bilateral benefits that might flow from hypothetical selective acts of restraint calculated to conciliate the U.S. elite. In practice, however, the rewards for restraint that have seemed likely to materialize have at no stage seemed commensurate with the alternative gains offered to Soviet competitive appetites.

In retrospect, it is possible that none of the benefits originally sought by the Soviet leaders from the detente relationship would have constrained Soviet behavior in the Third World. Even if the maximum, highly unrealistic Soviet hopes of 1971-72 had been realized—in terms, for example, of the massive U.S. and Japanese capital investments in Soviet energy production once visualized—it is uncertain that this would have sufficed to induce the Politburo subsequently to refrain from exploiting these qualitatively new opportunities for intervention that have emerged since 1975 in Africa and elsewhere.

In any case, this contingency never arose. With the rapid dissolution of those hopes, particularly after the passage of U.S. trade legislation of December 1974, the issue became moot; the incentive has been far too small to create Politburo perception of a motive for restraint sufficient to override the powerful imperative to maximize gains. Since the mid-1970s, the Soviet leadership has contemptuously dismissed periodic U.S. attempts to hold other aspects of the Soviet-U.S. leadership—such as arms control agreements—hostage to better Soviet behavior. The Politburo has made it clear that those U.S. efforts have reflected a naive misconception of its view of the balance of Soviet interests.

The Tolerable Price of Averting Sino-U.S. Collaboration

For more than a decade, ever since the 1969 Soviet military clashes with China on the Sino-Soviet border, the Politburo has feared that the United States would use Soviet vulnerability over the China issue as a lever on Soviet policy. From the moment that Sino-U.S. normalization surfaced in 1971, the Soviet leadership has increasingly seen the United States as attempting to apply such leverage, disregarding U.S. disclaimers it (correctly) assumed were not seriously intended.³⁹ In the earliest stages of this process, between the summer of 1969 and the spring of 1971, Politburo concerns about China were sufficiently great that the Soviet Union was in fact willing to make certain concessions to the United States in an effort to ensure U.S. neutrality and, if possible, some degree of alignment with the USSR against China.⁴⁰ Thereafter, and particularly since 1974-1975 when the Soviet leadership became simultaneously disappointed with the practical fruits of detente and enticed by new opportunities for gain at U.S. expense in the Third World, the Politburo has been adamant in its determination to avoid making further such concessions. What was seen in one context as a wise tactical adjustment to unfavorable circumstances has now become, in another context, unprincipled yielding to pressure, allowing the Party to be "used" by the enemy.⁴¹

In the last few years, the Soviet leadership has therefore responded to a growing Sino-U.S. alignment against the USSR with a combination of vague and inadequate threats to the major opponent (the United States), and equally vague and inadequate inducements to the secondary one (China). Although the Politburo became increasingly alarmed at the Sino-U.S. combination against it, it has evidently refused to acknowledge, even to itself, that its offensive policy of maximizing gains against the geopolitical interests of both adversaries has been largely responsible for driving them together. Instead, the Soviet leaders appear to have ascribed these unwelcome phenomena to the blind, autonomous, and ultimately unappeasable malevolence of particular individuals: Zbigniew Brzezinski in the United States and Deng Xiaoping in China. Such a Soviet view leads to the rationalizing conclusion that the enemy's propensity to follow this baneful line will only be

³⁹See Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1979, pp. 179, 187, 836, 1053.

⁴⁰See Sec. II, *The Effect of the China Factor*.

⁴¹*Code*, pp. 82-84, 41-42. "To seek unilateral concessions from the Soviet Union by pressing as hard as possible on the 'Chinese lever,'" one leading Soviet specialist insisted in the fall of 1979, "is completely unrealistic." V. B. Lukin, "Washington-Beijing: 'Quasi Allies?'" *USA: Economics, Politics, Ideology*, No. 12, 1979.

encouraged by concessions and is better met by opposing pressures,⁴² an assumption that meshes well with the Politburo's felt need to avoid such concessions and to maintain an offensive posture in any case. This pattern of Soviet thought has been facilitated by the continuing ambiguity of ultimate U.S. aims regarding China, an ambiguity that is itself the product of a lack of U.S. consensus on how to calibrate U.S. policies toward China and the USSR.

The Balance of Personal and Institutional Interests

The fourth factor, the internal dimension, is of a different order. It does not concern any crude juxtaposition of mythical Politburo "hawks" and "doves" in the determination of policy toward the United States. Rather it involves the interplay of subtle shadings of differences among leaders and institutions regarding the balance of Soviet interests, as events moved that informal Politburo consensus to which all have felt it wise to conform in a direction more highly prized by some than by others.

The Growing Military Effects within the Regime

There is little doubt that over time, the growing confidence of the Politburo in the political rewards to be obtained through the military instrument influenced the relationships among the institutions surrounding the Politburo. Above all, the prestige of the Soviet military establishment and its leaders, already greatly enhanced by the political effects of growing Soviet strategic strength, rose further with successive demonstrations of what Soviet power projection capabilities could add to the Soviet political position in the Third World. This enhancement of the political position of the Soviet military, in turn, had policy consequences. It appears likely that Soviet military leaders, particularly Marshal Grechko,⁴³ were important participants in the political coalition that favored increasing Soviet engagement in such Third World enterprises regardless of the effect on U.S. attitudes.

The point is not, of course, that the military could dictate to the Party. Rather, the total political environment, inside and outside the Soviet Union, gradually impelled Party leaders toward the consensus view that this line of policy was in the net Soviet interest. Each Politburo member therefore was increasingly inclined to assume, in marginal situations, that it was in his personal political interest to lean in the direction favored by military endorsement.

⁴²Code, p. 75.

⁴³See his statements of 1971 and 1974, cited below.

One symptom of this changing political atmosphere as the decade progressed was the readiness of the Party leadership to authorize Soviet military spokesmen to make increasingly explicit references to the legitimacy of the Soviet overseas combat role. Beginning with Marshal Grechko's statement at the 24th Party Congress in 1971,⁴⁴ this progression of assertions continued without interruption through the era of detente,⁴⁵ emerging at the other side at the close of the decade in extraordinarily defiant form.⁴⁶

A more subtle symptom was an apparent upgrading of the importance of military considerations against countervailing political ones in Soviet decisionmaking, even in some cases when the predictable result would play into the hands of the United States. The decision to proceed with the invasion of Afghanistan may possibly have been such a case, although the extent of the negative political consequences to be weighed against the powerful imperatives to act may have been underestimated. A clearer example was the decision late in the decade not merely to adhere to the adamant Soviet refusal to discuss the Japanese claim to the southern Kuriles, but also greatly to enlarge the garrison-

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The outstanding successes of the country of socialism and our military victories have exerted tremendous influence on the world's destiny and promoted the growth of the peoples' liberation movement and the development of the world revolutionary process. The Soviet Army has demonstrated convincingly its historical mission as the defender of everything which is advanced and progressive, against the forces of reaction and aggression.

Pravda, April 3, 1971.

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At the present stage the historic function of the Soviet Armed Forces is not restricted merely to their function in defending our Motherland and other socialist countries. In its foreign policy activity, the Soviet state actively, purposefully opposes the export of counterrevolution and the policy of oppression, supports the national liberation struggle, and resolutely resists imperialist aggression in whatever distant region of our planet it may appear.

A. A. Grechko, "The Leading Role of the CPSU in Building the Army of a Developed Socialist Society," *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, May 1974.

⁴⁶

From the very first day of its existence the land of the Soviets' army was an army of friendship and fraternity among peoples, an army of internationalists. The entire 60-year-plus history of the Soviet state and its armed forces are evidence of this. Soviet people did all they could to support the revolutionary struggle of the working class of Germany, Austria and Hungary in 1918-1919 and to help Mongolia and China in their struggle against the Japanese militarists. Many Soviet volunteers fought in the international brigades in Spain. Loyal to their international duty, Soviet servicemen together with the servicemen of other socialist countries went to the assistance of fraternal Czechoslovakia in 1968. At the request of Afghanistan's revolutionary government a limited contingent of Soviet troops is now fulfilling its international duty on the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's territory.

Red Star, March 15, 1980.

ing and fortification of those islands in a highly visible manner. Although there are probably important military reasons for this conduct (the desire to deny U.S. wartime entry to the Sea of Okhotsk and to ensure Soviet egress), the price paid—in terms of increasing Japanese hostility toward the Soviet Union, and the Japanese propensity to increase military expenditures, as desired by the United States—seemed to many outside observers to be disproportionate, and almost certainly foreseeable.⁴⁷

The International Department of the Party

Aside from the military, the most important single Soviet institution supporting the more forward line in the Third World as it unfolded in the 1970s may have been the Central Committee apparatus, particularly its International Department under party Secretary and candidate Politburo member B. N. Ponomarev. In what has evidently been an ongoing rivalry with the Foreign Ministry over the management of different aspects of Soviet foreign policy and the rendering of policy advice to the Politburo, this department has probably enjoyed some advantages over the Ministry in dealings with certain portions of the Third World. It has had frequently publicized, ongoing contacts, which the Foreign Ministry bureaucracy has evidently lacked, with leaders of so-called "national liberation movements" not yet in power.⁴⁸ This circumstance may have played some role in the watershed Soviet decision to take decisive action on behalf of the MPLA during the civil war in Angola in 1975-76, despite the angry U.S. reaction.

The Foreign Ministry

It is conceivable that some sections of the Foreign Ministry and some of the leaders of advisory foreign policy institutes may have been initially unenthusiastic about the priorities displayed in this trend of

⁴⁷Some observers suggest that Soviet calculations of their political interests in this instance did not oppose but reinforced Soviet military motives, and that Soviet decision-makers assumed a policy of intensifying pressure upon Japan through such deployments would eventually be profitable. Some sentiment of this kind undoubtedly exists in important Soviet circles. The Soviet leadership consensus can not have felt high confidence in this thesis, however, or have been unaware of the possibility of seriously adverse effects upon Japanese attitudes regarding rearmament. Professional military views as to Soviet force disposition needs were therefore probably decisive.

⁴⁸This bureaucratic or operational advantage probably was more important in influencing Soviet policy toward so-called "liberation movements" in the Third World than the more obvious fact that Gromyko since 1973 has been a full member of the Politburo, while Ponomarev is merely a candidate member. More generally, the Central Committee apparatus probably possesses a more direct channel of influence to the Politburo than does the Foreign Ministry, although this fact is probably outweighed by the personal stature of the Foreign Minister in those policy areas in which he has primary operational responsibility, such as dealings with the capitalist industrialized world.

Soviet policy, privately resentful of the attitudes and influence of the Defense Ministry, and somewhat more concerned than other sections of the foreign policy elite about the effect upon the Soviet bilateral relationship with the United States. If so, this lower-level lack of enthusiasm had no effect on the Politburo.⁴⁹ Foreign Minister Gromyko's speeches and travel and contacts patterns suggest that he has always given dealings with the United States and Europe much more personal attention, and a higher priority, than he gave most of the underdeveloped world. But if he shared any initial lower-level misgivings, his reactions probably have been increasingly submerged in the general hardening of Soviet policy as relations with the United States decayed.

The "New Class" and the Soviet Relationship with the United States

Finally, although the vested interest of large sections of the Soviet elite in the preservation of those personal economic advantages that the "New Class" derives from detente⁵⁰ are real enough, they nevertheless have had little effect on those Soviet policies that have eroded the Soviet-U.S. relationship over the last decade. This has evidently been so for two reasons.

First, the advantages that members of the elite derive from the greater opportunity for contacts and travel and the greater access to Western consumer goods associated with detente have not yet been severely curtailed by the cooling of U.S.-Soviet relations. This is partly because considerable intercourse with the United States still goes on but largely because detente with Western Europe has thus far been only marginally affected.

Second, even if that were not the case, the posture of the regime is well calculated to deflect elite resentment over the demise of detente. As earlier noted, the Soviet regime has never ceased to assert its support for the notion of improved economic and political relations with the United States, while simultaneously insisting that Soviet actions elsewhere in the world must be isolated from the bilateral relationship. The United States has thus, in effect, been forced to assume immediate responsibility for the decay by insisting that a good bilateral relationship is not compatible with recent Soviet patterns of behavior in the

⁴⁹The earlier-mentioned defector Orionova (see fn. 10) emphasizes that the USA Institute as such has no direct effect on Soviet policy and that even the personal influence of Institute director Arbatov had apparently declined after 1975 with the decline of detente.

⁵⁰As elaborated, in particular, by Alexander Yanov. See his *Detente After Brezhnev: The Domestic Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy*, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1977.

Third World. It is much more difficult for the elite generally to hold the regime responsible for this indirect culpability than would be the case if Moscow refused to do business with the United States.

II. THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET BEHAVIOR

THE PRE-DETENTE MOMENTUM OF SOVIET POLICY

The preceding discussion suggests that it would be an oversimplification to assume that the Politburo has been oblivious to the effects its Third World policies might have upon Soviet political relationships with the United States. On the contrary, concern over those effects upon the bilateral relationship—over and above the risk of military conflict with the United States—has often been an important consideration in the Politburo's weighing of its choices in the Third World. However, it has never, at any stage, been allowed to become a dominant consideration.

Within that constraint, the relative importance of this factor for the Politburo has varied over time with the mixture of changing circumstances in the Third World and the changing Soviet stake in Soviet-U.S. bilateral relations.

