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TITLE: THE POLITICS OF EMPIRE: A THEORY WITH
AN APPLICATION TO THE SOVIET CASE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Paul Kennedy's book on The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (Random House, 1987) had reminded a wide readership that geopolitical overextension has been the self-inflicted fate of the imperial powers. The present report, based on a forthcoming book, locates the sources of Kennedy's "imperial overstretch" in the domestic politics of the great powers.

Though all of these powers have shown a penchant for overextension, some have been much more extreme in this regard than others. A review of the experience of five great powers suggests that overextension has been greatest when the political system has been dominated by logrolling among groups having a parochial interest in empire. Imperial Germany and Japan are such cases. Expansion has been more moderate when such imperialist cartels have been controlled either from above, by a strong unitary leadership, or from below, by a democratic electorate. The Soviet Union exemplifies the former pattern; the United States and Britain, the latter.

The present report examines only the Soviet case in any detail. It argues that the Soviets have been most expansionist when Soviet politics was most dominated by the logrolling of military and ideological interest groups. Gorbachev, however, is attempting to regain control over these groups by strengthening both the center and the grassroots vis-a-vis these imperialist cartels. If he succeeds, the Soviet expansionist impetus should diminish.
Great Powers in the industrial age have shown a striking proclivity for self-inflicted wounds. Highly advanced societies with a great deal to lose have sacrificed their blood and treasure, sometimes risking the survival of their state, as a consequence of their overly aggressive foreign policies. Two states, Germany and Japan, proved so self-destructive that they wound up in receivership. Most of the other great powers, including the United States and the Soviet Union, have exhibited similar tendencies from time to time, but they were better able to learn from the adverse reaction that their aggressive behavior provoked.

The great industrial powers have punished themselves in two related ways: self-encirclement by provoking an overwhelming opposing coalition, and imperial overextension, that is, persistent expansion into the hinterland beyond the point where rising costs begin to outstrip declining benefits. I will discuss each in turn in this introductory section, but since I argue that they have common roots, I will often refer to them jointly as overexpansion.

A basic principle of the balance of power is that the most aggressive states make the most enemies.\footnote{Realist theory has been ambiguous about whether states balance against the most powerful state or the most threatening state, taking into account both power and intentions. Stephen Walt, \textit{The Origins of Alliance} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), argues for the latter view unambiguously and persuasively.} Self-encirclement is what results when an indiscriminately aggressive power threatens so many of its neighbors that they all coalesce against it. When this occurs, those
powers that are least capable of self-evaluation may embark on "preventive" war to break the ring of encirclement. But if the balance of power works as it normally does, this attempted breakout will entail high risks and a low probability of success. Indeed, the more the aggressor succeeds, the more he will find overwhelming power ranged against him. For example, at the outset of war in 1914, Britain, France, and Russia enjoyed a three-to-two advantage over Germany and Austria in most indicators of industrial capacity. Though Germany succeeded in knocking Russia out of the war, that ratio climbed to five-to-two once the United States joined in.² Likewise, in the Second World War, Germany, Japan, and Italy provoked an opposing coalition that was by 1943 outstripping them three-to-one in armaments production.³

States that are better learners may provoke an encirclement, but then shy away from war or even begin to appease some of their enemies. Britain, for the most part, has been a good learner and an astute appeaser, which explains, in Paul Kennedy's phrase, "why the British Empire lasted so long."⁴ Though Lord Palmerston flirted with the idea of expanding the Crimean War into a world war to

extinguish Russian power permanently, when neutral powers and Palmerston's own allies objected, the British Cabinet forced him to sign a compromise peace. Likewise, Britain's aggressive colonial expansion in the scramble for Africa left her at odds with every major European power by the turn of the century. Calculating the disastrous erosion of the naval balance that this could cause, Britain quickly ended her "splendid isolation," settling disputes with Japan, France, and Russia, and thereby strengthening her hand in the competition with Germany.

Despite this astute interlude, Britain did not remain immune from the lure of overextension. One of the reasons that Neville Chamberlain had to appease Hitler at Munich was that so much of Britain's strength was frittered away throughout a far-flung empire. So pervasive is the phenomenon of overextension that even the arch-appeasers and arch-retrenchers turn out to suffer from it.

Another state with a mixed record of overassertiveness, but quick learning is the Soviet Union. Belligerent behavior in the Berlin crises, the Korean War, and the Sino-Soviet rift has provoked an array of potential enemies that outnumber the Warsaw Pact by more than three-to-one in

5. This is argued most vigorously by Winfried Baumgart, The Peace of Paris, 1956 (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1981), though note the qualifications that I add in the British chapter, below.
national income. The Soviets have been good learners in
the short run, however, following each of their
counterproductive militant phases with attempts to defuse
opposition through self-restraint and overtures toward
detente.

