TITLE: THE SOURCES OF STABILITY OF THE SOVIET REGIME

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

Columbia University's Seweryn Bialer examines the on-going post-Brezhnev transition for probable trends in the formulation of Soviet domestic and foreign policies throughout the 1980s. His synthetic analysis of the entire scope of Soviet internal and external politics during this period will be published in the near future. In this report for the National Council, Professor Bialer defines the sources of regime stability which will continue to influence the future course of events throughout the remainder of this decade.

The report posits that the events subsequent to Stalin's death in 1953 could have been potentially very destabilizing to the Soviet regime. The abolishment of mass terror, the release of an uncounted number of political prisoners, Khrushchev's anti-Stalin campaign as well as his administrative reforms, the emergence of an anti-Soviet dissent movement all carried a destabilizing potential of disillusion, unrest and disorder. Add to these modifications of the Stalinist system the relatively poor economic performance of the past decade and we might expect that the resulting loss in the system's vitality could point to potential instabilities during the post-Brezhnev transition period. Yet, Professor Bialer cautions, the current instability of the Soviet system is one of effectiveness rather than of survival. The reasons for the author's skepticism about the possibilities for either radical reform or fatal destabilization lies in his analysis of the potent sources of regime stability still at work within the Soviet Union.

The system's highly visible coercive apparatus, for example, remains potent despite the absence of a policy of mass terror. One consequence of the presence of this extensive formal and, at times, informal security network is that the energies of the working classes, the middle class and even of officialdom are channeled away from political activities.

Soviet economic performance throughout the post-Stalin period also provides an important support system for regime stability. Professor Bialer argues that such performance has not radically disappointed the expectations of key strata of Soviet society including the workers, the peasants and the professional/middle classes. The author acknowledges that the standard of living of all these groups remains lower than that of their western counterparts as well as of their comrades in Eastern Europe. However, the relevant benchmark against which Soviet citizens measure their economic well-being continues to be that of their parents and of their own past. From this point of view economic performance has been sufficient not to foster regime destabilization.

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Professor Bialer also argues that corruption provides yet another moderating mechanism in the Soviet context. By providing a means for the realization of material expectations outside the official system, the sub-economy offers the trappings, if not the reality, of a higher status to its participants. It also serves to maintain the overall Soviet standard of living above its official level.

High levels of mobility, the congruence of cultural attitudes and tastes among the political elite and the working class as well as a relatively narrow range of economic stratification similarly support regime stability.

Professor Bialer continues his analysis by identifying forces present in the contemporary Soviet scene which eventually may undermine the stability described above. Here he argues that the rise of non-material expectations would endanger the status quo. As in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, a merging of the unfulfilled material expectations of the workers or peasants with the spiritual and political aspirations of the intelligentsia could be particularly explosive.

Of greater and more likely danger, the presence of the myriad nationalities who constitute the Soviet population—many of whom have recorded histories and traditions that predate the emergence of the Russian nation by centuries and even millennia—could undermine the long-term stability of the present regime. Here Professor Bialer notes that ethno-centricity constitutes one of the major sources of instability for multi-national or multi-racial states in the modern world. He finds that despite economic, political and coercive forces stabilizing national relations within the Soviet Union at present the potential for instability in the long-term due to ethnic and racial divisions and conflicts is enormous. Moreover, the nationality problem is the most difficult one confronting the Soviet regime to resolve without a drastic change of the system itself.

Finally, the stability of a regime depends on the strength of its legitimacy as perceived by the population at large and the system's elites. While it would be a mistake to exaggerate the strength of Soviet popular legitimacy, it remains counter-balanced by the enormous powers of coercion, control and manipulation at the disposal of the regime. For elites it seems clear that the will to power and the commitment to the existing system has remained unshaken.

Professor Bialer concludes by observing that the Soviet political elite is not a homogenous body. It joins varied interests, diverse outlooks and sympathies. During times of internal crisis and severe strain it tends to divide. Yet core beliefs about the system permeate the elite as a whole. This support structure produces a stability which relies heavily on political control, administrative organization, conscious manipulation and intervention. As such the contemporary Soviet system rests upon an elite stability that may be severely tested in the decade to come.
The sources of stability of the Soviet regime

The events subsequent to Stalin's death in 1953 could have been potentially very destabilizing to the Soviet regime. The abolishment of mass terror and elimination of police methods from intra-elite struggles, the release from concentration camps of an uncounted number of political prisoners, the anti-Stalin campaign of Khrushchev and his administrative reforms, the emergence of an anti-Soviet dissent movement—all carried a destabilizing potential of disillusion, unrest and disorder. The economic difficulties of the last decade and the pronounced loss of the Soviet system's vitality also point to potential instabilities. Yet it is my firm belief, shared by a clear majority of Western students of the Soviet Union, that hopes for a radical change in the Soviet Union represent wishful thinking of the liberals, and expectations of fatal destabilization of the Soviet regime wishful thinking of the conservatives.

Why has the modified Stalinist system proven so durable? Why is the Soviet system so stable? Before addressing these questions, a brief note on the meaning of instability is in order. There are two types of instability: a state of affairs in which the very survival of the political system is at stake; and a situation in which the effectiveness of the system is strongly impaired, but the survival of the system is not in question. Of

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course, a crisis of effectiveness may transform itself into a crisis of survival if it is not successfully counteracted. However these two kinds of instability are distinct from each other.

The Soviet Union is at present in the throes of a deep crisis of effectiveness. There is little reason to believe that the crisis will abate in the foreseeable future. I do not believe, however, that the Soviet state is now, or will be in the late 1980s, in danger of social or political disintegration. Thus, the discussion of the conditions of stability and instability of the Soviet Union will focus on the question: what are the factors which made the Soviet regime stable in the post-Stalin era and are still at work at the present?

The Soviet system has existed for over two-thirds of a century -- a period sufficiently long to mock the idea of its "experimental" character and to demonstrate its ability to adapt and adjust to its internal and international environment. It also has roots in Russian history. There is little in the Soviet system today inconsistent with the national and imperialist tradition from which it developed. In fact, as Zbigniew Brzezinski remarked in his article "From the Future to the Past," the character of Soviet socio-political-economic development is now much closer to its Russian past than to the original scheme of the founders of the Soviet state.

Once one perceives the Soviet Union as a "normal," though
hardly attractive, system, one can apply to its analysis the standards of stability or instability known from the studies of other industrial societies. While doing so, however, one should be conscious that many factors which may be marginal in promoting the stability of other types of societies could be of decisive importance in the Soviet case, while marginal factors in the Soviet situation may be decisive in other types of societies. What then, are the most important sources which explain the absence of a crisis of survival in the post-Stalin Soviet Union?