For a number of years before 1971, that stake remained a highly peripheral factor in the Brezhnev leadership's evaluation of opportunities. Throughout the latter half of the 1960s, the Politburo's attitudes toward the United States were overwhelmingly conditioned by its sense of the rich opportunity, created by the negative worldwide reaction to the Vietnam war, to promote the erosion of U.S. influence with a multitude of audiences.¹ The leadership's behavior in this period suggested the view that even the appearance of welcoming a broad improvement in the bilateral relationship would not be politically cost-effective.²

¹In view of the indignant Soviet reaction to the 1980 U.S. curtailment of bilateral dealings with Moscow in response to Soviet behavior, it is important to recall that the Soviet leaders evaded several overtures from the Johnson Administration for improvement in the atmosphere of bilateral relations during the Vietnam war. This was allegedly because of an overriding moral repugnance to U.S. behavior, which mysteriously became less important when the balance of perceived profit and loss changed several years later.

²Lyndon Johnson gives this account of the byplay that preceded his cold meeting with Kosygin at Glassboro in 1967:

I invited Kosygin to the White House, which I felt was the courteous thing to do, though it might pose problems for him. In the charged atmosphere of mid-1967 we recognized that the Soviet leader might prefer not to be an official guest in the U.S. capital. The Arabs, the Chinese Communists, the North Vietnamese, and others might misinterpret it or misunderstand the circumstances. I therefore suggested Camp David as an alternative. Kosygin replied that he did not wish to come to Washington or even the Washington area—what was wrong with meeting in New York?

That is, the Soviets apparently then believed that such an appearance of warmth in the relationship would jeopardize these more highly prized prospects for gain while exacerbating the danger of ideological contamination at home and in Eastern Europe.³

In the half-dozen years preceding the arrival of detente, Soviet opportunities and endeavors overseas were largely centered on the support and cultivation of two sets of clients: the Vietnamese in their struggle against the United States and the radical Arabs in their struggle against Israel. Concerned to implant and sustain a position of influence against the challenge of powerful local rivals (the PRC in Indochina, the United States in the Middle East), the Soviet Union in both arenas mortgaged its freedom of maneuver to a considerable degree. Although the Politburo indeed put forward its own preferences privately on many occasions, it was generally resigned to conform in the end to the intractable interests of the client.

In neither arena, whether before or during the era of detente, was the Politburo ever willing to put at stake political capital its hardware deliveries and propaganda backing had bought by threatening to withdraw such support to compel a client to compromise with the United States or its clients.⁴ The Soviets were, indeed, willing to bring such

At Glassboro, says Johnson,

With the Middle East, Vietnam, and other problem areas in mind, I suggested ... that we consider setting aside one week a year during which U.S. and Soviet leaders could meet and review all the major issues dividing us. Kosygin noted that we now had the "hot line," and could [instead] use that whenever necessary.

Lyndon Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1971, pp. 481, 484.

³*Pravda* of June 19, 1968 thus explained, in response to public appeals by President Johnson for broad Soviet-U.S. cooperation in a wide variety of fields, that the USSR had no intention of developing such relations with the United States, which would be "to the detriment of the interests of socialism, the national liberation movement and the security of the peoples." The felt need to maintain this public posture was apparently reinforced rather than weakened by the simultaneous maturing of the Soviet decision that it would be to the Soviet interest to enter strategic arms negotiations with the United States. This decision was formally announced by Gromyko to the Supreme Soviet only eight days after the *Pravda* editorial cited. Far from making such negotiations the centerpiece of a broad detente with the United States, the Soviet Union at this point apparently desired to offset the impression that such negotiations would imply a Soviet desire for detente.

⁴Former President Nixon asserts that at the Kissinger-Brezhnev meeting in Moscow in April 1972, Brezhnev initially responded to the U.S. demand for Soviet pressure on Hanoi by claiming that "the Soviets had refused to answer any new requests for military equipment from the North Vietnamese." *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1978, p. 592. Kissinger, in the relevant passage in his memoirs (*White House Years*, pp. 1144-1148), does not speak to this point. This is the only known report of such an alleged Soviet action in response to U.S. complaints about Soviet arms shipments to a Soviet client. If Brezhnev did make such a claim, it seems unlikely to be true, in view of the subsequent unbroken stream of Soviet arms shipments, and because later in the same meeting, according to Mr. Nixon, "in the end Brezhnev refused to promise

fairly crude pressure on certain of their Third World clients from time to time to serve their own broad competitive interests against those of the United States: in dealings with the Syrians, to try to compel them to cease intervention in Lebanon against the PLO and the local left; with the Iraqis, to try to induce them to cease hanging local Communists; with the Egyptians, to try to compel Sadat to cease dallying with the United States. Because even such efforts as those are often unsuccessful, the Soviet leadership was all the more reluctant to undertake what it regarded as a quixotic and probably futile endangering of its own interests for the sake of those of the United States. Before the advent of detente, the Politburo saw no incentive at all to attempt this; thereafter, not enough.

Given these attitudes, the frequent U.S. requests over the years that the Soviet Union produce concessions from the Vietnamese, the Syrians, or the Egyptians were evidently privately regarded by the Soviet leaders as tacit demands for unilateral concessions by *them* to the United States. Before detente these were commonly met with disdain, and with ritualized reciprocal demands for major concessions, instead, by the United States and its clients. Thereafter, the Soviet Union supplied the United States with pacifiers in the form of vague and generally unfulfilled promises. The Soviet leaders appear to have believed that the United States deliberately exaggerated Soviet ability to move the Vietnamese so as to belittle the political price the USSR was being asked to pay and therefore, in effect, to obscure the magnitude of the U.S. bilateral concessions the Politburo would consider commensurate. In dealings with their clients, meanwhile, the Soviet leaders at all times remained extremely defensive about any suggestion that the USSR might sacrifice their interests to those of a Soviet-U.S. relationship.⁵

LANDMARKS IN THE INITIAL COMPETITIVE BREAKOUT

On the whole, however, Soviet accommodation to the interests of Soviet clients initially caused the leadership little discomfort. Through-

to put any pressure on Hanoi to achieve either a deescalation or a final settlement." *Memoirs*, p. 592.

⁵The Soviets had reason for such concern. Despite their consistent refusal to bring pressure on clients on behalf of the United States, in two instances they did suffer embarrassment with those clients because of their own negotiations with the United States at the peak of detente. One was when the Soviets allowed the May 1972 summit to proceed despite the mining of Haiphong, and the other was when Sadat became suspicious about the Soviet-U.S. dealings in 1972 and 1973.

out the last four years of Nasser's life, for example, Soviet behavior suggested a firm, indeed growing conviction that Soviet interests—including the interest in reducing U.S. influence in the Middle East—were being richly served by encouragement and flattery of his enthusiasms and ambitions and by attuning Soviet policy to the tortuous evolution of his perception of his political and security needs.⁶

This Soviet attitude was variously reflected at different stages: in the belated and obviously reluctant Soviet endorsement of Nasser's closure of the Straits of Tiran before the June 1967 war;⁷ in the rapid Soviet jettisoning, in 1969, of initial indications of interest in the Rogers Plan in obedience to Nasser's decision to reject it; in the unprecedented large-scale dispatch of air defense personnel to Egypt in the spring of 1970 in response to Nasser's urgent demand; and in the Soviet cooperation, later that year, in surreptitiously moving surface-to-air missile sites to the Suez Canal area, in violation of the Israeli-Egyptian cease-fire agreement, and again in response to Nasser's felt needs.

All of this involved some modification of the Brezhnev regime's evaluation of the level of risk latent in certain kinds of behavior, particularly in areas close at hand. In Southeast Asia, far beyond the range of easy Soviet power projection capabilities, throughout the Vietnam war the Politburo continued to show great caution in the face of the local concentration of U.S. military power, particularly during the periods of U.S. bombing. This involved the regime in protracted private and public polemics with the Chinese, in which Beijing charged the Soviets, among other things, with a cowardly preference for shipping sensitive military hardware overland through China rather than by sea.⁸

In the Middle East, by contrast, although Brezhnev's Politburo continued to pull back when confronted with an immediate possibility of escalation involving the United States, it showed a heightened readiness to take both political and military initiatives in pursuit of potential advantage and in disregard of open-ended consequences. The

⁶Gomulka's former interpreter has asserted that in an April 1967 meeting with Ulbricht and Gomulka, Brezhnev expressed gratification that the USSR had been successful in "partly pushing the Americans out of the Near East," largely as a result of the "consistent application of the Leninist principle of seeking temporary allies."

Nasser, Brezhnev continued, is highly confused on ideological questions but he has proved that one can rely on him. If we . . . want to achieve progress, then we must also accept sacrifices. One sacrifice we bear is the persecution of Egyptian communists by Nasser. But, during this phase, Nasser is of inestimable value to us.

Der Spiegel, August 24, 1970.

⁷TASS, May 30, 1967. On May 23, a Soviet government statement on the crisis, released the day after Nasser's declaration of the closure, failed to mention it.

⁸*Peking Review*, January 7, 1966.

regime thus increasingly began to incorporate into its behavior elements of a style it had condemned in Khrushchev as adventuristic and hare-brained.⁹

False allegations of impending Israeli attack initially disseminated by Soviet representatives in Damascus thus set in motion the chain of events that produced the Six-Day War.¹⁰ This conduct was supplemented by an ingratiating and calculated ambiguity in dealings with the Arabs before the war began, which may have led certain Arabs erroneously to expect the Soviet Union to play an active combat role.¹¹ In view of the presence on the scene of the Sixth Fleet, the Soviet leadership had no desire or intention of taking such a risk. Yet the ensuing disaster to the Arab armies was sufficiently threatening to Soviet interests that the Politburo in the end felt obliged to threaten intervention if Israel did not halt its advance on Damascus.¹²

The Brezhnev leadership was almost certainly relieved that in the event, it did not have to attempt to make good on this threat. Within the oligarchy, this leadership's conduct of events was at the time controversial. A sharp conflict ensued at the next Central Committee plenum, possibly over the state of Soviet military readiness to support such risk-taking, which produced the immediate ouster of a Brezhnev critic.¹³ This showdown may be regarded as a watershed, for its ultimate effect was not to inhibit the trend toward more such political and military assertiveness, but to give it impetus. For Brezhnev and his colleagues the Yegorychev episode provided fresh justification for the Soviet strategic buildup as conclusively answering complaints that the USSR was not strong enough to pursue a desirable forward line with both appropriate vigor and safety.

⁹Less than three years before the Soviet threat to intervene in the 1967 war, at the Central Committee plenum that followed Khrushchev's ouster, Suslov had condemned Khrushchev's threat to intervene in Suez in 1956 as dangerous and adventuristic. *New York Times*, October 30, 1964.

¹⁰These allegations of an imminent Israeli assault on Syria were repeated to the Egyptian government by Soviet President Podgorny in Moscow on May 11, and Nasser regarded this as confirmation of claims to the same effect already being received from Syria. This led directly to Nasser's dispatch of troops into the Sinai a week later and his request for the withdrawal of UNEF forces. Mohamed Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, Harper & Row, New York, 1978, pp. 174-176; Nadau Safran, *From War to War*, Pegasus, New York, 1969, pp. 274-276.

¹¹Heikal alleges that Marshal Grechko made statements of this kind to Egyptian Defense Minister Badran at the close of the latter's visit to Moscow in late May 1967. He also credibly implies that Syrian Prime Minister Atassi received similar encouragement from Soviet sources during a visit immediately thereafter. Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, pp. 179-180.

¹²Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 302.

¹³N. G. Yegorychev, First Secretary of the Moscow City Party Committee, who was dismissed immediately after this plenum in late June and then appointed ambassador to Denmark. See accounts in *New York Times*, June 29, 1967; also Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin from Khrushchev to Kosygin*, Viking Press, New York, 1970, pp. 536-537.

A few months after the Six-Day War, Soviet combat pilots and military advisors became briefly active in a Yemeni civil war.¹⁴ This was the first such direct combat involvement outside the Soviet bloc since the use of Soviet pilots in the Korean war.¹⁵ Two and a half years later, in 1970, arrival of thousands of Soviet air defense troops in Egypt to defend Nasser against the consequences of his war of attrition eventually led to Soviets being killed in combat with Israel. Before the conclusion of a new Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire, in the early summer of 1970, Soviet fighter pilots flew patrols ever closer to the Suez Canal; in one well-known climactic incident, Israelis shot down five.¹⁶ Finally alarmed at the escalatory possibilities, and now aware that more and more Soviet combat inputs might be required to deal adequately with Israel, increasing the chance of a compensatory U.S. reaction, the Soviets ceased such patrols and showed heightened interest in an early ceasefire.

Always in the background, alongside the positive inducements to such risk-taking, was a fear of the consequences should the USSR waver. Nasser took care to reinforce this fear periodically through always-aborted gestures toward the United States. The Politburo's natural disinclination to allow itself to be manipulated was outweighed by the assumption that it was creating an Egyptian dependence on the Soviet Union that might in the end give it decisive and lasting leverage on Egyptian policy; and more important, the Politburo was convinced that it was in any case acquiring inestimable geopolitical advantages in the competition with the United States.

THE CONDITIONING EFFECT OF EMERGING MILITARY BENEFITS

It was of great importance for the subsequent evolution of Soviet policy that these advantages were, above all, military. Over the next few years, the Politburo members appear to have shared an impression that the aftermath of the 1967 war, by providing the political pretext for an immense enlargement of the Soviet military presence in the Middle East, had opened widening vistas for the future. In retrospect, the leadership is likely to have believed that the Soviet Union had been

¹⁴State Department spokesman statement of December 13, 1967. AP, December 13, 1967.