The handmaiden of self-encirclement is often imperial
overextension. Aggressors get into trouble not only because
they provoke balancing coalitions of other great powers, but
also because they get stuck in quagmires in the hinterland.
Up to a point, imperial expansion may be a paying
proposition for a strong power. Sometimes resources and
markets can be gained more cheaply and more reliably by
military than by economic means. The historical experience
of all empires shows, however, that at some point the costs
of additional expansion begin to outstrip its benefits.

Easy, nearby targets that yield a high return are exhausted.
Logistical burdens of further expansion rise, making it
easier for an opposing coalition to impose heavy costs by
resisting expansion.

All of the industrial great powers have expanded past
the point where marginal costs equal marginal revenue. Even

7. Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of
8. On Soviet learning, see Marshall Shulman, Stalin's
Soviet defusing tactics, see Deborah Welch Larson, "Crisis
Prevention and the Austrian State Treaty," International
Organization 41:1 (winter 1987), 27-60.
9. Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics
the terms "empire" or "imperial", I mean any expansionist
Great Power.
Britain had its Boer War and its repeated forays into Afghanistan, in the face of repeated lessons that this remote land was beyond the perimeter of Britain's sustainable power. Britain, however, was an explicit calculator of the marginal costs and revenues of expansion and almost always learned to retrench in the face of negative feedback.\textsuperscript{10} Similarly, the Vietnam war touched off over a decade of inflation, starved America's regular military forces of funds, demobilized domestic support for America's global role, sowed dissention in NATO, and encouraged Soviet geopolitical assertiveness in the 1970s. Thus, the war caused most of the outcomes that it was designed to forestall. As a consequence, Americans fairly quickly learned that Vietnam, and many other places in the Third World, were beyond America's sustainable perimeter of empire.\textsuperscript{11}

Though Britain and America were good learners, Japan learned its lessons about overextension backwards. Japan strove to conquer China in order to have an autarkic military-industrial base. But already by 1937, the China quagmire was in fact eating up Japan's industrial base, diverting expenditures from industrial investment into

\textsuperscript{10} Examples of such calculations may be found in Malcolm Yapp, \textit{Strategies of British India, 1798-1850} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 335, 341-3.

\textsuperscript{11} This is apparent in Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's exclusionary criteria for the use of american military forces abroad (FY87 DOD Annual Report, 78-9.)
current military consumption. But unlike Britain, Japan did not appease and retrench. Instead, she gambled on still more expansion to cut off supplies to China and to conquer resources for Japan even further afield, in Southeast Asia. As a consequence, Japan wound up both in a hinterland quagmire in China and with an overwhelming great power enemy, the United States, ranged against her.

In short, two basic dynamics of international politics -- the balance of power and the diminishing returns to expansion -- exact harsh penalties on overly aggressive states. All of the great powers of the industrial era, to one extent or another, have acted in defiance of those equilibrating forces. Some of them -- Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States -- have been relatively quick to liquidate self-defeating overexpansion. Others -- Germany and Japan -- provoked encirclement by belligerence and then sought security through still further aggression.

EXPLAINING OVEREXPANSION

I want to examine four explanations for this endemic proclivity towards self-punishing aggressiveness and for variations in its intensity: international anarchy, cognitive processes, interest-group ideology, and coalition politics and ideology. Each of them has different implications for how to control the aggressive inclinations

of states and how to stabilize international politics. If, as traditional Realism argues, the problem is insecurity bred by the anarchy of the international system, then the solution is to mitigate anarchy's effects by devising ways to make all states more secure. If, as the cognitive explanation holds, the problem lies in mental shortcuts that skew statesmen's perceptions of their international environment, then the solution is simply to point out these biases to the statesmen, who will adjust their thinking to take account of them. But if, as interest-group and coalition-politics explanations hold, misperceptions of the international environment are the consequences of an ideological struggle to determine who governs society in whose interest, then the solution is to lay bare the roots of the myths and organize politically against the mythmakers.

In this section, I will briefly sketch the four explanations before turning to a fuller rendering of each of them.

The first explanation, called Realism by its adherents, argues that the costs and risks of aggression are unavoidable in an anarchical international environment that forces states to use warlike means to guarantee their own security. The more vulnerable states are to the depredations of others, the more aggressive states must
become, if only in self-defense. But this explanation founders on the Realists' own argument that states typically form balancing alliances to resist aggressors. Therefore, at least in the long run, the balance of power that arises out of international anarchy punishes aggression; it does not reward it.

Many statesmen, however, have accepted the view that security requires aggressiveness and expansion. Seeing the world as a place in which the balance of power fails to operate, they envision falling dominoes, neutrals jumping on the bandwagon with a rising aggressor, and paper-tiger enemies collapsing when attacked but becoming strong and voracious when appeased. Such views, for the most part erroneous, have been endemic among the great powers. They have been most extreme among the most aggressive and self-defeating great powers, Germany and Japan.