Without doubt, the key issue in answering this question concerns the high visibility of the Soviet coercive apparatus and the historical stabilizing role of Soviet policies of coercion. During the rule of Stalin, Soviet society and elites were virtually paralyzed by a terror that was both massive and unpredictable. The social order under such conditions was that of a cemetery. After Stalin died and Beria, the secret police chief, was eliminated, the KGB apparatus was purged and placed firmly under the control of the party. This raised the question of whether the Soviet system could survive without mass terror.

It did survive. Aside from the crucible of the Second World War, this act of abolition was the greatest test of the stability of the Soviet system. How and why did the Soviet Union survive this test? There are three main reasons. First, for the generations brought up under Stalin and their children, the memory of the Great Terror served for many years — and still
serves today -- as a restraint on unorthodox behavior. These people -- either as a result of direct experience or socialization within the family -- continue to retain an instinctive fear that suggests the wisdom of conventional behavior because of the uncertainty of the future, because of the possibility that mass terror could once again be introduced. In my contact with Russians I have encountered this attitude so often as to make me believe that it is a generalized pattern of behavior that will diminish in intensity only over a very long period of time.

Secondly, while the policy of mass terror was abolished in post-Stalin Russia, the apparatus of terror was simply purged, not dismantled. The Soviet Union without mass terror is still a highly authoritarian and highly coercive police state. The coercive character of the Soviet political system differs from what it was in Stalin's day. There is less coercion. It is more predictable -- one is tempted to say rational. Punishments are now commensurate, by Soviet standards, with the nature and degree of the behavior being punished.

The unpredictability and extreme harshness of Stalin's terror can be best comprehended by real life anecdotes. A camp joke of these times has one prisoner ask another "What is your sentence?" The other prisoner replies "Twenty years." The first prisoner asked "What have you done?" to which the answer is "nothing." The first prisoner replies "That is impossible. For
nothing you get only 10 years." A Soviet Jew whose name is Gitler (the Russian pronunciation of Hitler) is arrested during the War under the suspicion that he is Hitler's relative. A soldier who rolls a cigarette with a piece of a newspaper is arrested for defaming the Great Leader. The piece of newspaper that he used contained the picture of Stalin. Members of a philatelist club were arrested because their hobby of collecting foreign postage stamps was considered as dangerous exposure to foreign propaganda and a sign of potential disloyalty. In the post-Stalin years people are usually punished for "something" real—anti-Soviet views, anti-regime propaganda, contact with foreigners, publication abroad, etc. The punishment is still harsh but it rarely amounts to judicial murder. In the case of incorrigible and well-known dissenters it is more often exile abroad and deprivation of citizenship than disappearance forever in the labor camp system.

The network of police informers that covers the Soviet Union precludes the formation of independent groups that could challenge Soviet power. Moreover, after Khrushchev's ouster the police apparatus was gradually rehabilitated and assumed a growing role in everyday Soviet life. While during the Khrushchev period the visibility and prerogatives of the police were limited, the Andropov succession marks the final stage of the rehabilitation of the KGB as the junior partner of the party apparatus in ruling the Soviet Union. What still remains
unchanged is the exclusion of police methods from intra-elite competition. Party officials do not have their rivals shot.

Moreover, the abolition of the Stalinist terror and its supplanting by a "normal," highly coercive police state diminished the risks of deviant economic behavior, while preserving the dangers of deviant political behavior. The energies of the Soviet working classes, middle class and officialdom were thus channeled not into political activities and spiritual aspirations, but into bribery, corruption and economic crimes. Deviant economic behavior, while costly in economic terms, is not politically very dangerous. It acts as a substitute for political aspirations, and to some extent performs the function of a safety valve for the pent-up dissatisfactions of broad strata of Soviet society.

Finally, the limited impact of the abolition of terror on the stability of the Soviet system indicates that Soviet stability -- both now and even in the Stalinist period -- also depends on factors other than mass terror and a highly coercive police state. These non-coercive dimensions and mechanisms of Soviet stability have come to play a larger role in the post-Stalin era.

Aside from coercive measures, the stability of all political regimes depends on economic performance and on the ability of those regimes to satisfy the material needs of various strata of the society. It must be remembered that this factor is a
relative one: it concerns not the **absolute** level of economic performance, but rather the relation of performance to the expectations of the population. In these terms the system worked well. Soviet economic performance in the post-Stalin era was not radically outdistanced by the rising expectations of the key strata of Soviet society -- the workers, the peasants, and the professional and middle classes. No revolution of rising expectations occurred in the Soviet Union. Due probably to their past experiences and to acquired recognition of the necessity of discounting the promises of the government, the expectations of the Soviet people have remained quite low.

Soviet economic performance in the 1960s and 1970s with regard to the improvement of the popular standard of living was probably not a great deal worse than what the Soviet population expected from the regime. In concentrating on the present serious difficulties of the Soviet economy, it is important to remember that the standard of living -- and the quality of life -- of the Soviet population rose quite substantially in the post-Stalin decades. In the case of the peasantry, this reflects a significant change in leadership attitudes that began under Khrushchev and was accelerated under Brezhnev. While the rural standard of living is still considerably lower than that of the urban dweller, it rose considerably during the 1960s and 1970s and is now commensurate, at least in terms of industrial consumer products, with the urban living standard of 10-12 years ago.
During the last twenty five years, the peasantry has been transformed from the internal colony it was under Stalin into an integrated part of society. The peasant has, in short, become a full-fledged citizen of the Soviet Union.

A number of benefits have accrued to the peasants as a result of this. For the first time in Soviet history they received internal passports which permitted them to travel in the Soviet Union without a special permit. For the first time since collectivization they began to receive social security benefits. Also, for the first time, the peasants' type of remuneration -- which depended entirely on land fertility, the weather, the efficiency of the management, and other local conditions -- designed to relieve the state of any responsibility for peasants' incomes, was tied to a monetary minimum wage guaranteed by the government. The kolkhoz itself was included in the net of government insurance which, at least in part, lifted the burden of a bad harvest from the peasant. In addition, state budgetary investments in agriculture rose dramatically and made possible a much higher level of mechanization in the kolkhozy and much more fertilization and irrigation of farm land.

Yet regardless of the progress in the countryside, the main avenue of improvement for the peasant remained his migration to the cities, which accelerated significantly in the late 1960s and 1970s. In the cities, the peasant enjoys not only a higher standard of living enhanced by government food subsidies, but
also greater access to better education and cultural amenities. The massive peasant migration from the kolkhoz has also resulted in a badly skewed demographic profile in the rural areas. The rural population is now either old or very young and the workforce is dominated by women. Such a peasantry is not likely to be the source of a destabilizing influence. If the countryside is to be the spawning ground of any destabilization in the near future, it will much more likely be the result of poor agricultural performance than peasant discontent.