¹⁵Unless one counts the Soviet SAM crews that brought down an American U-2 in Cuba in October 1962, or the very brief Soviet SAM combat involvement in Vietnam in 1965. The Yemen episode was in any case the first use of Soviet pilots in combat outside the bloc since the death of Stalin.

¹⁶Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 585.

the greatest gainer from the 1967 war, particularly because this event had facilitated the emergence of the USSR as a naval power in the Mediterranean in circumstances to which no Arab leader could object.

Although this enlarged Soviet naval presence could be profitably portrayed to the Arabs confronting Israel as the essential offset to the threat to Arab interests represented by the Sixth Fleet, its immediate operational significance for the Politburo was its potential to counter U.S. strategic capabilities against the Soviet Union from the Mediterranean. This, in turn, whetted appetites for particular military benefits to support this emerging presence. The massive Soviet resupply effort to the combatant Arab states and the thousands of Soviet combat and military advisory personnel dispatched to Syria and Egypt thus became the tacit justification for Soviet acquisition of naval port rights and bases for naval air reconnaissance and other functions that similarly served primarily Soviet, not Arab, purposes. In the years that have followed, the Soviets have never ceased the search for more military benefits of this kind.

Although part of this suddenly swollen Soviet Middle East presence proved ephemeral, the tendencies in Soviet thinking that produced it became increasingly dominant in the ensuing years. As already suggested, the growth of the perceived payoff from more venturesome behavior at greater distances made it correspondingly more difficult for Politburo members to allow themselves to be seen by their colleagues or by the supporting institutions as showing lack of resolution in seeking to maximize gains. Whenever a Politburo inclination toward action existed, Brezhnev, like his colleagues, is likely to have been concerned that the others should not believe, in the very common Soviet locution, that his "hand was trembling." In such a Politburo atmosphere, any specific behavior capable of being interpreted as excessive caution must be compensated for with interest.

Such defensiveness over the possibility of being thought less assertive in advancing Soviet interests in the worldwide competition with the United States than the risk/benefit ratio justified clearly affected the Politburo's continuing evaluation of emerging opportunities and needs. Within two or three months after the danger of escalation dramatized by the one-sided encounter with Israeli aircraft over the Suez Canal had brought an alarmed Marshal Kutakhov to Cairo to investigate and a withdrawal of the Soviet-manned fighter patrols,¹⁷

¹⁷Although Kutakhov probably came to Cairo merely to investigate the mechanics of this tactical disaster, a more important issue for the Soviets was their initial misreading of the dangerous consequences that might follow from permitting Soviet overflights of the Canal. By placing units of the Soviet armed forces in a position where combat with Israel was at least much more possible than previously, the Politburo had led the USSR to a choice between either accepting tactical defeat at Israeli hands, should it materialize, or escalating against Israel, increasing the chances of a clash with the United States.

the Soviet Union had begun work in Cuba on facilities at the port of Cienfuegos intended for the support of the operations of Soviet nuclear-powered submarines in the vicinity of the United States.¹⁸

Although this effort to exploit one of the many ambiguities of the 1962 Soviet-U.S. understanding over Cuba had almost certainly been under preparation for some time,¹⁹ it was highly significant that it was evidently unaffected by unpleasant surprises encountered in the Middle East. The broad momentum of Soviet policy and the compartmentation of the executing agencies was such that the emergence of difficulties and unanticipated dangers through the aggressive courting of advantage on one side of the world could not halt an enterprise with at least equally great latent dangers already in train on the other side. Similarly, the eventual Soviet retreat over Cienfuegos in response to severe private U.S. warnings was followed, the next year, by the signing of a treaty with India, paving the way for the Indian attack on East Pakistan that created Bangla Desh, and for a time seeming to tempt India to contemplate possible dismemberment of West Pakistan as well. The Politburo intended this treaty to be seen as a powerful instrument of deterrence to both China and the United States and sought to bolster this impression through ostentatious naval movements to shadow U.S. deployments in the Indian Ocean.²⁰

This line of Soviet conduct in 1971, so different from the posture of neutrality and the role of peacemaker assumed during the India-Pakistan hostilities of 1965, was to set the pattern for Soviet behavior in 1978, when the conclusion of another Soviet treaty provided the deterrent prerequisite for the Vietnamese blitzkrieg into Cambodia. In 1971, in addition to the broad geopolitical benefits in the Soviet competition with the United States and China sought by the Politburo through its underwriting of Indian behavior, the Soviets may have hoped for concrete military benefits that were not forthcoming. At the end of the decade, a similar mixture of motives informed Soviet policy toward Vietnam, and this time some military benefits materialized.

In sum, a common thread runs through the increasingly assertive Soviet behavior in increasingly diverse arenas from the late 1960s on, beginning with the pressure of client needs and perceived opportunities described in the Middle East at the turn of the new decade, continuing with the windfalls and new techniques discovered in Africa in the

¹⁸Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 635-652.

¹⁹Probably since a visit to Cuba by Marshal Grechko in November 1969.

²⁰Subsequent credible U.S. newspaper reports alleged that Soviet Ambassador Pegov had privately assured the Indian government that a Soviet fleet was now in the Indian Ocean and that the USSR would not "allow" the United States to intervene on behalf of Pakistan. *Washington Post*, December 21, 1971.

mid-1970s, and culminating with the adventures in Indochina and Afghanistan at the close of the decade. This current of behavior was driven in the first instance by the Politburo's incremental discovery of the growing capability of Soviet military power to assist in the struggle to enhance the Soviet geopolitical position with regard to the United States. At the same time, the Soviet leaders were increasingly enticed through the decade by the periodic emergence of areas of opportunity created partly by spontaneous local processes and partly by the widespread impression, from the middle of the decade on, that the United States was contracting its role and capabilities as a world actor.

In the midst of this evolution of Soviet leadership attitudes came two intervening and overlapping complications. One was the implications for Soviet strategy toward the United States of the increasingly unfavorable triangular relationship with China after 1969. The other was the Soviet exploration of the value to the USSR of the detente process with the United States, which rose and fell in a bell-shaped curve between 1971 and 1975, dwindling further thereafter. We shall consider each in turn.

THE CHINA FACTOR

The United States was from the start very much on the collective Politburo mind as the Soviet leaders reacted to the firefights on the Chinese border in 1969. Alarmed at what they considered the irrationality and unpredictability of Chinese behavior, and concerned that they might have to make good on threats of drastic action, they initiated contacts with the United States in the summer of 1969 to give resonance to such a threat.²¹

Besides testing the U.S. reaction to the possibility of Soviet preemptive action, the Soviets apparently hoped that an alarmed Washington would leak the threat to the world, thus furnishing the Chinese with independent testimony of the credibility of the threat and giving them new grounds for caution. This, indeed, is what happened.

At the same time, the Politburo wanted no complications with the United States at a juncture when there was considered to be a real possibility of escalation of military combat with China. To this end, as Mr. Kissinger notes, Soviet representatives abroad were apparently instructed in the summer of 1969 to indicate willingness to minimize friction with the United States.²² This instruction was evidently operative only during the period of acute military tension with China

²¹Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 183-184.

²²*Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

and was probably lifted with the start of Sino-Soviet border talks in October. As we have seen, concern over China did not prevent the Soviet Union from embarking on a new path of direct military involvement in Egypt after January 1970, with serious escalatory possibilities for conflict with the United States. Nor did it prevent the Politburo from authorizing the Soviet military to proceed with the Cienfuegos nuclear submarine venture in the fall of 1970.

Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership was, from the first, extremely concerned that the United States would seek to extract bargaining leverage in bilateral dealings with the USSR from Moscow's China problem. As President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger have since testified, the Soviets had good reason for such concern.²³ The Politburo therefore resorted to numerous maneuvers in an effort to convey the impression that Sino-Soviet relations might soon improve and that the United States had no grounds for expecting such leverage.

The initiation of Soviet-U.S. SALT talks in the fall of 1969 was rescheduled at Soviet insistence until a month after Sino-Soviet border talks had begun, in a pattern that was to be followed in other contexts in ensuing years.²⁴ Before important Soviet-U.S. negotiating sessions, the Soviet Union would habitually send chief border negotiator Ilichev back to Beijing to face Chinese intransigence once again, hoping to convey to the United States, through his presence in China, that the Soviet Union, too, had maneuvering room in the triangle. In the early years of the Sino-Soviet border talks, these tactics were sometimes supplemented by statements to Western representatives or journalists by Soviet diplomats or newsmen implying that significant progress had been made in the talks. On occasion, early in this process, the Soviets went so far in their anxiety to misrepresent the state of the triangle as to intimate a possibility of Chinese military counteraction to U.S. operations in Indochina, which Beijing had no intention of raising itself.

The Soviets meanwhile perceived themselves to be in a race to "normalize" relations with China before the United States completed normalization, and sought to escape their dilemma by searching for devices that might enable them to settle the border issue without granting the PRC's unthinkable demands.²⁵ To this end, the Soviets from

²³Ibid., p. 179.

²⁴Another probable contributory reason for this delay was the fact that the United States had previously delayed agreeing to the start of talks for several months and the Soviet Union did not want to appear too eager. This consideration probably reinforced Soviet desire to have the Sino-Soviet talks begin first and thus to suggest to the United States the imminence of Sino-Soviet harmony and the futility of expecting Soviet concessions in SALT because of the China problem.

²⁵For a description of these demands, see Harry Gelman, "Outlook for Sino-Soviet Relations," *Problems of Communism*, September-December 1979, pp. 50-66.

time to time offered China various palliative substitutes, such as nonaggression pacts, which were uniformly rejected. The Politburo at the same time sought vigorously and repeatedly for Chinese consent to a new Sino-Soviet summit meeting, particularly after Sino-U.S. high-level contacts began to surface in 1971. In this, too, Moscow was unsuccessful. At one point, in May 1970, when the U.S. incursion into Cambodia briefly revived questions in the Chinese mind as to whether the United States indeed intended to withdraw from Indochina, the PRC may have momentarily tantalized the Soviet leadership by signaling the possibility of Sino-Soviet improvement. As the eager Soviets discovered to their chagrin, that, too, came to nothing when U.S. troops left Cambodia and the Chinese conviction that the United States was a diminishing threat to Chinese security was reaffirmed.

The repeated unsuccessful efforts of the Soviet leadership to appeal to a Chinese interest in improving relations on common anti-U.S. grounds did not prevent the Politburo from authorizing an analogous appeal to the United States, on common anti-Chinese grounds. In July, 1970, soon after the Chinese disappointed the Soviet hopes raised in May, the Soviet SALT delegation formally proposed a plan for Soviet-U.S. "joint retaliatory action" against any third nuclear power that undertook "provocative" action against the USSR or the United States.²⁶ Transparently aimed at China, although also potentially harmful to the U.S. relationship with NATO, this plan was quickly rejected by the United States. It is a reasonable assumption that China became aware of this Soviet gambit long before it was made public in 1973.

The following spring and summer, confirmation of the worst Soviet forebodings about Sino-U.S. dealings appears to have briefly neutralized the habitual Soviet determination to make no concessions because of the weakness of the Soviet position in the triangle. The Soviet decision in May 1971 to end procrastination over a commitment to negotiate limitations of offensive missiles simultaneous with an ABM treaty²⁷ may have been influenced by the implications of "ping-pong diplomacy" in April. This evidence of movement in Sino-U.S. relations may have heightened Politburo awareness of a need, in the new circumstances, to make progress on a central aspect of the Soviet-U.S. relationship, which the Chinese of necessity could not match. It seems even more likely that the China factor played a role in accelerating Soviet agreement to tolerable terms of a Berlin Quadripartite Agreement in June and July 1971, also after months of stalling. The announcement

²⁶John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1973, p. 189. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 547-548.

²⁷Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 810-823.

of the Kissinger visit to China in mid-July—confirming long-standing Soviet suspicions about Sino-U.S. contacts—apparently at first stirred Politburo fears about the magnitude of the Sino-U.S. understanding that had already been reached. By heightening fear of Soviet isolation, it furnished fresh justification for hastening agreement to a document that was a key to consolidating the Soviet position in the West.

Subsequently, as the outline and initial limits of the new Sino-U.S. relationship became clearer, Soviet fears receded, and never again did the situation in the triangle show such a clear impact upon the Soviet propensity to make tactical concessions. For the next several years the Soviets were comforted by the assumption that further movement in Sino-U.S. relations would be delayed indefinitely by the Taiwan issue. Through the middle years of the decade the Soviets also remained convinced that the relationship with the Soviet Union would always of necessity be more important to the United States than that with China, so that U.S. economic and security dealings with Moscow would always serve as a restraint on those with Beijing. These twin pillars of Soviet complacency appear to have lasted long after the Soviet leaders themselves had grown disillusioned with the course of their bilateral relationship with Washington.