Three alternative explanations, challenging traditional Realism's assertion that aggressiveness is a necessary response to anarchy, contend that the belief in security through aggressiveness is based on misperceptions. They disagree, however, about the source of these misperceptions. A cognitive explanation suggests that paper-tiger images of the opponent and misconceptions of the balance of power are

14. See Stephen Van Evera, "Causes of War" (Berkeley dissertation, 1984), and Deborah Larson, "Defining Interests: The Bandwagon Metaphor in American Foreign Policy" (Columbia University, manuscript, August 1987).
caused by inherent biases in the information that is most readily available to the statesman or by biases in the lessons and analogies that come to mind most readily in interpreting this information.\textsuperscript{15} I will argue, however, that the main sources of bias in tasks like the gathering of information about the enemy or the selection of lessons to be drawn from the past are social and political, not cognitive.

Another explanation contends that strategic misconceptions are propagated by interest groups that benefit disproportionately from expansionism or militarism. By justifying their parochial interests in terms of national security, they seek to pass the costs of aggressive policies onto society as a whole. The more powerful and persuasive such groups are, the more the state will be inclined toward self-defeating aggression.\textsuperscript{16}

Herein lies a paradox, however. Very powerful interests, such as "the ruling class," have a major stake in the long-run health of the society as a whole, and thus have


\textsuperscript{16} The progenitor of this line of argument is J. A. Hobson, \textit{Imperialism}. Closer to my own formulation of it is Van Evera, "Causes of War." My use of the terminology of rent-seeking cartels to describe imperialist interest groups derives from Mancur Olson, \textit{The Rise and Fall of Nations} (New Haven: Yale, 1982).
only a limited incentive to milk society for short-run parochial gain. Conversely, groups with very narrow interests lack the power or authority to harness the state for their own ends. Thus, the role of propaganda, especially the selling of strategic myths like the domino theory, is indispensable for explaining how parochial interests hijack national policy. Even this may be problematic, however, since interest-group propaganda is often transparent and suspect.

A final explanation contends that parochial interests gain control over national policy by joining in logrolled coalitions, in which each group gets what it wants most and costs are diffused to society through taxes imposed by the state. Logrolling by its nature pays off concentrated groups interests and ignores diffuse interests, like taxpayer interests, which are hard to organize.17 Since interests in expansion and militarism are typically more concentrated than interests opposed to them, expansionism that rewards interest groups, but hurts society, is more likely whenever ruling coalitions are formed by logrolling. In all of the cases examined in this book, overexpansion was more extreme than that preferred by any individual group, due to the compounding of separate imperial programs through the logrolling process.

Strategic mythmaking plays a role in the making of imperial coalitions, as a result of jockeying for advantage by interest groups comprising the coalition or as a result of the coalition leader's attempts to justify the overcommitments that are endemic to the logrolling process. Indeed, the selling of myths is easier for coalition leaders than for individual interest groups because the instruments and credibility of the state can be harnessed to the task, and because self-serving strategic arguments are less traceable to the parochial interests that benefit from them.

Logrolling is a feature of most political systems, but when it is the dominant feature, self-defeating expansion is more extreme. This was the case in Germany and Japan, where the social consequences of late industrialization gave rise to logrolling among narrow interest groups, producing overcommitted expansionist policies and extreme imperialist ideologies. In contrast, the democratic systems of early industrializers like the United States and Britain strengthened diffuse interests opposed to overexpansion.

The comparatively unitary political system of the Soviet

Union, whose origins lay in the dynamics of "late, late" industrialization, strengthen the encompassing perspective of the top leadership, which has little incentive to take a parochial view of the costs and benefits of empire. Consequently, in both democratic and unitary systems, self-defeating aggressiveness has been more limited and strategic myths have been less extreme than in systems dominated by logrolling among cartels.

THE SOVIET CASE

The Soviet Union has been a moderately expansionist power, occasionally provoking the formation of balancing coalitions, but learning to retrench in the face of effective opposition. Since its early days, Bolshevik foreign policy has taken a militant stance toward the capitalist great powers, believing that the revolution in Russia could be secure only with the triumph of revolution in the more advanced countries. Thus, the Soviet Russia was born believing in security through expansion. Xenophobic security fears were subsequently exacerbated by Stalin's rhetoric linking internal and external threats as a motivating tactic in the campaigns to collectivize agriculture, industrialize at breakneck speed, and purge "spies, enemies, and wreckers."