The urban working class also enjoyed a major improvement in its living conditions over the last twenty years. The industrial worker was the main beneficiary of Brezhnev’s wage policy, including a significant increase in the minimum wage. Better food supplies were made available to the cities, particularly such higher quality items as meat, milk and butter. Consumer goods, and especially consumer durables, became much more readily available. There was also a substantial increase in expenditures for social welfare.

Without doubt, the social strata which have gained the least in material terms during Brezhnev’s tenure are the middle and professional classes. Over the last fifteen years, their real salaries have remained almost constant even as the industrial workers’ wage rose considerably. This was partly the result of a conscious policy of uravnilovka, or wage leveling, meant to decrease the range of income differentiation. However, the level
of wages of these groups is still much higher than that of the working classes and their standard of living not much different from the one prevailing in the West at the beginning of the era of mass consumption, let us say of urban Italy in the 1950s.

In addition, for a significant and most influential part of this stratum, the size of their salaries does not reflect adequately their relative standard of living with Soviet society. They get many non-monetary rewards. They can buy items that are in short supply, due to their proximity to the political elite they can share access to special stores. They are selected from time to time to travel abroad. They can acquire hard currency. Moreover, as will be discussed below, this segment of society has made very real gains in the non-material, professional sphere of their aspirations.

Of course, the standard of living today for every class in Soviet society is much lower than that of their western counterparts, or even their comrades in the Soviet East European bloc. However, what is salient for the Soviet citizen -- and hence crucial for the stability of the system -- is not how this level of material well-being compares with western society which he has never seen, or even how it compares to that of the Soviet political elite, since conspicuous consumption is not displayed in the Soviet media. The benchmark by which the Soviet citizen assesses his standard of living is that of his parents and of his own past. By this point of reference, the Soviet standard of
living shows a marked improvement over the Stalinist period. The Soviet leadership has thus been able to avoid a widening of the gap between economic performance and popular expectations. The widest divergence between standard of living and expectations in Soviet society today is probably within the middle and professional classes. In their case, however, the threat to the stability of the Soviet regime, for reasons which will be discussed below, is probably the lowest. To sum up, in material terms therefore the Soviet regime was able in the entire post-Stalin era to neutralize mass forces of dissatisfaction and unrest. The crucial factor in this respect was the combination of low popular expectations and marked improvements in the overall standard of living.

Another moderating mechanism is the Soviet system of corruption. During the post-Stalin era, virtually everyone participated in and gained from the broad network of unofficial economic activities. The entire na levo network -- the stealing, the bribery, and barter -- operated throughout the 1970s with very limited risks attached and came to function as a means of redistributing the national income. By providing a means for the realization of material expectations outside the official system, this sub-economy offered the trappings, if not the reality, of a higher status to its participants. It also served to maintain the overall Soviet standard of living above its official level.

Another factor promoting stability is the predominantly
lower class origin of the upper political strata in the Soviet Union. Since the working class and the political elite share the same tradition and come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, there results a symmetry of cultural attitudes and tastes cutting across the stratification matrix. This is reflected in the official culture and language of the society.

The Soviet Union is one of the few societies where the mass and the political elite's cultures are almost inseparable. The vocabulary, the idiom, the accent in which political officials address one another and the mass public is identical to that used by the mass public. The Russian-Soviet language as used by a Khrushchev, Brezhnev, or Chernenko represents its primitive lowest common denominator. In cultural terms the political elite and the mass public share anti-intellectualism, preference for highly traditional art forms and for "low brow" literature, art, theater and movies bordering on "kitsch." They share intolerance of cultural experimentation and lack of cultural imagination. They share the traditional Russian sentimentality and the definition of "good life" based on the model of the XIXth century Russian merchant class.

It is only a narrow strata of Soviet intellectuals and some middle level experts and members of the ruling bureaucracy which are attracted to and try to preserve the Russian heritage of "high brow" literature and innovative art. Because of that their isolation from the "people" is vast, and their mutual lack of
respect for each other highly pronounced. The political elite is culturally much more attuned to the taste of the Soviet common man. The political elite looks at the traditional Russian culture — Pepita's ballet, Stanislavsky's theater, Repin's art, Tolstoy's literature, Pushkin's poetry — as an adornment and ornament of their ruling status. They want to preserve their pre-revolutionary rich cultural heritage totally unchanged. At the same time they promote a new Soviet culture which aside from flagrant propaganda is a crossbreed of entertainment and morality play and which is attractive both to them and to the common man.

Still another central factor for stability during the 1960s and early 1970s was the high level of mobility from the working class into the middle and professional classes, and particularly into the political class. (Political class, a term unknown in the West, refers to the professional functionaries of the Soviet Communist Party). This was partly a result of rapid economic development and the expansion of educational institutions, the major channel of this mobility; partly a result of self-selection, whereby the offspring of professional class parents tend to follow in their footsteps, while children of the lower classes are much more prone to enter the political class; and partly a result of deliberate policy aimed at equalizing the educational chances of individuals of middle and lower class origin. Due to all these factors upward mobility in the Soviet Union was quite high. This is demonstrated by the difficulty one
has in finding an extended family in the Soviet Union some members of which do not belong to the official class.

Finally, while the low standard of living in the Soviet Union may make economic inequality seem more obnoxious than in the West, the range of economic stratification is in fact relatively narrow. This was particularly true during the years of the Brezhnev regime, which subsidized basic commodities, improved the economic position of the peasant, raised minimum industrial wages, and increased the standard of living of the worker -- particularly the skilled worker -- while limiting the growth of middle and professional class remuneration. No Soviet citizen found that his neighbor had much more than he did.

Instability, however, can often result from unfulfilled political and spiritual aspirations. No doubt the rise of non-material expectations would present dangers to the system's stability. The most explosive combination would be the merging of the unfulfilled material expectations of the workers or peasants and the spiritual and political aspirations of the intelligentsia. (This was exactly what happened in Poland in 1980 as well as in almost every major political upheaval in the Eastern block since 1945.) It seems clear that non-material expectations and aspirations of various Soviet groups and the population at large differ today in many respects from what they were 20 or 25 years ago. All groups now expect a secure life, free from capricious harassment and from terror. All aspire to
live in a state which preserves a modicum of legality in daily contact with citizens.