The completion of Sino-U.S. normalization and the growth of Chinese-American cooperation against the Soviet Union were eventually to emerge at the end of the decade impelled rather than resisted by Soviet policy, side by side with the decay of detente and the expansion of the Soviet offensive to replace Western influence in the Third World. Refusing to admit that their own behavior had contributed to the result, the Soviets displayed apparently genuine anger and indignation. *Pravda* thought it appropriate to ask, near the culmination of the process, why the United States had not explicitly repudiated Deng Xiaoping's attacks on the USSR during his visit to America in early 1979.²⁸ Determined to give no ground to either opponent, and eventually deprived of significant leverage on both, the Soviet leaders at last found themselves oscillating between undesirable alternatives—either to repeat denunciations of U.S. policy toward China, which revealed the Soviet sense of vulnerability,²⁹ or to maintain an impotent silence intended to disguise it.

²⁸*Pravda*, February 1, 1979.

²⁹

There are some in the U.S. and in other Western countries who have found the course hostile toward the Soviet Union followed by the present Chinese leadership so much to their liking that they are tempted to turn Peking into an instrument of pressure on the world of socialism. . . . This is nothing more than presumptuous naivete.

Brezhnev interview, *Time*, January 22, 1979.

THE RISE AND FALL OF DETENTE

The Precipitating Factors

The Politburo's sense of a Soviet interest in significantly enlarging its bilateral dealings with the United States had meanwhile emerged very gradually between 1969 and 1972, in ironical tandem with its initial discovery of the scope of the geopolitical profits that might be obtained at U.S. expense from a more venturesome military posture abroad.

The leadership's painful movement toward a consensus that a more urgent need existed for wide-ranging U.S. bilaterals was influenced by a mixture of well-known factors, four of which were probably dominant. Although each of these has retained importance to the Politburo to this day, each for its own reason was to become less and less able, as time went on, to induce restraint in Politburo policies affecting U.S. interests.

The Technology Transfer Imperative

As we know, one factor was the reluctant Soviet decision early in the decade that the difficulties of the Soviet economy justified a much more vigorous effort to expand the importation of Western technology and capital, necessarily including participation by the United States, the leader in both regards. Kosygin had been pressing this argument for several years in the late 1960s,³⁰ but Brezhnev had initially opposed it³¹ with the contention that the Soviet economy had the capacity to solve its problems of technological lag and declining productivity without large-scale recourse to the West—that is, without exposing the country to those dangers of ideological contamination and dependence on the enemy that became bogeys to the most ideologically oriented sections of the Party after the Soviet experience with Dubcek and Ota Sik. Brezhnev, who faithfully represented the evolving consensus within the regime on this as on other matters, became converted to Kosygin's view early in the Nixon administration and then soon took management of relations with the United States into his own hands.

From the outset, however, some in the Politburo appeared to retain reservations about this shift in the Brezhnev-led consensus, and these reservations were to become increasingly important as difficulties with the United States materialized over political preconditions for the expansion of trade.

³⁰Notably in a speech in Minsk on February 14, 1968.

³¹Speech to Moscow City Party Committee, March 29, 1968.

The European Security Imperative

Another factor, closely related, was the progress of *Westpolitik*, the Soviet normalization with West Germany, which closely preceded detente with the United States in 1971-72 and prepared the way for it. On the one hand, the unfolding of Soviet and East European political and economic dealings with the FRG created a model for the opening to the United States; on the other hand, it made more practicable the European security conference the Soviet leadership had long desired. The minimum Soviet expectation from this conference was the ratification and legitimization of Soviet territorial gains from World War II, while the maximum Soviet hope was for the insinuation of some Soviet role in the management of West European security affairs, along with a reduction of the U.S. role. Characteristically, the Politburo persisted for a long time in probing the chances of securing a conference from which the United States would be excluded. When finally convinced that this was impossible, and when confronted with Western insistence that one prerequisite for this conference was a Berlin agreement—to which the United States would have to be a party—the leadership concluded that this European front, too, required a new emphasis on negotiations with the United States.

Although conceding this in practice, the Politburo at no point lost sight of the objective of using its detente relationship with Europe to attenuate U.S. influence there. This possibility was to become increasingly important from the middle of the decade on, after the European Security Conference, with the evolution of Soviet operations in the Third World and the appearance of a gap between U.S. and European perceptions of the meaning of those operations for their interests.

The Chinese Imperative

In addition, as already noted, the Politburo found reason to establish a calmer relationship with the West—including the United States—because of its extraordinary anxiety about China at the start of the decade. We have seen that the leadership in 1970 unsuccessfully tested U.S. reaction to the notion of an anti-China understanding in SALT and in 1971 took steps to expedite progress both in the SALT process itself and in the Berlin negotiations, at least in part because of concern about the U.S. approach to China.

As also noted, however, with the subsequent gradual moderation of Soviet anxieties about China, the Politburo was to become increasingly unwilling to regard this factor as an independent reason for conciliation of U.S. interests, although it continued to be a reason for maintaining calm in Europe.

The SALT Process

Finally, and most important, the leadership gradually convinced itself of a national interest in a SALT I agreement with the United States, provided that one could be negotiated within certain severe constraints. These negotiating attitudes, and the assumptions with which the Politburo began, should be clearly visualized because they proved of great importance to the evolution of subsequent U.S. and Soviet political attitudes toward the SALT process, and toward detente as a whole.

The Soviets approached SALT against the background of an ongoing, massive Soviet program already in train for the better part of a decade intended to eliminate for all time the position of strategic inferiority that had furnished the backdrop for the Soviet humiliation in the Cuban missile crisis, and beyond this to secure such advantages as fortune might decree. They knew that the United States was alarmed at the rapid pace of Soviet ICBM and SLBM deployment, which was threatening soon to surpass a U.S. launcher total that had been frozen for several years, initially by conscious choice and thereafter by the paralyzing political and economic realities created by the Vietnam war.

They knew from statements in the U.S. press that the United States was preoccupied with concern over the counterforce potential of the largest deployed Soviet third-generation missile, the SS-9, and they probably believed, from U.S. conduct, that the United States did not yet know that the new, fourth generation of missiles that the Soviet Union was meanwhile preparing was intended to replace the SS-9 and other third-generation ICBMs with weapons of even greater capabilities. They also knew, from U.S. publications, that the United States was deploying multiple warheads (MIRVs) on its missiles as a less expensive substitute for the politically impossible enlargement of the U.S. missile force. They probably assumed that the United States did not yet know that the Soviet Union was already planning to more than match this MIRV development by installing more and larger MIRVs on what were to prove the larger missiles of the forthcoming fourth generation.

They knew that the United States possessed a larger bomber force, superior submarine and antisubmarine warfare technology, and certain qualitative missile advantages that the Soviet Union was working to overcome. Finally, they knew that the United States possessed one major strategic technological advantage, in the superiority of the U.S. antiballistic missile (ABM) to the Soviet version³² but that it was highly

³²Despite the public controversy in the United States in 1969 and 1970 about the weaknesses of the proposed U.S. ABM system, Soviet subsequent negotiating behavior made it clear that the USSR regarded existing U.S. technology as sufficiently superior to their own as to render the constraining of U.S. ABM deployment the primary Soviet objective in SALT I. See Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, pp. 156-157, 195-196; Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 535, 547.

doubtful politically that the U.S. Congress and public would pay for its extensive deployment, so that the United States might be eager to trade off an ABM ban to the USSR rather cheaply.

Unlike the situation in the United States, all this information was probably shared only by the very small group of men in the USSR Defense Council who both planned and authorized Soviet weapons programs and planned the strategy of SALT negotiations to protect those programs.

Starting from this position, by the conclusion of the SALT I negotiations the Soviets had agreed at last to a halt in the growth in the number of ICBM launchers deployed, a stipulation that may possibly have required them to reduce somewhat the total of new fourth-generation heavy ICBM launchers they had previously planned to build as additions to the missile force. They further agreed to begin dismantling some older SLBM or ICBM launchers once their SLBM total reached a specified point.

The Soviets were adamantly unwilling, however, to tolerate meaningful constraints on their plans to "modernize" the existing set of Soviet third-generation ICBMs, by replacing them with fourth-generation launchers of sufficiently greater size and other capabilities to permit the USSR subsequently to outmatch the United States in multiple warhead throw-weight. They disguised this intention during the negotiation of SALT I, agreeing to qualitative language in the Interim Agreement that implied they would indeed be so constrained and that was subsequently advertised as such to the U.S. Senate rather incautiously by the U.S. negotiators. But the Soviet leaders insisted on sufficient ambiguity in the agreed text to permit them, without violation of the letter of the Agreement, later to retrofit their old launchers with new ones of a size and capability the United States had hoped to have prevented. Although the Soviets would have proceeded with these deployment plans in any case, with or without an Agreement, their legal achievement was later considered by many in the United States to be sharp practice, because the implied but illusory Soviet concession had meanwhile served as tacit justification for certain concessions on the U.S. side.

- The most important of these was the U.S. agreement to an antiballistic missile treaty. This was the most important Soviet objective in the SALT I negotiation, because the United States was at the time well ahead of the Soviet Union in ABM technology.
- In addition, the scope of the constraints apparently accepted by the Politburo, but in fact rejected, served to justify continued freezing of U.S. launcher totals below those of the USSR and

the legitimization of this unpleasant reality in the Agreement pending negotiation of a broader and more equitable SALT II framework.

On the Soviet side, these agreements were seen as the centerpiece of a bilateral relationship from which the Politburo expected to extract the much broader practical political and economic benefits already mentioned. Beyond this, they were viewed as having bought time for the Soviet Union to complete the process of overhauling, and in some respects surpassing, the United States in strategic capability, after which a new and necessarily more difficult understanding would be necessary to constrain U.S. programs and maintain the relative position achieved.

On the U.S. side, the real nature of the bargain struck in SALT I, as it gradually became known during the ensuing years as a result of Soviet post-Agreement "modernization," served greatly to increase mistrust of the SALT process and detente as a whole. In political terms, it provided initial impetus to the growth of opposition to what was in fact a more equitable SALT II agreement. That opposition in turn was eventually to undermine the chief benefit the Soviets saw as remaining in detente for them.

The Soviet Interaction with U.S. Pluralism

In their pursuit of these four sets of benefits from bilateral intercourse with the United States, the Soviet leaders were initially greatly impressed by the manipulative advantages offered them by U.S. reality. Eventually, however, the Politburo became increasingly soured by the associated disadvantages.

Soviet Projective Misconceptions

Themselves profoundly contemptuous of the ignorance and ephemeral passions of the masses, determined to allow no opening for the exertion of pressure from below upon Party policy, and fearful of any tendency toward drift or passivity at the top that might give vent to inchoate popular spontaneity (*stikhiinost'*), the Soviet leaders were alternately incredulous, gratified, and appalled at the extent to which U.S. leadership and the flow of U.S. policy became buffeted and conditioned by elite pluralism and mercurial popular pressures.

The Politburo members were incredulous because they were reluctant to come to grips with the implications of a central class enemy not symmetrically shaped in their own image—that is, not in command of its forces, united by class interests in fundamental hostility to them—

selves, and projecting a single will abroad. The asymmetrical multiplication of diverse tendencies and unpredictable variables in the camp of the enemy opens the door uncomfortably wide to such banned phenomena as chance (*sluchaynost'*) and coincidence (*kon'yunkturnost'*), and disorients the Manichean world-view.³³ There was (and is) in consequence a considerable tendency in the Soviet leadership, despite repeated lessons from American behavior and some warnings from their Americanologists, to continue to underestimate the dispersion of authority in the United States and to persist in projecting upon the U.S. scene a degree of orderly causality extracted from their own manipulative experience.

Of the many examples of this tendency, two may be cited as characteristic.

- In 1973 and 1974, the Soviets were reluctant to accept the prospect that an American President could be overthrown for what seemed to them such a trivial irrelevancy as Watergate, preferring to believe, until very late in the day, that the campaign against President Nixon had been prompted primarily by hidden fundamental causes that were ideologically relevant to themselves—in particular, opposition to detente.
- As recently as the winter of 1978-79, a visiting Congressional delegation was startled to be told by a member of the Soviet leadership that he was sure the President and the central Democratic Party leadership had decisive influence over the SALT votes of Democratic senators because of their control of party campaign funds.

Manipulative Exploitation of Asymmetrical Vulnerabilities

But despite this recurrent tendency to try to rationalize the American kaleidoscope into accustomed patterns, most Politburo members—and the foreign-policy elite supporting them—were constantly reminded by day-to-day events that U.S. pluralism was real and did affect the Soviet Union by shaping U.S. behavior as bilateral negotiator and global competitor. To the considerable degree that they perceived practical advantages for Soviet policy from these phenomena, the Soviet leaders were of course gratified. They took for granted that the asymmetries among U.S. and Soviet societies, political practice, and alliance systems would in any circumstances make it less difficult for them to strive to influence U.S. decisionmaking—and to bargain successfully—than it would be for any U.S. President to operate upon

³³Code, pp. 1-4.

them.