Despite this, Soviet foreign policy in the 1920s and 1930s remained quite moderate. Despite the revolutionary rhetoric of the Comintern, hyped up in 1928 to coincide with
the militant domestic rhetoric of the First Five-Year Plan, actual foreign policy followed the defensive principles of "socialism in one country." Stalin, like Lenin before him, counted on intense rivalries among the capitalist states to buy time for the development of Soviet power. As early as 1925, Stalin held the view that if war comes "we shall have to take action, but we shall be the last to do so in order to throw the decisive weight into the scales." The Soviet Union could avoid early embroilment in a conflict by building up a military deterrent and by avoiding provocations that could give a pretext for an attack. Vis-à-vis both Germany and Japan, Stalin tried for the most part to be both militarily strong and diplomatically conciliatory. Thus, Stalin exploited the incentives for buckpassing in a multipolar balance-of-power system, adopting a hedgehog posture in order to deflect conflict in other directions.

After the Second World War, Soviet foreign policy showed a greater tendency toward overexpansion, though it

21. Even the exception proves the rule. Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov's collective security policy can easily be explained as an attempt to lure France into a direct fight on Germany's border, while the Soviet Union would be buffered from significant involvement by the barrier of Polish territory. The most insightful analyses of this situation are Telford Taylor, Munich (Garden City: doubleday, 1979), 452-6, and Barry Posen, "Competing Images of the Soviet Union," World Politics 39:4 (July 1987), 579-604. I discuss this issue in greater detail in "Offense, Defense, and Deterrence in the Twentieth Century," in Harold Jacobson, William Zimmerman, and Deborah Yarsike, eds., Adapting to SDI, forthcoming.
retained an ability to learn well from its failures. Three times -- Stalin's intensification of the Cold War, Khrushchev's missile diplomacy, and Brezhnev's Third World expansionism -- aggressive Soviet actions unified the opposing camp, provoked it to intensify its military preparations, alienated neutrals and socialist allies, and wasted scarce Soviet economic resources. Three times the Soviets learned at least temporarily to retrench from their aggressive stance in order to demobilize the opposing forces that their actions had conjured up. And in the third of these episodes of learning, it seems that Gorbachev and his supporters may have learned a deeper, perhaps more permanent lesson about the counterproductiveness of militancy and expansionism.

Consequently, what needs to be explained about the Soviet case is (1) the lack of significant overexpansion before World War II, and Stalin's adoption of a hedgehog strategy, (2) the three periods of moderate overextension after 1945, (3) the relative effectiveness with which the Soviets learned to retrench from these bouts of overextension and self-encirclement, and (4) initial signs of the qualitatively different character of Soviet strategic learning in the Gorbachev period.

Changes over time in Soviet strategic concepts correlate with the Soviets' degree of inclination toward overexpansion. Stalin's pre-war hedgehog strategy was based on the concepts of a very hostile West, but few
opportunities to pursue this zero-sum competition through offensive action. In contrast, post-war overexpansion was fueled first by Andrei Zhdanov's notions of a hostile West and many offensive opportunities, and subsequently by Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's concept of offensive detente. In this latter view, the West was a paper tiger, aggressive but also susceptible to being lulled or overawed into surrendering its positions of strength in the global competition. Finally, interludes of retrenchment, above all the Gorbachev period, coincided with the rise the belief that Western hostility is contingent on Soviet provocations, and that offensive opportunities are scarce.

International-systemic explanations help account for Stalin's pre-war balance-of-power strategy and for post-war periods of retrenchment. The more expansionist periods, however, are harder to explain in terms of rational adaptation to the incentives posed by the international system. Even in the periods in which Soviet policy was astute, it is worthwhile asking what domestic political conditions allowed this relatively clear-sighted strategy.

The most popular cognitive theory explaining Soviet overexpansion and subsequent retrenchment is the "Bolshevik operational code," a particular brand of offensive tactics ostensibly inculcated by Bolshevism's formative
experiences. But this theory fits poorly with the actual practice of Soviet grand strategy up to the first Berlin crisis. Thus, the Bolshevik operational code makes its first clear-cut appearance thirty years after the events that supposedly caused it, at a time when almost all of the old Bolsheviks except Stalin were already dead.

Domestic political structure offers a more satisfactory explanation of both the general moderation of Soviet expansionism and its more assertive episodes. Russia's pattern of "late, late" development was different in kind, not just in degree, from German "late" development. Russia was so backward that its old social structure was largely swept away under the pressure of war and revolution triggered by competition with more advanced societies. The Bolshevik revolution and Stalin's subsequent "revolution from above" replaced it with the strong, centralized political institutions needed to force through the social, economic, and military development that could make Russia a viable competitor on the international scene. Whereas "late" development, characterized by industrial cartels financed by bank capital and an atavistic military-agricultural elite unintegrated into the industrial economy, produced a cartelized political system, Russia's "late,

"late" development produced a unified political system, dominated by a relatively unified Bolshevik political oligarchy capped by a personal dictator.