The Soviet regime is highly repressive toward any political and spiritual aspirations among its citizenry that depart from established norms. How frequent and extreme is such deviant behavior in the Soviet Union and how successful the Soviet regime is in isolating its carriers? Such behavior is for the most part rare and rather timid. The working (and middle) classes of Soviet society are permeated by a deep sense of resignation towards the existing state of affairs and an extraordinary apathy towards Soviet "high" politics. The working strata in particular exhibit very little in terms of political, cultural, or spiritual aspirations, and those that they do exhibit conform closely to the preferences of the leadership and the political elite. This in itself is a major source of stability, and it would take a major shock to change such attitudes. Moreover, if such a shock did occur, it would most likely be of local origin, a specific intolerable injustice, and the reaction to it would not take the form of organized and directed action, but rather of blind fury, the unleashing of a pent-up proclivity for violence. (Indeed, in the late 1960s and in the 1970s there were a few instances of violent strikes in Russia which were put brutally down by Soviet security forces.) In any event, there is no reason to believe that the values of the Soviet working classes are any less authoritarian, anti-intellectual, or traditional than those of
their political overlords, so such a scenario is highly unlikely.

There is little more to be expected in this regard from the class which the Soviets term the "intelligentsia" and which includes anybody who is not engaged in physical labor. At the outset it should be pointed out that this group has little in common with the two variants of educated class of Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Russia which bore the same name; the first being the democratic intelligentsia of 1840-1860, the other the revolutionary intelligentsia of the post 1860s. Then the term connoted not only educational attainments but also, and most importantly, a critical spiritual and political mold, an alienation from the social and political system, and an adherence to the idea of "the good of the people" that the intelligentsia felt should inform their own activities. This segment of society explicitly rejected the existing socio-political structure and propounded radical, utopian solutions to the shortcomings they perceived.

Nothing could be further from this traditional Russian class than the present Soviet "intelligentsia." With some exceptions, this group is only a statistical category. The Soviet professional class is basically integrated into the system. It does not selflessly champion the cause of "the people" nor, for the most part, do its members advocate radical alternatives to the status quo. In addition, the Soviet "intelligentsia" is
rather isolated from the "simple" people. More often than not, the working people have only thinly disguised anti-intellectual attitudes, while the "intelligentsia" has an only thinly disguised contempt for the "simple" people. This "intelligentsia" is highly materialistic and primarily interested in pursuing a career.

Of course, I am speaking here about the bulk of this class, a class which has grown immensely in the post-Stalin period. Some individuals and small groups in this stratum do resemble the old intelligentsia. This is particularly true within the small segment of this stratum which is designated by the Soviets as the "creative intelligentsia" -- writers, poets, actors, painters, scientists, etc. Yet even within this segment, we are speaking about a small, unorganized layer, or more likely, a collection of individuals. The material improvements of the "intelligentsia's" position in the post-Stalin era, the higher degree of professional autonomy bestowed on them during the Brezhnev era, the disappearance of mass terror and the commensurate increase in private freedoms has only strengthened their inbred conformist attitude. This is a class from which the Soviet regime has little to fear.

The preponderant portion of the creative "intelligentsia" has much more narrowly defined expectations. They aspire to greater but not unlimited artistic freedom. To a state of being in which they can, within limits, experiment in. They expect to
continue to enjoy the advantage of opting out, of engaging safely in artistic pursuits which are neutral to the goals of the regime.

More broadly speaking, the members of the professional class -- including the creative and technical "intelligentsia" as well as various elite groups -- share the expectation that they will never again be isolated from the mainstream of non-socialist world culture. Professional groups expect a greater degree of professional autonomy and aspire to expand still further its limits, to gain greater access to information and data about their own and other societies, and to be able to address the areas of their expertise more freely if only in closed discussions and publications of limited circulation.

These, however, are largely conformist attitudes (certainly in political terms) and they have been significantly reinforced by the gains these groups have made in the post-Stalin era. Today the professionals have reached a critical mass in the Soviet Union. That is to say, their weight has reached a point where collectively they exert a considerable influence on the entire administrative structure. The era of the political dilettante lording over an uneducated, developing society and a semiprofessional, self-taught administrative structure is over. For the first time in Soviet post-war history the role of the professional who is not an integral part of the political bureaucracy became a growing and important factor in Soviet
decision making under Brezhnev. The leap here can be seen to a very limited degree in the "soft" professions of social science, but it is especially evident in economics, managerial sciences, communication, information and processing sciences, and, of course, in the applied technological field. Most importantly, professionals of all branches who are not a part of the public administration have come to serve as consultants and experts in the formulation of the goals and especially the means of Soviet policies in all spheres. This observation holds true not only with regard to the central authorities but also in local administration. The professionals perform their role through direct participation in the decision-making bodies, consultative positions with executive organization, preparation of position papers, and participation in permanent and ad hoc advisory councils.

The broader background and underpinning of the evolving professionalization of Soviet society are provided by the theorists of two new concepts in Soviet ideology: the "scientific-technological revolution" (NTR) and the "scientific management of society" (NUO). The concepts of NTR and NUO assumed during the Brezhnev period a central place in Soviet ideology. The literature on them is already large and growing by leaps. The old Soviet cult of technology centered on the means of production. The new concepts supplement this focus with the cult of scientism in shaping and managing social-economic and
political relations. They proclaim that the optimally effective and profitable ways of managing society should not simply be equated with the existence of a socialist economic system. Such a system is said to provide only propitious potential conditions for achieving optimal growth and profitability. Its realization, however, requires profound understanding, training, and effort which necessitate the upgrading of the role of science, the management of technology, the development of "scientific methods," and the placement of professionals in all spheres of leadership and management. In other words, progress requires not just ideological fervor but professional expertise as well. The Brezhnev era signified a major step in the transition from the revolutionary ethos of Leninism, the leadership ethos of Stalinism, and the populist ethos of Khrushchevism to a professional-administrative ethos.

From the political point of view, while the new professionalism reflects a desire for, and the attainment of, a higher degree of autonomy for professional pursuits than at any previous point in Soviet history since the 1920s, it does not constitute a challenge to the existing system. The Soviet professionals are dissatisfied with many of the regime's policies and features, but are committed to their careers and advancement within the system. As noted above, the most important point about this Soviet "intelligentsia" is precisely that it is not an intelligentsia in the 19th century sense of the term.
That the professional groups or their segments try to influence official policy is amply documented. That they are sometimes successful can also be demonstrated. The question is, however, what policies do they try to influence and when are they successful? First, as a rule, the closer their profession is to the technological sphere and the more removed from the ideological one, the less likely their interests and pressures are to be ignored. Writers, on the one extreme, and scientists, on the other, represents the two poles of permissible freedom and influence. (The gravitation of economists from identification with cultural to scientific spheres is significant here.) Second, the main policy pressures emanating from these groups concern the status of their professions, their share in the allocation of state resources, and their right to a measure of professional autonomy and integrity. In these concerns scientific and technological groups have been very successful during the Brezhnev period. Yet the importance to the Soviet system and society of science and scientists (let alone other professional groups), their success in developing professional integrity and autonomy in basic research, and their proximity to men of power, should not be taken to signify great political influence. While respecting their expertise and responding to their needs, the Soviet politician is unlikely to attribute to them superior insight and wisdom in more broadly defined areas. Since 1969, under the impact of the dissident Sakharov manifesto
and the subsequent defense of his person and position by a number of scientists, the party has shown increasing anxiety about the political and social attitude of scientists and has made attempts to minimize the destabilizing potential of this group. This has been done through considerably tightened supervision of personnel policy in the scientific establishment and an effort to denigrate the expertise of scientists in social and political matters.