Ambiguous Generalizations. The most common feature in all such Soviet efforts to exploit the asymmetries latent in the detente relationship was the search for ambiguous and generalized mutual pledges. The Politburo ardently sought a wide spectrum of joint commitments on principle with the United States and its allies, each containing broad mutual promises so phrased as to fail to commit the Soviet Union to anything specifically defined, but having the potential for some constraining effect upon the U.S. public (and hence the U.S. government) because of the different conditions prevailing in the United States.³⁴

- We have seen that the SALT I Interim Agreement of May 1972 contained one such passage in the pledge in Article II not to convert "light" ICBM launchers into "heavy" ones of types deployed after 1964. In the absence of any quantitative definitions of "light" and "heavy" missiles, which the Soviets tenaciously refused to accept, the Soviets were later enabled legally to make conversions of a kind that the United States hoped the Agreement had prevented (notably involving the SS-19). This fact eventually proved extremely damaging to U.S. interests. Although the most important U.S. goal in SALT I was thus not achieved, the atmosphere surrounding the signing of the Interim Agreement left the U.S. public with the impression for some time that this ambiguous language was an important step forward for arms control.
- In the text of a document on "basic principles" of Soviet-U.S. relations also signed at the May 1972 summit, a similarly unspecific pledge was made to abstain "from efforts to obtain unilateral advantage at the expense of the other, directly or indirectly." The context of this pledge strongly implied that the parties were not merely referring to strategic weapon programs, but to geopolitical conduct generally. The unrealistic (not to say unLeninist) nature of this sentiment was surely clear to the Politburo when it was signed, and the Soviet leaders undoubtedly believed the U.S. leadership to feel similarly. But such statements as this, surrounded by the package of accompanying agreements signed in 1972 and 1973, fueled U.S. public perceptions of the advent of a benign, nonantagonistic Soviet attitude toward the United States, a fact that was useful to the Soviet Union until undermined by the revelations

³⁴On this subject, see Marshall Brement, "Organizing Ourselves to Deal with the Soviets," The Rand Corporation, P-6213, June 1978, pp. 8-9.

- of the October 1973 war.
- Similarly, in the Agreement on Prevention of Nuclear War signed at the summit of July 1973, the parties pledged to act "in such a manner as to prevent the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations." At the moment this statement was signed, as will be seen below, the Soviet Union had long since had information, not possessed by the United States, leading it to attach much higher credence than the United States to the likelihood of an Egyptian attack on Israel. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was incrementally supplying weapons systems to Egypt that it knew to be prerequisites for such an attack. The parties also pledged to "refrain from the threat or use of force" against either "the other Party" or "the allies of the other Party." This pledge was to be violated by both sides three months later, first by the Soviet Union (in its threat to intervene unilaterally against Israel), and then by the United States (in its consequent movement to a heightened state of strategic readiness against the Soviet Union). The enunciation of these vague and open-ended pledges in July 1973, however, served at the time to obscure from the U.S. public the extent to which the Politburo continued to consider specific national interests incompatible with those of the United States.
 - These paper pledges were accompanied by unsuccessful Soviet advocacy of a variety of similarly sweeping but nonenforceable proposals that the Soviets could confidently expect, if ever adopted, to have an unequal effect upon East and West because of the military and societal asymmetries involved. Some of these—such as the various Soviet proposals for pledges on nonuse of force, on nonfirst use of nuclear weapons, on the permanent banning of the use of nuclear weapons, and on the renunciation and destruction of all nuclear weapons—were put forward routinely in multilateral forums for political effect with no serious expectation of ever being adopted by the antagonist.
 - One such proposal, however, was also repeatedly put forward by the Soviet Union not only in propaganda arenas, but also in direct contacts; it was highly symptomatic of Politburo attitudes during and after the era of detente. This was the proposal for equal percentage reductions in announced Soviet and U.S. military budgets. Because U.S. budget figures are published and debated in considerable detail, while the Soviet military budget is publicly portrayed in a one-line item whose total is fictitious and does not indicate even the trend in Soviet

military spending, this proposal was unusually egregious. Its repetition to the United States therefore suggested a certain thinly disguised contempt.

The Economic Sphere. Here the Soviet leaders, like Dr. Kissinger, hoped from the start for advantageous political side-effects for themselves from the construction of a web of economic relationships with the competitor. They believed themselves considerably aided in their economic dealings with American society by the great disparity between the position of Soviet agencies and institutions, fundamentally responsive to a single political will, and that of the multiplicity of self-propelled U.S. commercial and economic interests with which they interacted.³⁵ As detente developed, this disparity was also reflected in an increasing lack of consensus in the United States both in society and government as to how much U.S. economic relations with the Soviet Union should relate to U.S. political aims. Consequently, there were no effective U.S. government mechanisms to prioritize and enforce such aims in the economic sphere. As one result of this situation, the Soviets may on occasion have believed certain of their ongoing contacts with U.S. business interests furnished a means to apply indirect pressure on the U.S. government for concessions on trade-related matters.³⁶

In practice, the Soviet leaders failed, for reasons discussed below, to obtain economic benefits from detente of the scope they had initially envisioned. Yet they continued to believe that most of those benefits they did receive would be fairly invulnerable. Even after the decline of detente, they assumed, until very recently, that the U.S. business and farming communities had acquired sufficient vested interest in the relationship with Moscow to constrain the U.S. government from drastic action at the expense of Soviet economic interests, despite any Soviet activities elsewhere considered inimical by the United States. One of the major Politburo disappointments resulting from the U.S. reaction

³⁵On a purely tactical level, the Soviets believed themselves at an advantage in most economic and commercial dealings with U.S. negotiators because of the U.S. propensity to regard compromise as both desirable and inevitable, and to experience feelings of frustration and failure when agreement was not achieved promptly. The Soviets prided themselves on their ability to operate with great deliberation, believing that this formula was ultimately likely to induce major concessions. See *Soviet Strategy and Tactics in Economic and Commercial Negotiations with the United States*, CIA National Foreign Assessment Center, ER 79-10276, June 1979.

³⁶The Soviets may in fact have hoped for broader leverage on U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union generally, exercised not only through inducements but also through threats to the business community. After the U.S. International Harvester representative Jay Crawford was seized in Moscow in June 1978, apparently in reprisal for the arrest in the United States of two Soviets accused of espionage, Western diplomats were quoted as suggesting that the Soviets were hoping thereby to induce U.S. business leaders to "use their political influence to press the Administration for a more cooperative attitude toward Moscow." *New York Times*, June 16, 1978.

to the invasion of Afghanistan was the discovery that this vested interest, while indeed substantial, was at least temporarily insufficient to enforce such constraint.

The Diplomatic Sphere. Here the Soviet leadership increasingly took for granted an even more striking asymmetry in the practice of the two states. The Politburo found that the very mechanism of diplomacy could be used, with the consent of the antagonist, to enlarge those tactical advantages the Soviet Union already derived from certain of the notorious differences between the two societies—particularly in regard to secrecy and self-discipline.³⁷

With the advent of detente, Ambassador Dobrynin and his staff became, to a much greater degree than previously, the primary channel for day-to-day intercourse between the two governments. Equally significant, Dobrynin and the Soviet Embassy notably expanded their activities in contact with the highest competing circles of the U.S. decisionmaking and opinionmaking elites, greatly enhancing their opportunities both to procure informed assessments of U.S. policy for the Politburo and to lobby for the Soviet viewpoint.

Simultaneously, the relative position of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, always much more circumscribed than its counterpart in Washington, declined still further. Not only were successive U.S. Ambassadors kept in ignorance of matters to which Dobrynin was privy, but the failure to use the Moscow channel served to encourage, exacerbate, and even legitimize the pre-existing Soviet tendency to isolate the Embassy as much as possible from decisionmakers, senior policy aides, and advisors. This was superimposed upon the existing nonreciprocal handicaps accepted and taken for granted by the United States in the everyday operation of its Embassy in Moscow.³⁸

In sum, with the coming of detente the Soviet official ability to assess and interact with the U.S. decisionmaking elite, already exten-

³⁷Reflected, for example, in the fact that throughout the SALT negotiations data discussed regarding Soviet as well as U.S. weapons was provided by the United States, because the USSR refused to do so.

³⁸That is, the police routinely stationed at Embassy gates to intercept Soviet citizens seeking to do business with the Embassy, the Soviet radiation of the Embassy building, the necessity (because of Soviet travel realities) to have Intourist (and therefore, presumably, KGB) representatives permanently present in the building, the need (because of Congressional penuriousness) to employ Soviet (and therefore, presumably, KGB) drivers for Embassy cars, and so on. For a further view of this extraordinary working asymmetry, see Richard A. Baker, letter to the editor, *Washington Post*, October 8, 1980, who states:

How many Americans are aware that the U.S. Embassy in Moscow is chock-full of Soviet workers—answering phones, handling correspondence, interpreting, translating documents, driving embassy cars? How many think they aren't debriefed by the KGB on a regular basis? The Soviet Embassy in Washington, on the contrary, employs no Americans whatever—they import all their own personnel, right down to the cleaning ladies.

sive, became even richer, while the U.S. official ability to do the same to Soviet counterparts in Moscow, already very meager, became even poorer. The Soviets probably believed that the U.S. leadership accepted this contrast, at least in part, because of special vulnerabilities created by U.S. reality. On the one hand, leaks and external policy opposition could be minimized only by private dealings with Dobrynin, and on the other hand, internal U.S. policy differences often made formal coordination of a U.S. position for presentation to the Soviets by the Moscow Embassy seem less desirable than uncoordinated contact with the Soviets in Washington.³⁹ All this the Soviets duly noted and ground into their assumptions about the changing "correlation of forces."

The Sphere of Unofficial Interaction. Here the Soviet leadership meanwhile evolved special institutions and mechanisms to cope with and exploit other asymmetrical U.S. vulnerabilities made manifest by more intimate bilateral dealings. These were intended to supplement, but not to supplant, older mechanisms of contact such as the Pugwash meetings.

One of the first of these new institutions was the Institute for the Study of the United States and Canada, which was created at the start of the 1970s as an adjunct of the Soviet foreign policy community.⁴⁰ It was intended partly to provide unclassified and classified assessments of aspects of U.S. reality for the leadership and its advisers, but more particularly to provide an authorized channel of contact for the collection of impressions from, and the dissemination of rationalizations of Soviet policies among, a wide spectrum of U.S. diplomats, journalists, scholars, businessmen, and other opinionmakers.⁴¹ It was headed by an exceptionally skillful and sophisticated Soviet propagandist.

Late in the decade, after the decay of detente was well advanced, the private propaganda functions of this institute were supplemented by creation of a Department of International Information within the Central Committee apparatus. This Department was especially intended to strive to influence Western journalists in Moscow.

These new organizations, along with a number of other Soviet instrumentalities, were designed to serve as substitutes, in such con-

³⁹In this connection, see the remarks by Marshall Bremant, a former Political Counselor in Embassy Moscow, "Organizing ourselves . . .," pp. 7, 14, 17-20, 28-29. See also the comments of former Ambassador Toon, in *New York Times*, October 17, 1979.

⁴⁰As the most important offshoot of the broader Institute of World Economics and International Relations, the USA Institute was one of a family of such regional institutes that emerged under the Brezhnev regime.

⁴¹See, in this connection, the details provided by Galina Orionova regarding efforts routinely made by the Institute to mislead and dupe U.S. visitors regarding Soviet policy. Nora Beloff, "Escape from Boredom: A Defector's Story," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1980.

tacts with the central antagonist, for those policy-advisory institutions and persons serving the Politburo whose work was regarded as too sensitive to permit frequent access to them by Western diplomats or journalists.⁴² Borrowing increasingly from the political and public relations techniques encountered by the Soviets in the United States, such Soviet instrumentalities throughout the 1970s sought to justify Soviet policies by encouraging the U.S. tendency to project aspects of U.S. life on to Soviet reality.⁴³ In the aftermath of the Afghanistan invasion, all such instrumentalities were called into play publicly or privately to defend Soviet actions, at varying levels of sophistication, as essentially defensive in nature and as justified by the previous trend of U.S. policies.⁴⁴

The Sphere of Interaction Abroad. In parallel with bilateral intercourse in all these spheres, and partly as a result of it, the Soviet leaders by the middle of the decade of the 1970s acquired an increasingly vivid sense of the constraints upon U.S. actions abroad and, indeed, upon the concerting of U.S. foreign policy in general, which were created by the decay of foreign policy consensus both inside and outside the U.S. government and the weakening of the Presidency by competing power centers.⁴⁵ From the airlift into Angola in 1975 to the airlift into Afghanistan in 1980, the expectation of an internally enfeebled U.S. reaction, in political as well as military terms, was to become one of the important considerations in the Soviet calculation of prospective costs and risks.

This Soviet perception of a paralyzing U.S. absence of consensus was gradually and cumulatively reinforced by intercourse with the

⁴²Notably, the International Department and Socialist Countries Department of the Central Committee, and the personal aides of Politburo members, such as Brezhnev's chief foreign policy aide Aleksandrov.

⁴³Characteristic, in this regard, was the effort made on one occasion to persuade a leading U.S. journalist that certain Politburo policies were necessitated by the pressure of Soviet "public opinion," which was implied to be an autonomous phenomenon with a breadth and constraining influence on the regime closely comparable to the influence of public opinion on the U.S. government. (*Washington Post*, June 7, 1977.) As already suggested, Politburo members are indeed sensitive to the opinions of their peers and, to a lesser extent, to what they sense to be the consensus among the most senior representatives of the most senior institutions around them. This oligarchic consensus represents a different order of reality from public opinion in the United States, however.

⁴⁴Particularly noteworthy in this regard were the "background interviews" on Afghanistan given by unidentified "informed Soviet sources" in Moscow in early January 1980, apparently in conscious imitation of U.S. backgrounders. More sophisticated in line than the public Soviet propaganda, which they partially contradicted, these interviews were probably provided by the International Information Department and received extensive, fairly sympathetic coverage in the U.S. press.