Unlike the particularistic logrolling of elite cartels in the "late" system, elites in the "late, late," unitary polity had relatively encompassing foreign-policy interests. It is true that the Bolshevik elite as a whole had a parochial interest in the inflation of foreign threats and the glorification of world-wide revolutionary aims, which helped to legitimate their power. But the ruling elite in a unitary system had a strong incentive to distinguish clearly in their own minds between these rhetorical appeals and excessively expansionist behavior, which might provoke foreign intervention that would threaten their survival. To the extent that the "late, late" polity was a unitary system dominated by an elite group with relatively encompassing interests, there was little incentive for overexpansion and little opportunity for imperialistic or militaristic cartels to hijack national policy.

However, after the Second World War and especially after the death of Stalin, the party, industrial, and military institutions created by Stalin's revolution from above increasingly acted as interest groups, using the militant, mobilizing rhetoric of the First Five-Year Plan to advance their own, parochial policy agendas. The creation of a ruling coalition within the Politburo increasingly had to take into account the need to logroll these interests,
which were often militaristic and expansionist, and also to integrate them into the less militant perspectives of another rising constituency, the cultural and technical intelligentsia. Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's concepts of offensive detente, which worked at home but not abroad, were ideologies that tried to reconcile proponents of three sets of irreconcilable interests: (1) party ideologues, who wanted support for "progressive change" around the world, (2) the military, who wanted an arms build-up, and (3) the intelligentsia, who wanted a thawing of tensions internationally and domestically. Even before Stalin's death, Soviet aggressiveness in the late 1940s may have been caused in part by Stalin's attempt to manage the emergence of these proto-interest groups.

Periods of Soviet retrenchment before Gorbachev were mere interludes during which discredited imperial coalitions regrouped on a slightly modified basis. This oscillation between expansion and retrenchment reflected the tension between the cartelized aspects of the post-Stalin political system, which promoted overexpansion, and the residual unitary role of a Politburo elite with encompassing interests. Gorbachev, responding to the economic necessity of creating new institutional arrangements, may be breaking this pattern by increasing the power of both the center and the grass roots vis-a-vis ossified military, industrial, and party bureaucracies. If so, the political impetus that
spurred Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's overexpansion might be permanently curtailed.24

SOVIET STRATEGIC CONCEPTS

Like British debates on grand strategy, Soviet strategic thinking has been quite diverse, with as many as four conceptually distinctive schools of thought active at any given time, and with considerable variation in the relative strength of the contending schools over time. For the sake of analytical convenience, these outlooks can be divided along two dimensions: first, whether imperialism's hostility toward socialism is conditional or unconditional, and second, whether offense is the best defense in international politics. This yields the following four permutations, which I will illustrate with some examples from the post-war period:25


25. These four strategies are a variation on the four images discussed in Franklyn Griffiths, "The Sources of American Conduct: Soviet Perspectives and Their Policy Implications," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Fall 1984), 3-50. The most important difference is that I split Griffiths's first image into two strategies, those of Molotov and of Zhdanov.
1. **Molotov**: Western hostility is unconditional; the defense has the advantage.

Molotov, as Foreign Minister in the mid-1950s, argued that Soviet efforts to relax tensions with the West would not reduce the imperialists' hostility, but would only reduce vigilance within the socialist camp. However, he saw very few opportunities to exploit imperialist vulnerabilities through offensive action, arguing against Khrushchev for example that the Third World and Yugoslavia were inextricably tied to the opposing camp. Attempts to woo them by reforming Russia's Stalinist image would only lead to unrest in Eastern Europe, he accurately predicted. Consequently, the Soviet Union should adopt a hedgehog strategy of autarky, internal repression, and the forced-
draft development of Russia's military-industrial base.  
In short, Stalinists like Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, weaned on Stalin's strategy of "socialism in one country," saw a militant defense as the best way to secure the revolution. As Stalin himself had put it, "Of course, the Fascists are not asleep. But it is to our advantage to let them attack first; that will rally the working class around the communists."  

2. Zhdanov: Western hostility is unconditional; offense has the advantage.

Andrei Zhdanov represented a different brand of militancy. Like Molotov, he believed that Soviet concessions would not diminish the aggressiveness of the West, but he was distinctive in arguing that a political offensive was the best defense against imperialism's hostile onslaught. As part of his militant Cominform strategy, for example, Zhdanov promoted the use of violent strikes by Western Communist Parties as a means to prevent the implementation of the Marshall Plan, which Zhdanov saw as

the groundwork for an American policy of rollback in Eastern Europe.28

3. Malenkov: Western hostility is conditional; the defense has the advantage.

Malenkov, in contrast, believed that Western aggressiveness could be defused by Soviet self-restraint, and that defensive advantages dominated the international system. Malenkov's views dovetailed with the arguments of Eugene Varga, who contended that institutional changes in the American state during World War II had made it a stronger but less aggressive international competitor, more able to control the heedlessly aggressive impulses of the