However, even without these efforts, the Soviet professional communities are politically fragile. Each "group," as, for example, the sociologists, the computer specialists, but particularly the economists, displays a very broad range of views and opinions concerning the matters on which it advises the political authorities. It is composed of individuals of different generations with different training and diverse institutional associations and career orientations. The choice between conflicting advice and pressures remains with the politicians. To what extent this choice will gravitate from one option to another (market-oriented economic reforms versus mathematization and computerization of centralized planning, civilian versus military stress in scientific research, or a restriction versus the free flow of scientific information across institutional and national borders) may have very important consequences. But this choice depends only marginally on what goes on within the professional groups. It depends decisively on elite goals, elite perceptions of internal and international
opportunities, and the elites' quest for self-preservation.

But what of that segment of the intelligentsia that is not satisfied with its advancement within the system and does not have limited aspirations and conformist attitudes? The emigre dissident Valery Chalidze has contended that active dissent in the Soviet Union represents only a tip of the iceberg: that behind each active dissenter there are scores of hidden dissenters among the intelligentsia and even within the elites, who share their ideas but lack the courage, opportunity, ability or desire to act openly. We cannot know whether Chalidze is correct. In all probability he accurately describes those groups of dissenters who hold the most moderate views. Even if Chalidze were right, however, from the point of view of the regime's stability, a crucial distinction must be made between a small active dissent movement and a large inactive dissenting one. The small active dissent movement can be defeated with relative ease: it can be fragmented, isolated, neutralized. Inactive dissent does not produce instability: its danger to the regime lies in the possibility of its activation under conditions of instability.

Yet one may also argue, as I do, that Chalidze exaggerates the extent of the inactive dissent by identifying it incorrectly as dissent. In light of what has just been said about the raised non-material expectations and aspirations of various groups in Soviet society, it is more probable that what he observed is the
partial coincidence of aspirations of dissenters and "professionals." Yet, these aspirations, especially in their scope and intensity, represent only a small part of the program of the dissenters. Moreover, the dissenters hope to achieve their program through systemic change. In contrast, the various professional groups aspire to realize their limited goals within the system by means of political pressure that results in policy relaxation.

The non-dissident groups and strata do not expect a change of system but rather seek accommodation within it. Moreover, their expectations and, within limits, their aspirations are not neglected by the system's directors. As a matter of fact, their very expectations are based on changes which have already taken place in the post-Stalin era with the willing or grudging support of the leadership. These changes -- towards greater professional autonomy, greater freedom of expression, greater contact with the nonsocialist world -- did not endanger the regime's stability. Indeed, these changes probably had a stabilizing effect on the system by coopting large portions of the professional classes and thereby diminishing the likelihood of broader political demands being made by these groups in the near future. Besides, the implementation of these changes owed perhaps less to pressure from various professional groups than to the coincidence of those pressures with some interests of the leadership itself. The post-Stalin leadership slowly became convinced that the changes

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that the intelligentsia wanted, such as greater professional autonomy, greater contact with experts abroad, stricter division between science, expertise and ideology, could enhance the effectiveness of the system. The crux of the matter for them is to contain the aspirations that they do not infringe on issues which the regime considers crucial to its survival.

It now seems that despite the partial coincidence of the aspirations of professional groups and strata with those of active dissidents, the former do not pose a threat to the system as long as they do not share the dissidents' broader goals and selection of means for their attainment. As Walter Connor has put it:

The political culture links the bureaucratic elite and the 'masses' more closely than it links the dissidents to either. The institutional framework that emerged in the Stalin era fitted rather well with the antecedent political culture of Tsarist Russia at the most critical points, and to all appearances the contemporary Soviet political culture still 'fits' this relatively unchanged institutional pattern quite well.

This discussion of the sources of stability of the Soviet order that flow from the characteristics of the major classes and status strata in the post-Stalin society and their relations with the present Soviet regime leads to a number of conclusions: none of the major classes of Soviet society have posed a political threat to the survival of the regime; the intellectual aspirations of the professional strata were successfully channelled into professional or material preoccupations; political dissent posed a problem for the Soviet leadership.
primarily in the international arena -- domestically, dissent was contained and suppressed; until recently the material expectations of the working classes did not differ drastically from the regime's actual performance; generational differences with Soviet society were contained by a combination of the regime's willingness to let their youth "blow off steam" by a permissive attitude to western cultural forms and the youths' own political cynicism and career orientation; the cleavages that have developed in Soviet society are cross-cutting rather than cumulative: the regime found a common ground with the urban working class in its spiritual aspirations and cultural preferences; the regime redirected the potential spiritual aspiration of the professional strata and creative "intelligentsia" into material and professional channels; the regime was able to preserve the fragmentation of Soviet society, which preserves the boundaries between major classes and groups and limits their intercommunication. Finally the Soviet regime, while denying political freedom to all its citizens, granted them a degree of private freedom unimaginable in the Stalin era. It should be remembered that under Stalin even the family did not provide a sanctuary from thought control and from the necessity to express actively one's support for the regime. After all during the Stalin era the model hero of the youth was a peasant boy, Pavlik Morozov, whose claim to fame consisted in his denunciation of his father's anti-Soviet views to the
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authorities. Morozov is still the official hero of the communist youth organizations. Thousands of monuments to his "achievement" are still preserved or built in Soviet cities, towns and villages. Nevertheless, the freedom of expression within the family and the control by the parents of their offsprings constitutes today a grey area which is not free from state control but where this control is marginal and muted.

Yet our discussion of the sources of stability of the Soviet system, and of the relation between the political regime and society has omitted a category of great salience to the question of stability: the national composition of Soviet society and its relation to the political regime. Only about 50 percent of the Soviet Union's population is composed of Great Russians. Of the remaining 50 percent, about one half is not even Slavic. The whole southern and western tiers of the Soviet Union are inhabited by non-Russian nations. Many of these nations have a recorded history and traditions that go back centuries or even millennia before even the emergence of the Russian nation itself, as for example, the Georgians, the Abkhazians, and the Armenians. It is to the discussion of the relation of these nations to the Soviet political system that we now turn.