⁴⁵For a fairly frank Soviet discussion of one aspect of this process, see Yu. I. Nyporko, *Konstitutsionnye vzaimootnosheniya prezidenta i Kongressa SShA v oblasti vneshney politiki* (Constitutional Relationships Between the President and the Congress of the USA in the Field of Foreign Policy), Academy of Sciences and Ukrainian SSR, Kiev, 1979.

United States through the end of 1979. The multiplication of public and private U.S. warnings to the Soviet leaders to desist or refrain from a multitude of specific actions—from intervention in Angola and Ethiopia to punishment of Shcharansky to naval entry into Cam Ranh Bay—was so regularly found by the Soviets to be devoid of immediate and specific political consequences of any kind, when such warnings were inevitably brushed aside, as to inculcate a quasi-permanent attitude of familiar contempt toward such demarches. This conditioning of Soviet expectations apparently led to a Soviet sense of grievance when one more such warning (over Afghanistan) was finally matched by major political consequences.⁴⁶

The Erosion of the Value of Detente

Meanwhile, all the advantages the Politburo could extract from U.S. pluralism did not prevent the Soviet leaders from being increasingly appalled by those particular consequences of the diffusion of influence over foreign policy in the United States that they found to be more and more adversely affecting their own interests. The weakening of the Presidency that was so convenient in other respects was discovered, as the decade went on, to be making it difficult or impossible to carry out desirable bilateral agreements already reached with the United States and in general to cash in the benefits for the sake of which the Soviet Union had entered detente.

The Soviet leadership first encountered this problem in connection with the issue of Jewish emigration, which an influential section of U.S. opinion increasingly pressed upon the U.S. leadership as a factor that should be made to condition other aspects of the bilateral relationship. The Politburo had authorized the enlargement of such emigration early in the decade for reasons that were never publicly articulated but that probably involved, primarily, a decision to provide a safety-valve for a disaffected but homogeneous section of the population.⁴⁷ The Soviets may also have calculated that this emigration could serve as a tacit *quid pro quo* in dealings with the United States that might be modulated at Soviet discretion. From the Politburo's perspective, the toleration of any emigration was an act of extraordinary condescension. The Soviet leadership was dismayed, however, to discover that in

⁴⁶See the accounts of this interchange with the USSR in the *Washington Post*, December 31, 1979, and *New York Times*, January 1, 1980. A senior State Department official later told Congress that the United States had "expressed concern" to the USSR about the possibility of such military action "at least four or five times" after late November, but that for some reason the Soviet Union had "grossly miscalculated" the American reaction. He did not speculate as to why these repeated "expressions of concern" had been ineffectual. *New York Times*, January 31, 1980.

⁴⁷Along a pattern followed by Cuba in the early 1960s and again in 1980, by Poland after 1956 and after 1967, by China briefly in 1962, and by Vietnam since 1978.

practice it obtained little credit or leverage in the United States from the emigration it permitted but much blame for what it did not.⁴⁸

The Soviet leaders thus found this issue transmuted by degrees into an instrument of intensified attack upon their internal security practices, particularly inasmuch as they simultaneously felt obliged to sharpen rather than relax controls over dissident elements as a precaution against the ideological contamination expected from detente. At the same time, the emigration question became one of several major obstacles to the Politburo's hopes of obtaining capital and technology transfers from the United States on the scale originally envisioned. Finally, it also eventually became one of the many contributing complications to the deteriorating prospects of ratification of SALT II.

Of all these accumulating disappointments, probably most important in modifying Soviet perspectives was the decisive defeat in December 1974 of the Politburo's hopes for very large economic benefits from the bilateral relationship. This defeat centered on the passage of the Stevenson Amendment to the Export-Import Bank Bill limiting to \$300 million the total the Bank could lend to the Soviet Union over the next four years without seeking further Congressional approval, and banning use of any of this money for development and production of energy. This event resulted from a confluence of factors: Congressional unease over Soviet behavior during the October 1973 war, concern over the pace of technological transfer to the USSR, determination to make large future credits wait upon Soviet future behavior in all arenas, and resolve to assert Congressional will over the preferences of a weakened Presidency, which wished instead to make large credits available promptly to the USSR as an inducement to subsequent good behavior. At issue, in particular, was the prospect of extremely large incremental U.S. loans to the Soviet Union over the next few years for the Yakutsk and North Star Siberian energy development projects. These became highly unlikely after passage of the Stevenson Amendment.

Immediately upon the withdrawal of this long-awaited reward, the Politburo, after an acrimonious Central Committee Plenum in mid-December 1974, took steps publicly to disavow and deny the existence of those tacit commitments Brezhnev had made with the United States regarding the scope and conditions of future Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union, commitments that the Administration had in turn used to negotiate with Congress an 18-month exemption in the Trade Reform Act of 1974 from the Jackson Amendment's ban on the granting

⁴⁸This was in contrast to the reaction in Israel, whose posture toward the USSR was influenced somewhat by this emigration; and even more so to that of the FRG, where the repatriation of Germans from the Soviet Union proved to be an important instrument of Soviet leverage.

of most favored nation status and credits to the USSR. Focusing on the symbolic emigration issue, and ignoring the fact that the credits in question had just been reduced to what they considered a pittance, the Soviet leaders then abrogated the October 1972 Trade Agreement with the United States. The Politburo now indignantly denied that it could ever be bribed to permit interference in Soviet internal affairs; but in fact, the bribe was henceforth too small.

This episode was thus a landmark in the refueling of Soviet pugnacity⁴⁹ and set the stage for the seizure of the opportunity that appeared in Angola ten months later. The Soviets seemed characteristically unaware, however, of the extent to which their own prior competitive behavior in 1973 and 1974, discussed below, had contributed to Congressional reluctance to transfer the sums expected to the Soviet Union.

Soviet encounters with U.S. pluralism henceforth took place in an atmosphere of increasing bilateral acrimony and revived and expanded Soviet pressure abroad. In the last years of the decade, the Soviet struggle with what now seemed the inimical disparate forces at work in the United States centered increasingly on what the Politburo regarded as the last benefit remaining from detente, the SALT II treaty.

In these most recent years, the Soviet leaders became increasingly impatient with the drawbacks of the weakened Presidency. They became indignant at what they perceived as the propensity of the President's negotiators to use this very weakness of the office as leverage with which to attempt to extract concessions from the Soviet Union, by claiming a Soviet need not only to bargain with the Administration on the matters at hand, but also to propitiate supplementary concerns of Congress and public opinion.

The Soviets were themselves accustomed to buttress their rhetorical position in dealings with the gullible by alleging the existence of constraints placed on their flexibility by a mythical Soviet public opinion. They were consequently aggrieved by what they perceived as U.S. efforts to elevate what they regard as a nonserious propaganda expedient into a principal element of negotiation. In every such negotiation, they were therefore inevitably suspicious that the Administration was intentionally exaggerating its difficulties in securing Congressional

⁴⁹The period of November-December 1974 was in retrospect a turning point in two other regards as well. A Brezhnev visit to Egypt was widely heralded and then permanently canceled, reflecting Soviet recognition of the reduction of Soviet influence in Cairo by the United States since the October 1973 war. In the same period, the tentative SALT understanding reached at Vladivostok confirmed Soviet failure to ensure accommodation in SALT II of their demands regarding the Forward Based Systems in Europe, and thereby probably also confirmed Soviet private determination to deploy the SS-20 IRBM as unilateral compensation for FBS.

and public consent to a given Soviet-U.S. agreement. To the extent that they accepted the reality of such difficulties, they became increasingly insistent, as the Soviet payoff from detente dwindled, that the U.S. leadership, and not that of the Soviet Union, must bear the political costs of coping with them.⁵⁰

When this proved impossible—as began to happen across a broad front of issues by the late 1970s—the rewards of exploiting those foreign policy advantages for the Soviet Union created by U.S. pluralism became increasingly more central to the Politburo, while the Soviet interest in struggling with the bilateral frustrations imposed by the same pluralism dwindled.

GALVANIZING DISAPPOINTMENTS AND BECKONING OPPORTUNITIES

The Interaction with Egypt and the Fate of Detente

Meanwhile, from the very outset of detente, a strong tension had existed between the Soviet interest in bilateral dealings with the United States and the Politburo's determination to attempt to preserve those political and military advantages with respect to the United States that it had achieved in Egypt and the Arab world as a result of the Arab-Israeli confrontation. This Soviet task was further complicated by the death of Nasser and his replacement by an Egyptian leadership that the Politburo soon found to be more conservative, less inclined to pan-Arab romanticism, more Egypt-centered, and consequently less easily harnessed to Soviet geopolitical interests. These Soviet forebodings had already been confirmed in 1971, first by Sadat's actions to suppress the Soviet-oriented left in Egypt, and second by Sadat's support of the Sudan's Numayri, whose relations with the USSR drastically worsened after an attempted Communist Party coup, which the Soviet Union had enthusiastically applauded.

In 1971 the Politburo had therefore sought to counteract these adverse trends and to erect artificial underpinnings for the relationship with Egypt by inducing Sadat to sign a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union. On the one hand, this treaty furnished a legalistic justification for the continuation of the Soviet military presence in Egypt and

⁵⁰To quote the earlier-mentioned anonymous Soviet diplomat in Washington: "Should we rely on a worm-eaten American constitutional system? What business of ours is it if the President fails to get his treaties through the Senate? Should we wait and keep still?" *Die Welt*, January 14, 1980.

for the USSR's efforts to expand its extraterritorial rights. On the other hand, it furnished a written pretext to support Sadat's insatiable demands for Soviet arms.

From 1971 through 1973, simultaneous with the rise in Soviet dealings with the United States, the Soviet leaders were under continuous pressure from Sadat to supply him with what he regarded as the military hardware prerequisites for a renewed attack on Israel.⁵¹ In responding to this pressure, the Politburo was influenced by a mixture of motives: anxiety to preserve the military advantages they had obtained in Egypt, skepticism that any amount of weaponry would enable Sadat to succeed, concern that the USSR might be forced to take undesirable risks to rescue him after the expected defeat, and desire to use the military-supply relationship as leverage upon Sadat both to improve the position of the Egyptian left and to head off any opening by Sadat toward the United States.

The Politburo therefore equivocated. Some weapon systems the Soviets refused to furnish, many others they promised and indeed promptly supplied, still others they promised and then repeatedly delayed delivering, yet others they promised and repromised and then reneged upon.⁵² But the Soviets found Sadat extremely resistant to pressures exerted in this fashion. The important types and large quantities of weapons they did supply earned them little credit in Egypt, either then or subsequently, while the weapons they withheld evoked threats and punitive action. In the summer of 1972, Sadat ordered the bulk of the Soviet military presence withdrawn from Egypt, implying that Soviet delays in weapon delivery had been influenced by Soviet dealings with the United States. It is noteworthy that this drastic step did in fact improve Soviet delivery performance over the ensuing year.⁵³

Despite Sadat's subsequent tendency to belittle what the Soviets did supply, the Soviets knew by 1973 that the scope of their deliveries was radically changing Egyptian capabilities;⁵⁴ and they also knew, from ongoing contacts with Egypt and Syria, that the Arab intention to attack eventually was far more serious than the United States or Israel believed. The Politburo did not communicate this information to

⁵¹See Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, Harper & Row, New York, 1977, pp. 220-231.

⁵²*Ibid.*; also Mohammed Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, Quadrangle, New York, 1975, pp. 155-177.

⁵³Heikal, *The Road to Ramadan*, claims (p. 181) that the Soviets "seemed anxious to recover lost ground by speeding up the flow of arms, to such an extent that I remember President Sadat saying to me one day: 'They are drowning me in new arms.' Between December 1972 and June 1973 we received more arms from them than in the whole of the two preceding years." This is probably somewhat exaggerated. See also Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, Harper & Row, New York, 1978, p. 253.

⁵⁴See Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, p. 254.

the United States, because that would have undermined the Soviet position with their clients. Instead, Brezhnev made a vigorous effort, at his July 1973 summit meeting with President Nixon, to induce the United States to compel Israel to satisfy the Arab demands.⁵⁵ When this effort failed, the Soviet leadership in effect washed its hands of responsibility and allowed matters to drift toward war.

When the Soviets became aware of the imminence of hostilities in early October, they withdrew their dependents from Cairo and Damascus, while maintaining contact with the United States, apparently to ensure that the United States had not become aware of what was about to happen and was not about to warn Israel. According to both Sadat and Heikal, soon after the war began, Brezhnev made some efforts to induce Egypt and Syria to agree to a cease-fire. When these failed, however, the Soviets thereafter blocked any UN effort to halt the fighting and concentrated their efforts on stimulating other Arab states to support the war effort. After the Soviets initiated resupply to their clients, they disseminated false reports that the United States had also already done so, in an effort to precipitate hostile Arab reaction. After the United States did finally begin resupply to Israel, and the Arab oil suppliers imposed a petroleum embargo on the United States in response, the USSR, which had previously encouraged such a step, now applauded.⁵⁶ When, eventually, the Arab battle position gravely worsened, the Soviet leaders cooperated with the United States to procure a cease-fire; but when Israeli violations of this cease-fire rendered Sadat desperate, the USSR first proposed joint intervention with the United States to police the cease-fire and then threatened unilateral intervention,⁵⁷ inducing the United States at last to compel Israel to comply.