28. Gavriel Ra'an'an, International Policy Formation in the USSR: Factional "Debates" during the Zhdanovshchina (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1983). Werner Hahn, Postwar Soviet Politics (Ithaca: Cornell, 1982) sees Zhdanov as relatively moderate, especially in comparison with the party militants that succeeded him, like Suslov. In fact, Zhdanov's constituencies did lead him to be "moderate" on some foreign and security issues at least some of the time -- e.g., limits on defense spending (to undercut Malenkov's heavy-industrial base), opportunities for foreign trade (a Lenigrad interest), communication of Eastern Europe by political (not police) methods. But the suggestion that Zhdanov was actually opposed to the Cominform policy that he implemented so vigorously is certainly at odds with the memoirs of the European Communists who lived through it. See Ruble, 30-2; Jerry Hough, "Debates about the Postwar World," in Susan J. Linz, The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allenhead, 1985), 275; Eugenio Reale, Avec Jacques Duclos au Banc des Accuses (Paris: Plon, n.d.), 10-11 and passim. Zhdanov's Cominform speech is reprinted in Myron Rush, The International Situation and Soviet Foreign Policy (Columbus: Merrill, 1969).
monopoly capitalists. Malenkov argued that the imperialists had become realistic and sane enough to be deterred by a minimum atomic force, so that defense budgets could be safely cut and the heavy-industrial priority reversed. Moreover, he argued, Soviet political concessions in Europe would demobilize and split the West, leading to a new Rapallo. There is evidence that Malenkov warned on similar grounds against invading South Korea.


31. Letteney, 330. Letteney also provides indirect, but voluminous evidence that Malenkov and his allies criticized the 1948 Berlin policy as having justified the formation of NATO and the deployment of American nuclear forces within striking distance of the Soviet Union. Pages 56, 77, 82-3, quoting Izvestiia, February 12, 1949; March 19, 1949; July 22, 1949. Note also that Zhdanov appointees ran Soviet policy in Germany until the lifting of the blockade in 1949, when they were replaced by Malenkov-Beria men. See Ann Phillips, Soviet Policy toward East Germany Reconsidered: The Postwar Decade (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 34. Authors like Dunmore who portray Malenkov as a belligerent cold warrior during this period present virtually no evidence to support their view. It is likely, however, that Malenkov supported the military buildup at this time, because it led to the return to power of his wartime heavy industry cronies. See Jeremy Azrael, Managerial Power and Soviet Politics (Cambridge: Harvard, 1966), chapter 5. I am indebted to Dr. Azrael for a helpful discussion of these issues.
4. Khrushchev and Brezhnev: Western hostility is conditional; offense has the advantage.

Khrushchev and Brezhnev shared the Malenkov-Varga thesis that "realists" in the West made possible a relaxation of international tension, but they coupled this with a belief in offensive advantage in international politics. Imperialism could behave in a heedlessly aggressive manner, they believed, but prudent forces within the capitalist camp, especially the bourgeois state and public opinion, could restrain the most reckless of the monopoly capitalists. The influence of such realists could be strengthened by Soviet policy in two ways: first, Soviet efforts to shift the world correlation of forces, including the military balance, to the advantage of socialism would cause realists increasingly to shun the dangers of direct confrontation; second, Soviet projection of an image of restraint in the methods by which it pursues its expansionist goals would lull the West. These two elements would reinforce each other, according to Khrushchev and Brezhnev. The increased strength of the socialist camp would leave imperialism little choice but to accept detente on terms favorable to socialism. Detente in turn would weaken imperialism by hindering its counterrevolutionary interventions in the Third World. The success of the strategy depends, in their view, on active measures to improve the Soviet position at the expense of the West, not
simply the passive acceptance of a stalemate or balance.\textsuperscript{32} As Khrushchev put it: "Peace cannot be begged for. It can be safeguarded only by an active purposeful struggle."\textsuperscript{33}

In short, any explanation of the Soviets' moderate proclivity towards overexpansion should be able to account for (1) the secular evolution from hedgehog to offensive detente to Malenkovite dominant strategies, (2) the post-1945 cyclical oscillation between more and less militant strategies, and if possible, (3) the disagreements among proponents of the four strategic orientations at any given time.

In the book upon which this report is based, international-system and cognitive-process explanations for Soviet grand strategy will be examined and, for the most part, refuted. However, limitations on space prevent the inclusion of those sections in the present report.

**DOMESTIC POLITICS: ATAVISMS OF THE REVOLUTION FROM ABOVE**

The political consequences of "late, late" industrialization help to explain all of the variations in Soviet foreign policy -- Stalin's Realpolitik, post-war periods of overextension, differences in the strategic conceptions of different political leaders, and Gorbachev's strategic retrenchment. The Soviet late, late pattern was like a flat-out version of German late industrialization:

\textsuperscript{33} Quoted by Adomeit, 224.
rapid, concentrated in large-scale heavy industry, centrally financed, and shaped by state intervention.\textsuperscript{34} But this difference in degree was so great that it constituted a difference in kind. To carry out this revolution from above, old social groups had to be broken and political power concentrated in the hands of a unitary "organizational weapon," to use Philip Selznick's term for the Communist Party.\textsuperscript{35} The resulting political and economic structures were so concentrated that, rather than being bases for interest-group logrolling as in the German case, they could be dominated from the unitary focal point of the totalitarian dictator.