In the modern world and especially in the second half of the Twentieth Century, ethno-centricity constitutes one of the major sources of instability in multi-national or multi-racial states. The Soviet Union today is by any standards the largest
multi-national and multi-racial state. The Soviet system of government, with its political, economic and partly cultural supercentralization, permits a characterization of the relations between the Great Russian center and the non-Russian peripheries as imperial. The "internal" Soviet empire (and its "external" empire in East Europe) make the Soviet Union and Russia the largest and last colonial or semi-colonial power in the world.

The main colonial characteristics of this empire are as follows: the centralization of the Party and state bureaucracy with decisive control exercised by the metropolitan center, Moscow; Moscow's prerogative to make budgetary decisions and to distribute key resources for the entire Soviet Union; the lack of ethnic influence on the military and foreign policies of the USSR; the control of Moscow over the "Nomenklatura" appointments within the non-Russian republics (that is to say the right to hire, promote or fire the local party and state officials); the lack of real power of the Supreme Soviet, the Soviet parliament, to which representation is proportional; the limitation of upward career mobility for non-Russian officials, with the partial exception of the Ukrainians, to their own republics; the appointment of Russian, or Slavic, officials to state and party positions within the republics as overseers and controllers; preference for the Russian language in official business and the knowledge of Russian as a prerequisite for advancement.

The potential for instability in the Soviet system due to
ethnic and racial divisions and conflicts is enormous. The Soviet national problem is the most difficult one to resolve without a drastic change of the Soviet system. It is also highly probable that the ethno-racial set of issues will become in the future the single most important cause of disintegration or drastic change of the Soviet system. Yet even in the present age of anti-colonialism, which has witnessed the dissolution of all other large-scale colonial systems, and the reassertion of ethnic interests and political participation the world over, the forces of stability are much more powerful in the Soviet Union with regard to the internal empire than the destructive, centrifugal forces. How can this enduring imperial stability be explained? By what confluence of politics and social processes was it achieved?

First of all, empires do not generally disintegrate when the metropolis is at the peak of its military power, as Russia is today. More specifically, Moscow keeps tight control over the military forces deployed inside the Soviet Union by making sure that the officer corps is predominantly Russian, that the conscripts of any nationality but Russian for the most part do not serve their terms of military duty in their own republic, and that the military forces deployed in the republics are clearly visible to the population.

A key stabilizing force among the ethnic populations is the tight net of KGB supervision. The secret police are attuned to
any manifestation of local nationalism in the non-Russian republics. The toleration of political-national dissidence in these areas has an even lower threshold of intervention than in Russia proper. The republican KGB apparatus is also under the strict control and supervision of Russian representatives.

Another major stabilizing element is the continuing duality of the Soviet nationality policies with regard to the republican administration and culture. It is a policy that on the one hand concentrates the most important elements of political, economic and social-cultural power in Moscow and in the hands of Russian officials, but on the other hand grants the symbols of nationhood to the republics, permits a high degree of local cultural autonomy, and some bureaucratic autonomy.

The symbols and realities of this cultural autonomy -- the preservation and utilization of the native language, native literature, and native folklore -- both on the communal and national level makes the reality of Russian political domination much more palatable to the native population. The data from consecutive post-Stalin censuses show either an increase or at least stability in the native population of non-Russian Union Republics who consider their own language as their primary language. Of course the upwardly mobile individuals in the professional or political class must have a good knowledge of Russian and of the Russian lifestyle and patterns of behavior, but neither they nor, to an even greater extent, the
non-political native population is forced to abandon their own customs, language or cultural heritage. This heritage is of course strongly "adjusted" to exclude anti-Russian traditions, but nevertheless provides the lower and middle classes with an important outlet for ethnocentric feelings.

Yet Russian political and economic control over these areas is manifest. The administration of the non-Russian republics is infiltrated thoroughly by Russian and Slavic officials who keep a check on the native officials. The second party secretary of the republic is always a Slav, as are most of the second secretaries of the provinces, the deputy heads of republican central committee departments, and the deputy ministers of all important ministries. But, while Russians do rule the Soviet Union, with few exceptions bureaucrats of native origin administer the republics on a day to day basis. Especially at the top level, where positions are highly visible and symbolic, and at the lowest levels, where the bureaucracy comes into daily contact with the population, the officials are predominantly of native origin. (In this respect different Union Republics enjoy different degrees of administrative "nativization," with Georgia and Armenia on the high end of the spectrum and Kazakhstan on the low end.) The cultural and administrative privileges which were described above, however, are not available to the same degree to the autonomous republics, most of which are within the Russian Republic proper, such as, for example, the Tartar Autonomous
Republic.

There also occurred during the Brezhnev era a major change in the type of Russian political and economic officials that are asked to serve in the Union republics. Previously they were appointees who came from Russia without any background in the local customs, problems and culture and who were most often specialists in the ideological and propaganda fields. Most recently the officials are either descendants of the Russian settlers in the area or at least have made their way to high positions in the republican bureaucracy after serving for a prolonged time on the lower levels. Moreover, they are mostly specialists in industrial or agricultural management, rather than ideological supervisors.

This trend has been paralleled by a process of Russian cooptation of the native elites. The pattern of their careers within their republics is similar to that of the Russian elites. The rewards of their service are not different from their Russian counterparts. Their socialization through secular and party education is similar to that of the Russian elites. The native political and administrative elites are tested and tried, and usually occupy their offices longer than their Russian counterparts. In most cases they are sufficiently Russified to satisfy the Russians, and yet retain sufficient ties with the local culture and custom to be seen by the native population as their "own" leaders. The most important thing denied by Moscow
to these native elites is the chance of advancement to the central apparatus in Moscow. For the overwhelming majority of the native elites, their careers begin and end within the borders of their own republic. (This, incidentally, is the reason that they display greater horizontal mobility than the Russian, and partly Ukrainian elites, that is to say, move more often than their Russian counterparts from one job to another at the same level, and from one bureaucratic hierarchy -- political, economic, administrative, police -- to another.)

The participation of the non-Russian republics in the process of Soviet economic modernization, particularly in the post-Stalin era, also served to mitigate the centrifugal forces in the Soviet Union. Industrial and agricultural development in the politically important non-Russian regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia, was faster overall than in Russia proper. Under the impact of economic growth and political modernization, the traditional national patterns of authority have declined radically, while at the same time, the familial and communal patterns of authority have been preserved to a surprising degree. The far-reaching erosion of the national patterns of authority and their integration into the centralized Soviet state reinforce the Russian political and economic control of these areas while the preservation of a large degree of traditional authority patterns on the familial and communal level provides a safety valve for the ethnocentric identity and aspirations of the
native population in these regions.