This line of conduct over a three-year period testified to the relative weight of Soviet priorities. While always sensitive to the possible consequences of particular actions for its relationship with the United States, the Politburo maintained a framework of reference in which Soviet competitive needs at all times remained paramount. Throughout this period, Brezhnev on a number of occasions publicly reiterated his belief in a need to eliminate what he termed "hotbeds of war" in the Third World, lest they lead to superpower clashes. His conduct suggested that

⁵⁵Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 885.

⁵⁶This is not, of course, to imply that Soviet encouragement had significant weight with OPEC; it did, however, indicate priorities in the era of detente.

⁵⁷The alert of the Soviet airborne units was initially reported in *New York Times*, November 21, 1973; also, in Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 937. After the October 1973 war, some Soviet broadcasts to the Middle East acknowledged this alert and claimed that the USSR had been prepared to intervene. Regarding this Soviet threat, see the *Washington Post*, November 28, 1973; Nixon, *Memoirs*, p. 938.

this was indeed one consideration in his behavior toward Sadat. But it is also clear that this consideration was insufficient in view of overriding Soviet interests to induce the Soviet leaders to accept the political consequences of the drastic action that would have been required to head off a war they knew was coming and had helped to prepare.

Instead, as events drifted toward ignition of the war, the anti-U.S. aspects of Soviet behavior in the Middle East grew increasingly important, as the USSR became more anxious to do what was required to avoid a complete break with Egypt,⁵⁴ more enticed by the prospect of the damage that a war might do to the United States in the eyes of both radical and conservative Arab opinion, and consequently more concerned to do its modest best to attempt to render that damage permanent.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, in the immediate aftermath of the October war, the Politburo members regarded themselves as having serious grievances against the United States. In the first place, they were aggrieved because of the U.S. declaration of a higher state of military readiness at the moment of impasse over the ceasefire at the conclusion of the war, which had superimposed a global and strategic dimension upon a regional crisis. Second, and even more important, the Soviet leadership strongly resented President Nixon's public suggestion, at a press conference immediately thereafter, that he had thereby *faced them down*.⁵⁶ They did not believe this to be true, since the United States had, in effect, done what the USSR had requested by compelling Israel to comply with the cease-fire. In addition, they resented the implication of Nixon's statement that the Soviet achievement of strategic parity had not removed the stigma of inferiority implanted by the Cuban missile crisis.

These initial postwar grievances against the United States were, of course, subsequently greatly reinforced by the erosion of the Soviet position in Egypt as the result of U.S. initiatives and Egyptian ingratitude. All this could only further strengthen the Soviet assertive tendency, which had never been subordinated to detente.

⁵⁴As noted above (footnote 53), after late 1972 the Soviet Union apparently accelerated delivery of arms to Egypt that were essential to the October attack.

⁵⁵As already noted, the Soviets appear to have awaited with some eagerness the Arab use of the "oil weapon" against the United States as a consequence of Arab-Israeli hostilities.

⁵⁶A TASS statement released some hours after the Nixon interview mentioned the U.S. alert for the first time, alluded to efforts by unnamed U.S. officials to justify it as a response to Soviet actions, and condemned it as a vain attempt to "intimidate" the Soviet Union. TASS, October 27, 1973.

The Adventures in Africa and Southeast Asia

The Growing Internal Predisposition To Act

In addition to the geopolitical motives for the Soviet behavior just described, this behavior was also testimony to Brezhnev's continued personal need to display a militant face to the Party. We have seen that earlier, in 1967, Brezhnev had felt called upon to demonstrate against internal challenge that the growth of Soviet strategic strength was sufficient to justify the degree of risk-taking indulged in during the Six Day War.⁶¹ In the years immediately following, he may have felt defensive over, and tacitly obliged to compensate for, even minor reservations imposed on the generally more venturesome line of Soviet policy. Now, in the era of detente, he seems to have perceived an obligation to demonstrate to his peers and their institutional subordinates that the substitution of vague and flowery language for ideologically charged rhetoric in connection with his dealings with the main antagonist did not signify willingness to sacrifice the Party's fighting qualities (*boevost'*). This felt need was enlarged rather than diminished by a new personal victory in inner-Party struggle over the acceptability of the tactics involved.

It has been widely and credibly alleged that Ukrainian party leader Shelest had objected to his colleagues' decision to proceed with the May 1972 summit with the United States despite the mining of Haiphong. Shelest's defeat and demotion by Brezhnev on this occasion and his formal ouster from the Politburo on various pretexts a year later did not eliminate the political force of the issue he had raised, but rather left behind a need for self-justification. It is in this sense that the previously cited Brezhnev private statement to some militant followers in the spring of 1973 must be understood. In claiming that detente would prove to be an expedient, an interlude for strengthening after which (by 1985) the Party would be in a position to assert itself more vigorously, Brezhnev was projecting from complex variables future consequences that he surely could not anticipate with great confidence. Moreover, this was in any case an outcome he would probably not live to see. Nevertheless, the private enunciation of this rationalization was evidently felt to supply political insurance.⁶² In the same sense, the

⁶¹See above, p. 32.

⁶²See above, p. 15. Two years later, Brezhnev performed another symbolic act of a somewhat different kind to testify to his adherence to militant orthodoxy. He then caused to be published in *Pravda* an announcement that he had received the propagandist Konstantin Zarodov, editor of *Problems of Peace and Socialism*, shortly after Zarodov had published in *Pravda* a highly controversial article attacking foreign Communist "opportunists" who forgo the leadership of revolutions to pursue electoral advantage. This article was aimed at Italian and Spanish Communists who had criticized the aggressive

policy privately followed by the Soviet Union in the Middle East between 1971 and 1973, in contradistinction to the professions of detente, protected Brezhnev's interests by protecting those of the Party as perceived by the consensus of his colleagues.

The fall of Shelest had another political effect as well. As part of Brezhnev's reaction to this foreign policy challenge raised in 1972, he sought a year later to shore up his consensus against any future such challenge by elevating the heads of the leading national security bureaucracies—the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister, and the Chairman of the KGB—to full membership in the Politburo. Although this change had the appearance of being a balanced one, over the long term its most important single consequence was the legitimization of a policymaking role for the defense establishment in areas of foreign policy from which it had hitherto been nominally distant.

Against this background, the increasingly resolute leadership inclination to forgo no opportunities for advance was reflected, in 1974 and 1975, by continued and expanded military shipments to North Vietnam. These greatly assisted Hanoi in its determination not to abide by the terms of the 1973 peace agreement, and were indispensable to the events that led to the sudden South Vietnamese collapse and to the gratifying U.S. humiliation in Saigon in the spring of 1975.

This event, in its turn, furnished one of the preconditions for the new stage in Soviet behavior that began in Africa some months later.

Soviet Calculations in Africa

The Soviet involvement in Africa after 1975 was both a new departure and an extension of a process long in train. The continuity was provided by the increasing military input to Soviet policy since the later 1960s and by an evolving propensity, which had grown unimpeded through the era of detente, to seek geopolitical profit at U.S. expense from involvement in the security concerns of Third World clients. What was new came as a fortuitous juxtaposition of favorable historical factors:

- The death of Salazar and the Portuguese revolution, which precipitated the dissolution of the remnants of the Portuguese empire and thus a showdown between rival Angolan factions.
- The simultaneous overthrow of Haile Selassie by a radical but ineffectual regime, whose hold on part of the inherited Empire was presently menaced by a traditional irredentism from Somalia.

(and ultimately unsuccessful) tactics pursued by the Portuguese Communist Party in its efforts to seize dominance in the Portuguese revolution. Brezhnev thus again found occasion to associate himself with a reassertion of the Party's revolutionary legitimacy to offset the rhetoric of detente. *Pravda*, August 5 and September 18, 1975.

- The maturing of a coalition of Black African states in support of the struggle against the white regime in Rhodesia.
- The culmination of the U.S. disaster in Vietnam, whose effect on public opinion insured the paralysis of U.S. opposition to Soviet overseas ventures for years to come.
- The growth of Soviet airlift and other logistical capabilities, which provided a reach to Soviet power projection efforts not seen hitherto.
- Finally, the discovery of the Cuban potential to furnish, for intervention under Soviet aegis, a corps of combat soldiers that would be both quantitatively and qualitatively significant under African conditions, yet far less offensive to African opinion than a Soviet expeditionary force of comparable size would have been.

The Soviet exploration of these possibilities evolved incrementally as they emerged into view between 1975 and 1977. One notable aspect of Soviet behavior was the care taken to minimize the local political risks incurred. The Cuban intervention on the side of the MPLA in Angola caused only modest disturbance among African observers; the much larger Soviet-Cuban effort on behalf of Mengistu was actually regarded with more sympathy than not, in view of the general distaste for Somalia's effort to alter African boundaries by force; and the scope of the Soviet-Cuban advisory role in support of ZAPU operations against Rhodesia was constrained within the framework set by the leaders of the Black African states supporting the Patriotic Front. The Soviets observed that this seizure of the dominant political heights rendered U.S. opposition to their efforts not only toothless but politically counterproductive. That is, the circumstances in the Horn of Africa and in south-central Africa, if not in Angola, were such that even if U.S. efforts to oppose the Soviets and Cubans by force had not been ruled out by U.S. domestic opinion, they would have been deterred by the negative political consequences for U.S. interests in Africa.⁶³

Because the United States was thus doubly deterred on political grounds, and there was consequently very little military risk of confrontation with the United States in any case, the Soviet achievement of strategic parity was only peripherally relevant to Soviet efforts in Africa. It was significant only to the extent that it continued to fuel Soviet confidence overall, and thus generally to encourage the broad outward thrust of Soviet policy. But regardless of these limiting cir-

⁶³The strongly pro-U.S. Kenyans, for example, were also fearful of Somali irredentist claims on Kenyan territory, and consequently wanted no active U.S. military support given to Somalia.

cumstances, the repeated spectacle of vigorous Soviet action and U.S. inaction in a region of former unchallenged predominance of Western influence could not but feed that general impression of a shifting balance of power already fostered by U.S. misfortunes elsewhere. The Soviet leadership was aware of this impression and sought increasingly to play upon it.

Indochina

In the other significant arena that saw major Soviet security involvement before Afghanistan, that of Indochina, Soviet calculations were quite different. Here Soviet combat involvement was virtually nil, the major Soviet role was one of deterrence, and the implicit military risks were considerable. The net result was a further expansion of Soviet presence and influence at the expense of both the PRC and the United States.

The Politburo very probably had an accurate sense of Vietnamese intentions when the USSR signed a friendship and security treaty with Vietnam in November 1978. The Soviet leaders surely knew that in agreeing to this formal act of alignment, which Hanoi had often resisted in the past, Hanoi was clearly purchasing insurance against Chinese military reaction when Vietnam took steps to solve its Pol Pot problem by overrunning Cambodia. This Hanoi then proceeded to do in the following two months.

Neither Moscow nor Hanoi appears to have foreseen, however, either the persistence of Pol Pot's resistance or the likelihood that the Chinese would in fact attack Vietnam in response. The Soviets were therefore in retrospect quite fortunate that the Chinese military effort to teach Hanoi "a lesson," which ensued in February and March 1979, was self-restricted in both scope and time, so that the PRC made no attempt to penetrate to the Red River delta to threaten Hanoi. Despite the Soviet large firepower advantage on the Sino-Soviet border, the Politburo's response during this episode testified to its great reluctance to become involved in a land war with China or to take any initiative that might seriously risk precipitating such a war. Had the Chinese in fact gone on to menace the viability of the Vietnamese regime or its capital, the Soviet leadership would have found the political costs extremely high had it not responded with some actions against China that would have greatly increased the possibility of a Sino-Soviet war, with further incalculable possibilities of U.S. involvement. Once again, the Politburo had accepted an open-ended commitment whose implications were not clearly envisioned, for the sake of a quick gain for Soviet geopolitical interests.

In exchange for accepting these undefined risks, for supplying the Vietnamese war economy, and for providing certain logistical support

to Hanoi, the Soviets at last found the Vietnamese, after years of equivocation during the struggle against the United States, totally aligned with them and isolated in dependence on them. If still not at all subject to Soviet political control, the Vietnamese were now far more vulnerable to Soviet leverage than ever before. The USSR was similarly enabled to strengthen its political presence in Laos and to reestablish its presence in Cambodia by following in the footsteps of the Vietnamese as they consolidated their dominance over the Indochinese peninsula. Finally, the Soviet military establishment was able to secure benefits it had long coveted but that Hanoi had previously denied it: the right to make naval port visits, including visits to the former U.S. base at Cam Ranh Bay, a point of special satisfaction; the right to operate electronic facilities at Cam Ranh Bay; and the right to use Vietnam for the staging of Soviet long-range naval air reconnaissance flights from the Soviet Far East.⁶⁴ These benefits offered some conveniences to the Soviet Union in its gradually increasing effort to compete with the U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean. More broadly, they provided a new increment to the continuous worldwide process of slowly supplanting the United States in places where its presence had previously been dominant.

The Intervention into Afghanistan

Seen against this background, the question of whether Soviet motives in invading Afghanistan were mainly defensive or offensive is an illusory one.

Although there is little doubt that the Politburo regarded its immediate purpose in dispatching large forces to depose Amin, install Karmal, and take over the counterinsurgency struggle as primarily defensive, this was so only in the peculiar sense generally characteristic of Soviet assertive behavior. That is, the Soviet leadership saw itself as thereby defending *gains* for the Soviet Union that it had already assumed to have won, yet had never consolidated. It was also, in the process, seeking to eliminate the contingency of an outright setback that had itself been conjured up by the very effort to advance: the unprecedented possibility that anti-Soviet rebels might take power in Kabul.