These characteristics of the late, late pattern affected foreign policy outcomes. The superconcentrated, almost monistic political structure meant that the interests motivating policymakers at the apex of the structure tended to be "encompassing" rather than parochial. By limiting the role of vested interests and coalition logrolling in generating strategic ideologies, this promoted balance-of-power realism in the foreign policy of the totalitarian pre-war period. Though a militant ideology and exaggeration of foreign threats were needed to forge an organizational weapon to carry out the revolution from above and to justify the hardships and repression it would bring, the unitary political structure made it possible to insulate actual

\textsuperscript{34} Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness. \\
foreign policy from the blowback effects of this ideological rhetoric. More generally, the unitary character of the Soviet political system helps to explain the Politburo’s continuing ability to correct the worst of its mistakes.

After the revolutionary stage of the industrial transformation was completed, the institutions and ideas that it created lived on for decades as atavisms. The military-industrial complex and the mobilizing "combat party" played a key role in the formation of domestic political coalitions, driving foreign and security policies in a militant, expansionist direction. Recently, however, Gorbachev and his allies have been attacking these old institutions and ideas as self-serving holdovers from the out-moded tasks of "extensive" economic development -- that is, the administrative mobilization of underutilized human and material resources. Instead, argue the reformers, the Soviet Union needs to break the power of these old institutions and dogmas in order to create new institutions which will be better suited to the needs of "intensive" economic development -- that is, the efficient allocation of resources in response to demand. Given the nature of this task, they argue, these new institutional forms must allow a greater role for markets and grass-roots political participation. By breaking the power of imperialist interests and by creating stronger incentives for detente

36. When I use the term institution, I mean not only bureaucratic organizations, but also established ways of organizing social relationships, such as the institution of central planning or of the market.
and participation in the world market, these developments may be harbingers of the waning of Soviet militarism and expansionism.37

Institutions and Ideas of the Revolution from Above

Stalinist institutions were marked by their origins in the attempts of an autocrat to whip his backward society to modernize in the face of foreign competition. In this process, international pressure provided both the motive and the opportunity to smash obsolete institutions and replace them with more efficient, centrally controlled ones. 38

"Old Russia... was ceaselessly beaten for her backwardness," Stalin warned at the height of the First Five-Year Plan. "We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us."39

The tsars, too, had tried to spur revolutions from above for much the same reason. However, Stalin explained, "none of the old classes...could solve the problem of overcoming the backwardness of the country."40 Instead, they were barriers to the needed transformation. But all of

38. In addition to Gerschenkron, for a state-building perspective on the Bolshevik revolution, see Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979).
40. Deutscher, 321.
these old urban and elite classes, including the old working class, had been swept away between 1917 and 1921 by the combination of war, revolution, foreign intervention, and civil war. The Bolsheviks were not yet strong enough in the early 1920s to break the peasantry and mobilize the material and labor surpluses needed for rapid industrialization. During the 1920s, however, they were able to forge a spearhead for completing the social transformation from the ranks of the new, *tabula rasa* working class, which was younger and less tainted with reformist trade-unionism than the old working class had been.41

This revolution had institutional and intellectual consequences. Institutionally, its implementation required a more militant mobilizing party, the strengthening of repressive police institutions, and a more centralized authoritarian economic structure to overcome bottlenecks and to assert the priority of military-related heavy industrial production. Through upward mobility from the new working class, it also created by the late 1930s a politically dependent, hothouse technical elite — what Stalin called "a new Soviet intelligentsia, firmly linked with the people and ready en masse to give it true and faithful service."42 This was the Brezhnev generation, for which the Great Purges cleared the way.

Intellectually, these institutions and personnel were motivated and tempered through the inculcation of an ideology of political combat and the exaggeration of internal and external threats. This mobilized energies when pecuniary rewards were lacking, justified repression, and legitimated the priority of resource allocations for the military-industrial complex. According to the definitive study of the enlistment of workers in the campaign to collectivize agriculture:

The recruitment drive took place within the context of the First Five-Year Plan mobilization atmosphere. The Stalin leadership manipulated and played upon popular fear of military intervention and memories of civil war famine, rekindled by the 1927 war scare and the grain crisis of the late 1920s. The dominant motifs of the First Five-Year Plan revolution were military and the imagery was that of the Russian civil war. The working class was called upon to sacrifice for the good of the cause and the preservation of the nation. The state sought to deflect working class grievances away from systemic problems and toward the 'external' and the 'internal' enemies -- that is, the 'kulak,' the 'bourgeois' specialist, the Nepmen, and the political
opposition [inside the Party] all said to be in league with the agents of international imperialism. 43