The stability of these areas has been further buttressed by the benefits accruing from more recent Soviet economic policy. This policy includes an increased commitment to the general development of the non-Russian republics; efforts to increase wages, particularly in the agricultural sector, in the Caucasus and Central Asia; and a greater tolerance for the activities of the "Second Economy" and generally for "private initiative" in the republics as compared to Russia proper. As a result, the indigenous populations in these areas have a higher standard of living than that of the Russian peasant. (I suspect that the relatively greater accessibility to a wide variety of low cost foodstuffs is also explained by the better climatic conditions in those areas compared to Russia proper, and the lack of necessary transportation, storage and refrigeration infrastructure that would make the native produce more accessible to the northern regions of the Soviet Union. They cannot sell what they grow in Moscow so they keep it.)

Moscow's efforts to maintain its dominance over the internal empire are aided by the traditional divisions and animosity among the non-Russian republics. Conflict and competition in the process of allocating resources exacerbates these differences. The Russians are well aware of these ethnic animosities and often attempt to foster them through budgetary procedures, forced migration patterns, and appointment to political and economic
offices. The upshot of this is a competition among the ethnically diverse local elites for Moscow's favor and a lack of unified pressure on the center.

The nations of the Soviet Union and their elites are not equal in their importance for the preservation of the Soviet "internal" empire and in their potential effect on the ethnocentric tendencies in the empire. The Slav population of the Soviet Union (that is the Ukrainians and Byelorussians in addition to the Russians) is of decisive importance. Because of their size -- about a quarter of the Soviet population, their location on the western borders of the Soviet Union, and their contribution to the economic and military might of the Soviet Union, the non-Russian Slavs are a decisive factor in the maintenance of the Soviet "internal" empire. Fortunately for Moscow, it is the Slavs of the Soviet Union that are most Russified and whose cultural patterns are most similar to those of the Russians. In addition, the Slav elites are treated differently by Moscow than the elites of other nationalities, with partial exception of the Armenians. The Ukrainians and Byelorussians are often elevated to the central elite in Moscow (the latest example being the appointment of the Ukrainian trade minister Vatchenko to the post of Minister of Trade of the USSR) and are well represented in many central hierarchies, including Gosplan, the Army, and the KGB. Moreover, it is the non-Russian Slavs who in part perform the supervisory role of controlling the
non-Slavic elites in their republics. As long as the junior partnership of the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians with the Russian Moscow establishment survives intact, the sheer weight and power of such a coalition is sufficient to prevent any irredentist aspirations of the non-Slavs from getting out of hand.

In the final analysis, the stability of a regime depends on the strength of its legitimacy as perceived by the population at large and the system elites. Stability depends on the extent and intensity of support for the structure, goals and policies of the regime. At the two extremes, delegitimization occurs either in a condensed crisis situation such as war, or through a gradual process of erosion and decline. The question of legitimacy is especially important for revolutionary regimes that have ostensibly broken with traditional patterns of authority and, as in the case of the Soviet Union, still draw on the revolution itself as a key source of legitimacy.

When one speaks of legitimacy, most often its meaning conveys the extent of the regime's popular support. Does the Soviet regime in the post-Stalin era possess such support? I would argue that despite the impression (probably accurate) that the popular legitimacy of the Soviet regime has declined, especially in the last 5-6 years, the regime still enjoys both significant popular support and, as importantly, the absence of strong opposition. There are a number of factors that both
explain and illustrate this situation.

The Soviet regime benefits from the lack of democratic tradition in its own and its tsarist past. Authoritarianism still remains the only model of rule with which the Soviet population on masse has any experience. As a matter of fact, there are many indications that the erosion of popular legitimacy in recent years is connected not with any democratic yearning of the Soviet populace, but with the lack of strong rule and order. The popular desire for a strong boss in the last years of Brezhnev's rule were unmistakable. This lack of democratic tradition and desire for strong rule is not limited to the lower classes but is also prevalent among the professional strata and especially in the bureaucratic hierarchies.

Implicit, and sometimes even explicit, in the views of the professional strata (including even parts of the dissent movement at home and abroad) are a contempt for and isolation from the working classes, a fear that democracy would give license to the worst instincts of the popular mass, and a belief that a disintegration of the Soviet regime in its present form would reawaken the popular violence that has flared up so often in Russian history. There is, in short, a widely shared conviction that Russia is not ready for democracy.

Where the legitimacy of a regime is concerned, all people are not equal. Even in western democracies, popular legitimacy rests on the active support of a part of the population and the
political apathy of the rest of the population. In the Soviet Union, the active support for the regime similarly comes only from a part of the population. It is the part that actively participates in the political process on the central level or in the Soviet political, economic, cultural micro-institutions. This part of the population is not small at all if one considers that it is concentrated in the communist party, which includes almost one third of the adult male urban population, and includes the activists of the numerous Soviet intermediary associations and organizations such as the local Soviets, the Komsomol, the Trade Unions, and other organizations. They and the political apathy of the rest of the population concerning "high" politics, underwrite the regime as it exists today.

Despite its revolutionary origin, the Soviet Union began relatively early to utilize and promote the symbols of traditional Russian legitimacy. Overall, the Soviets were successful in tapping the sources of traditional legitimacy -- Russian nationalism, Russian international ambitions, and Russian messianic views on their national and international mission. To a very large extent, the official Soviet world view is a result of the fusion of Marxist-Leninist ideology and Russian nationalism and messianism. In a specific way the official Soviet outlook also constitutes a reconciliation of the Slavophile and Westernizing streams in Russian political thought. Because of its traditional Russian sources popular
legitimacy in the Soviet Union is strongest among the Russian population and weaker among the non-Russians and non-Slavs. The attempt to identify Russian nationalism with Soviet patriotism is only moderately successful. The political acquiescence of the population, is also based on the dramatic and overwhelming sense of a lack of alternatives. Moreover, the Soviet authoritarian system requires much less support than democratic systems, and can function and survive even with only limited active support. The foundations of the Soviet system rest on both power and authority, but their mix is different than in democratic societies, being skewed in favor of power over authority.

Finally, the strength of Soviet popular legitimacy in the post-Stalin era, while not tested through many major crises or traumatic events, has nevertheless passed some tests: the death of Stalin itself and the end of personal dictatorship and mass terror, Khrushchev's anti-Stalin campaign, and, last but not least, the emergence and development of political dissent in the Soviet Union. The continuity of Soviet power after Stalin's death has been uninterrupted. The preservation of mass political obedience despite the abolition of mass terror was never in question. The destabilizing effects of the anti-Stalin campaign were clear, but exactly because of their negative effects from the leadership's point of view, the campaign was abandoned relatively quickly and without major domestic repercussions. Finally, the Soviet leadership and its coercive mechanism were
able to isolate and neutralize the political dissent movement so successfully that today, within the Soviet Union, it is only a shadow of its own post-Stalin past. There is little doubt in my mind that Soviet political dissent is of greater importance for the Soviet Union's image, prestige and goals abroad, than it is at home.