The Soviet Union was thus intervening militarily to defend a tentative and precarious advantage under challenge, just as it was simul-

⁶⁴All these Soviet military benefits were widely reported in the Western and Japanese press, beginning in the spring of 1979, and were also angrily cited by Chinese propaganda. For example, *Washington Post*, May 10, 1979; Beijing radio, February 22, 1980.

taneously asserting itself politically in Europe to defend the advantageous force balance it had achieved there against the challenge of threatened NATO theater nuclear deployments. As noted earlier, in both cases there was an offensive essence to a defensive concern.

At the same time, there is also little doubt that the Politburo saw the advantage it was seeking to consolidate in Afghanistan not as an isolated circumstance, but as another in a progression of favorable changes in different parts of the world in recent years. This sense of continuity had consequences. The Politburo's willingness to allow itself to be incrementally enticed into guaranteeing a Communist regime against the wishes of the Afghan population was almost certainly influenced by the trends of the past decade discussed in this report. If the Soviet invasion was largely foreordained by the growing Soviet involvement in defense of the regime since April 1978, that involvement was itself powerfully conditioned by the Politburo's perception of the trend in the world correlation of forces and by the vivid Politburo awareness of the succession of cases in which boldness in seizing opportunities had been rewarded since 1967.

In such a context, although previous "neutral" Afghan regimes had been respectful of Soviet interests, once the new opportunity appeared the Politburo could never again be satisfied with such a relationship. The April 1978 Kabul coup had promised something more; the December 1978 Soviet-Afghan treaty had formalized Soviet recognition of this; and neither the wishes of the Afghan majority nor the peculiarities of Amin could be allowed to prevent its realization. The increasing Soviet investment in men, weapons, and military prestige in the unsuccessful advisory effort to halt the insurgency in 1978 and 1979 had then provided additional reasons why the Afghan revolution had at almost any cost to be made "irreversible."

Finally, the lure of strategic benefits waiting at the end of pacification seems to have become more important as the difficulties of pacification multiplied. Thus, increasingly after the signing of the treaty of December 1978, a buffer status for Afghanistan ceased to be sufficient; more and more, this country probably became predestined, in Politburo thinking, in some fashion to project Soviet geopolitical influence to the south.

The Politburo probably now believes that this has already begun to happen. Although the Soviet troop presence in Afghanistan has intensified animosity toward the USSR in neighbors Iran and Pakistan, it has also increased fear of the Soviet Union; and in the case of Pakistan, it has already augmented Soviet geopolitical leverage. This intimidating presence has been initially successful, without the Soviets having to cross any additional boundaries, in deterring Pakistan from closer military association with the United States, in the absence of

U.S. military guarantees to Pakistan so far-reaching as to be unlikely to be endorsed by the U.S. public.

The Politburo is likely to become seduced by and habituated to this new, risk-free geopolitical benefit, and this will probably become a supplementary reason for the permanent retention of some Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, even in the unlikely event that the security situation there should ever, in principle, permit a total Soviet withdrawal. Over the long term, Soviet gestures regarding withdrawal intended to reduce the adverse political consequences elsewhere will therefore remain token. As in the case of the Soviet forces stationed in Czechoslovakia, the strategic and political advantages of some forward deployment outside the USSR will increasingly reinforce the security motives that were originally most urgent.

The Mix of Future Soviet Policies

The Afghan Cost-Benefit Ratio

Afghanistan has thus undoubtedly increased the Politburo's awareness of the geopolitical advantages that are obtainable through the uninhibited use of Soviet military force on the USSR's periphery. It is therefore possible that the precedent has whetted the leadership's appetite for more such gains if they can be obtained at acceptable risk and cost.

Soviet attitudes on this subject are almost certainly equivocal, however. In addition to the frustrating difficulties thus far encountered in the process of subduing the Afghans, the Politburo is by no means indifferent to the political costs attached to its behavior in Afghanistan. It probably judges certain of these costs to be much more important than others.

- Some costs—such as the reaction in Europe—may be regarded as easily tolerable, and indeed offset by favorable secondary effects, such as the fissures created in the Western alliance.
- Others—such as the reaction in the Moslem world—may now be seen as probably surmountable, but still somewhat uncertain in their ultimate effects.
- Still other costs are probably considered to be potentially quite serious for the Soviet Union, although also not yet final. One of these is the long-term effect of Afghanistan upon the U.S. propensity to increase arms spending; another is the ultimate effect upon the Sino-U.S. relationship.

The Politburo's sense of the balance of profit and loss among such

disparate factors is thus probably tentative and likely to be continuously revised. The net effect of Afghanistan upon Politburo thinking thus far, however, is probably ambiguous. If the leadership does have a heightened appetite for the geopolitical gains that such use of military force can bring, that is likely to be coupled with a sense of the desirability of first obtaining a more secure political base in the next target country than was available in Afghanistan.

The Effects of a Repetition upon Other Soviet Clients

The Politburo probably also senses that the potential advantages of further such uninhibited use of Soviet force to establish clearcut Soviet control of Third World countries will have to be weighed against the possibility of counterproductive effects upon relationships with clients that the USSR has achieved through more carefully circumscribed use of military power for geopolitical ends over the last decade. This is not a trivial consideration.

We have seen that the Soviets during the 1970s became increasingly active in dispatching Soviet and proxy forces at the invitation and service of sympathetic Third World regimes. Until Afghanistan, the appeal for Soviet assistance and the services rendered to the Third World client were in every case genuine, as such varied clients as Le Duan, Nasser, Sadat, Asad, Neto, Mengistu, and Nkomo could testify.⁶⁵ Also until Afghanistan, in no case did acceptance of this Soviet assistance bring to the client loss of effective political control of his own regime to the Soviet Union. This was, to be sure, in many cases not for want of Soviet trying.⁶⁶ The fact remains, however, that although several states (particularly Cuba and South Yemen) have an exceptionally close relationship with Moscow because of a perceived commonality of interests, there are still no noncontiguous Soviet puppets in the world today.⁶⁷ Soviet presence and influence has, on the whole, expanded considerably in the Third World since the late 1960s. Thus far, Soviet control has not.

The Politburo is well aware that its clients and prospective clients in the Third World are generally sensitive to this distinction and that

⁶⁵The adequacy of the Soviet military services in question is of course another matter. Although Sadat, and possibly even Nkomo, may be inclined to carp, most Soviet clients probably feel that the Soviets rendered good value.

⁶⁶Most notably, through political pressures and intrigues in Cuba in the early 1960s, in Egypt in 1971, and in Ethiopia more recently. Mengistu, for example, has appeared to be quite suspicious of Soviet intentions.

⁶⁷Some observers may feel that South Yemen already belongs in this category; I disagree, and would draw attention to the widespread mistaken belief in 1971 that the enormous Soviet military presence in Egypt, including the stationing of advisers in key positions down to battalion level, had then given the USSR such control in Egypt.

the Soviet success in advancing the Soviet presence in the Third World has been conditioned by a client assumption that the USSR would be unable to extract control as the price of its services. Afghanistan was a radical departure from this pattern and a challenge to this assumption. Afghanistan was a parody of previous Soviet ventures precisely because the alleged invitation to the Soviets to intervene was generally perceived, inside and outside the country, as a fictitious justification for the violent assertion of Soviet control. If Soviet clients such as the Syrians, Angolans, and Ethiopians are thus far not greatly disturbed by this precedent, it is largely because of their continuing overriding need for Soviet services; but it is partly also because they see Soviet behavior in Afghanistan as an isolated and nonthreatening instance. Undisguised repetitions of the Afghanistan pattern elsewhere, however, will probably have some cumulative negative effect upon the Soviet relationship with clients whom they do not control.

These considerations give the Politburo important additional reasons to prefer better political cover for any such military attempts to establish Soviet hegemony in the future. This does not mean, of course, that the USSR will not vigorously pursue its efforts to expand its political and military presence in the Third World. On the contrary, the Politburo will do this in any case on the pattern successfully practiced in Africa, when and if suitable new clients in need of Soviet security assistance emerge. But as a rule the Soviets are likely to consider their acceptance of a relationship of less than complete control, with a sympathetic regime heavily dependent on the USSR, as in Ethiopia and South Yemen, to be on balance more advantageous than an effort to repeat what they had done in Afghanistan. The profitability of their past and present joint operations with the Cubans, and the fact that the Cubans have up to now been widely perceived by clients as less threatening, also suggests that, other things being equal, the Soviet leadership will have reason to continue to emphasize the use of such proxies to the extent feasible.

Possible More Dangerous Alternatives

Having said this, let us note a major caveat: Such Politburo preferences, even if now considered in Moscow to represent the balance of Soviet interests in the abstract, may easily be sidetracked by the spontaneous evolution of short-lived opportunities in circumstances where the ultimate political costs are initially ambiguous. The Soviet leaders have established two sets of disquieting precedents in the last decade that could entice them to override the cautionary considerations discussed:

- They have three times assisted client regimes to conquer rivals

across established boundaries (in India's attack on Pakistan in 1971, in Hanoi's attack across the 17th parallel beginning in 1972, and in Hanoi's onslaught against Cambodia in 1978). They could therefore be led to do this again and in some circumstances to play a larger and more independent military role.

- They have been willing to accept thinly supported conspiratorial coups as sufficient pretext to establish security relationships with the resulting unpopular regimes. Despite any present misgivings, they will be under temptation to do so again should such coups materialize in places that are both important to the Soviet Union and within the geographical range of Soviet effective power projection capabilities. Within this radius, they may therefore be more ready than heretofore to intervene in civil wars in which such regimes are involved, even in cases where the possibility of a U.S. military reaction is not ruled out. Indeed, on their immediate periphery they are now more likely than before to seize on any pretext offered by U.S. conduct to justify such Soviet intervention in a civil war as a response to a U.S. initiative. Finally, they could also be tempted, given the appropriate combination of circumstances, to seek to stimulate coups in nearby states in order to establish the political base for a subsequent military presence.

CONCLUSIONS: THE SOVIET VIEW OF PROSPECTS IN THE COMPETITION

Although the Politburo is quite wary of the possibility of a new U.S. assertiveness, it is by no means yet convinced that the United States will ever again satisfy either the political or the military prerequisites for effective opposition to the gradual further expansion of the Soviet position.

The Soviet leaders may believe that the differences between the United States and certain of its allies over policy toward the Soviet Union that have emerged in recent years transcend issues of personality and reflect opposing and enduring conceptions of national self-interest. They will certainly continue to test this assumption.

With regard to the Third World, the Soviet leadership probably believes that the contraction of U.S. influence as an adjunct of radical or anticolonial insurgency has not yet run its course and will continue over time to evoke new opportunities—in the Middle East, in southern Africa, and in Latin America—for the expansion of the Soviet presence and influence.

The Soviet leaders may feel that although Sino-U.S. cooperation against the Soviet Union is deeply disturbing, it is not firmly established and may possibly in time be weakened. They surely hope for an exacerbation of Sino-U.S. bilateral difficulties. They may also count upon a combination of a growth in Soviet power to intimidate and repeated demonstration of the inadequacy of the U.S. counterweight to that power.

In their own sphere, the Soviet leaders know they will continue to face grave and growing difficulties, particularly in regard to stagnating economic growth, a serious energy problem, adverse demographic trends, and the ongoing crisis with Poland. The Politburo seems determined, however, to continue to seek to insulate its external ambitions from the effects of its internal troubles. The regime is particularly reluctant to believe that its economic difficulties will ever necessitate what it would regard as major political concessions to the United States. The Soviet leadership is likely to continue to see acceptance of important restraints on the USSR's efforts to expand its world at U.S. expense as such an unpalatable concession. Although it remains barely conceivable, as it was a decade ago, that the Soviet leadership might modify its external behavior somewhat if the truly massive economic benefits originally envisioned as flowing from a Soviet-U.S. relationship were to materialize, this assumption remains highly conjectural. Moreover, benefits of this scope are now, in any case, far less likely than ever before to be forthcoming. Similarly, although it is not inconceivable that accumulating economic problems could one day compel the regime to slow the growth of military spending, there is no evidence that this has yet occurred, nor that the leadership believes such a point is near at hand.

The leadership thus does not yet appear to see any reason to scale down its long-term external expectations because of its internal difficulties. Although the Politburo probably recognizes that a decision regarding Poland involving Polish-Soviet bloodshed, should it prove necessary, would seriously impede Soviet efforts to split Western Europe from the United States, the Soviets may assume that even in this case the adverse effects would be transitory. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the regime believes its internal problems are likely over the next decade to hamper seriously its efforts to further improve its presence and influence in the Third World at the expense of the United States. In sum, the leadership has provided little reason to believe that its internal problems have either tempered the profound underlying hostility that drives Soviet worldwide competition with the United States or have caused the Soviets to revise their estimate of their long-term prospects.

Finally, the Soviets certainly retain enduring respect for U.S. technological capabilities and are surely greatly concerned at the evidence of a rebirth of U.S. nationalism and military spending. The Soviets may feel, however, that there is as yet little evidence that the enervating effects of U.S. pluralism upon the U.S. capacity to concert and execute competitive policies have dissipated. They also have little reason to believe that the substantial manipulative advantages they obtain from certain of the asymmetries between the two societies are being reduced.

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The following correction should be made:

p. 46, footnote 34, change P-6213 to P-6123.

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