It would be a mistake to exaggerate the strength of Soviet popular legitimacy. Such legitimacy is without doubt much weaker than in traditional societies or modernized democratic societies. Yet it is important to note that a regime's legitimacy defines not only the extent of its popular support, but also the ability of the elites to rule and extract obedience on issues where the popular support is low. The relative thinness of Soviet popular legitimacy is counter-balanced by the enormous powers of coercion, control, and manipulation at the disposal of the regime. In a future time of major trouble or protracted crisis, the limitations of Soviet popular legitimacy may pose a serious threat to survival for the Soviet regime. However, in the face of the "normal" challenges of everyday life, as long as the will to rule of the Soviet leadership and political elite remains as strong as it is today, the continuation of Soviet authoritarianism is assured.

One must also recognize that the legitimacy of regimes has another dimension, as important or perhaps even more important than popular legitimacy. This is the regime's legitimacy among
the system's elites. From the time of the writings of the great sociologists of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, and especially Pareto, it has been recognized that conditions of stability are to a large extent also a function of the situation within the elite of the society. While Pareto stressed particularly the elite's will for power as a key indicator of legitimacy, Marx and Weber stressed the unity of the various functional elites. The insight of these classic writers has been confirmed by the entire experience of communist regimes. It is now an accepted axiom that in almost all cases of critical instability in East European communist countries, the decline of the will to rule and the internal divisions and conflict within the elite structure were the condition and the harbinger of the ensuing events.

The elite legitimacy of the Soviet system has been tempered by several aspects of the Soviet experience: the longevity of the regime's existence, its survival of the tests of World War II, the elite's ability to fuse its revolutionary doctrine with great power nationalism to form a domestically conservative ideology to which all subscribe, the cohesion of the Soviet elites against the outside world, and their commitment to the preservation of their empire and the advancement of their global ambitions. Despite the obvious differences of particular interests among the various Soviet functional elites, all these factors make it very unlikely that long lasting divisions will emerge among the
leadership and elites which bring into question the institutional mainstays of the system or which prevent the elites from providing mutual support should a popular threat to the existing relations arise.

In the past and at the present divisions between diverse elite groups, such as the military elite and the top party bureaucracy do emerge. They were very clear during the times of Khrushchev and reappeared in the last few years. These differences did not concern, however, division about the nature of the system and the future of its major institutions but primarily of the mundane questions of resource allocation. In the early 1960s Khrushchev reduced the size of the armed forces by about 15 percent (one could see at that time erstwhile army officers driving Moscow taxis). Obviously the Army high command was opposed to such a move. Khrushchev opposed and ridiculed the need to build Soviet aircraft carriers. Obviously the Navy High Command disagreed with such a decision. The recently removed chief of the Soviet General Staff, citing the dangerous state of Soviet-American relations, stresses the need for continuing growth of military expenditures. Some party leaders, however, such as Andropov in his time, or even the "political" Defense Minister Ustinov, are concerned with reconciling the needs of the military with necessary increases in industrial investments and keeping at least unchanged the popular consumption standards. These and other squabbles and conflicts have not put into
question the basic authoritarian and party dominated formula of the Soviet system.

It seems clear that in the post-Stalin era, the will to power and the commitment to the existing system of the political elite and leadership has remained unshaken. While the elites have been conscious of the many short-comings, primarily economic ones, of the regime, they still consider their rule as just and superior to that of western democracies, and best suited for Russia and its "internal" and "external" empire. In their belief in the overall propriety and justness of their system Soviet elites do not differ substantially from other authoritarian elites which "know" that what they are doing is in the best interest of their country and superior to the "decadence" of western democracies. Of course, their and the sub-elite's affirmation of support for the system reflects the fusion of their power interests and their psychological need of self-esteem. (This need, known in social psychology as "cognitive dissonance," pushes individuals to assign positive, disinterested valuation to their actions which could be actually explained by greed or power seeking.)

The divisions within the political leadership and among various functional elites were quite sharp during the Khrushchev period and his anti-Stalin campaign. To some extent, these divisions and conflicts represented differences of opinion concerning the evaluation of the past, the attitude toward Soviet
tradition, and the image of the just and efficacious regime. Without doubt these divisions and conflicts weakened Soviet stability and were a decisive factor in the almost total unity of the Soviet leadership and functional elites in engineering and accomplishing Khrushchev's ouster in the fall of 1964.

The first steps of the Brezhnev regime were to end the anti-Stalin campaign, to reaffirm the elites' acceptance of and devotion to their past traditions, and to restore the structural configuration of Soviet power and administration shaken by Khrushchev's innovations and his impulsive and chaotic reorganizations. Throughout its existence, the Brezhnev regime put the utmost premium on the stability of the elite system, continuity of elite rule, and compromise resolution of conflicts. Leadership and elite unity, and the resolution of differences of interest and policy through bargaining and compromise were cardinal characteristics of Brezhnev's style. The conflicts and differences of opinion within the leadership and among the various functional elites concerned not, as at times during the Khrushchev period, the basic questions of justice, ideology, and regime goals, but only instrumental questions of resource allocations, regime efficiency, and power distribution among the elites and within the leadership.

The Soviet regime under Brezhnev can best be described as a stable oligarchy directing stable bureaucratic hierarchies in the quest for material progress, national security, and international
influence. While Khrushchev's leadership granted the Soviet elites security of life by abolishing mass terror, Brezhnev's leadership granted the bureaucratic elites security of office. The turnover of high office holders among all Soviet functional elites was lower than at any time in Soviet history. The process of policy-making through bargaining and compromise can be said to have been institutionalized under Brezhnev. Indeed, towards the end of Brezhnev's rule, the potential danger to the stability of the regime was developing not from the disunity of leadership and elites, but rather from bureaucratic immobilism and inertia, which threatened the efficiency and performance of the system, and created the danger of its stagnation.

The Soviet political elite is, of course, not a homogenous body. It joins varied interests, diverse outlooks and sympathies. During times of internal crisis and severe stress it tends to divide. Yet the core beliefs about the system permeate the elite as a whole. When speaking about the groups and interests in Soviet society, there is an understandable tendency to concentrate on conflict among different groups. This, after all, is the element of experience which gives groups their uniqueness and variety. But when considering the interaction of elite groups in the Soviet Union, it is important to suggest that it refers to a relationship among groups which fundamentally accept the system while competing for advantages within it. The difference on this score between the Soviet political elite and
communist elite of East Europe is as striking as the difference between the Soviet and East European societies. Still the stability of the Soviet system is in some areas very narrowly based. It relies heavily on the "visible" hand of political control, administrative organization and conscious manipulation and intervention; and depends far less than in the West on the "invisible" processes of socialization, tradition, and internalized controls. This kind of stability may be severely tested in the decade to come.