Though this paranoid, pressure-cooker atmosphere was largely fomented from above by Stalin and his allies, recent studies have stressed that it was readily internalized and exploited by the upwardly mobile militants that were Stalin's shock troops. During the collectivization campaign and the later purges, these young radicals exaggerated the threat of foreign subversion to push campaigns to extremes and to sweep away the older bureaucratic elite that was blocking its path to social advancement. 44

43. Lynne Viola, "The Campaign of the 25,000ers: A Study of the Collectivization of Soviet Agriculture, 1929-1931" (Princeton University dissertation in history, October 1984), 59, also available as Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Collectivization (New York: Oxford, 1986). For Stalin speeches clearly showing the manipulation of the 1927 war scare for factional and mobilizational purposes, see Jane Degras, Soviet Documents of Foreign Policy, II, 1925-1932 (London: Oxford, 1952), 233-7, 301-2. While Stalin was trumpeting the threat in public, a briefing to the Politburo from Foreign Minister Chicherin argued flatly that the idea of an imminent danger of war was utter nonsense. See Michal Reiman, Die Geburt des Stalinismus (Frankfurt: Europaische, 1979), 37.

44. Viola dissertation, 29; J. Arch Getty, Origins of the Great Purges (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985). For a debate on the new social history of the Stalin period, see the essays by Fitzpatrick, Stephen Cohen, and other commentators in Russia Review, Vol. 45, No. 4 (October 1986). Wolfgang Leonhard recounts that the new intelligentsia was so steeped in the militant ideology of the revolution from above that, when given access to the foreign press, "we could hardly summon up any interest" in viewpoints couched in "expressions which were so entirely meaningless to us." Only Trotskyite publications were dangerous, he explains, because they "wrote in our own language." Child of the Revolution (Chicago: Regnery, 1958), 235.
Stalinist Atavisms and the Politics of Expansion

After the period of rapid social mobilization, these institutions and ideas lived on as atavisms. As early as the late 1940s, the institutional instruments of mobilization were turning into self-interested cartels. The intellectual instruments were turning into tools for justifying these institutional interests, especially the role of orthodox ideology in shaping society, the allocative priority of the military-industrial complex, and petty interference by party bureaucrats in day-to-day economic administration.

Foreign policy ideas played an important role in rationalizing and reconciling group interests. By the late 1940s and 1950s, the four schools of thought in Soviet grand strategy discussed above had emerged, each supported by a distinctive constituency. Molotov's hedgehog strategy gained adherents among Stalin's old henchmen and the military-industrial complex. The Zhdanovite strategy appealed to party militants, while Malenkov sought adherents for a domestic and international relaxation of tensions among the intelligentsia. The fourth school of thought, offensive detente, resulted from the efforts of political entrepreneurs like Khrushchev and Brezhnev to form coalitions among the other three. It was this fourth school that held the reins of policy for most of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The preferences and power of individual interest groups are necessary, but not sufficient, to explain this
outcome. Only by adding the dynamics of logrolling and strategic mythmaking by coalition leaders can Soviet overextension in this period be fully explained.

Molotov, the Military, and the Hedgehog Strategy

Molotov, at least by the time of Stalin's death, was promoting a strategy of "fortress Russia," shunning adventurism but stressing high levels of vigilance against socialism's enemies at home and abroad. Since Molotov's prestige and legitimacy hinged on being Stalin's chief lieutenant, especially in foreign affairs, his interests as well as his habits were served by being the guardian of orthodoxy.

A more enduring constituency for this hedgehog strategy lay among the military-industrial interests. When Khrushchev moved to limit military spending and simultaneously to provoke foreign conflicts, for example, a powerful leader of the opposition was Frol Kozlov, whose political base was rooted in Leningrad's military-oriented
In Kozlov's view, which became so prominent in the Brezhnev era, the methodical development of Soviet military strength was the prerequisite for successful dealings with the West.

The professional military itself inclined to this view, which served as a justification for high levels of expenditure on military forces and the heavy-industrial sectors that supplied them. The strategy was also congenial to the military, because it warned against foreign showdows for which the military felt unprepared. Western scholarship on the "pacifist realism" of military professionals would expect such an outlook. This view was prevalent under Khrushchev. During this period, the strategic ideology of the Soviet military stressed straightforward threat inflation, denying that there were any "realists" in the West who could be partners in arms control, or for that


matter, who could be intimidated by Khrushchev's brinkmanship into accepting detente on Soviet terms. 47

However, in the Brezhnev era, increased Soviet capabilities made the top brass much more willing to advocate military interventions abroad and to offer Soviet military power to deter American intervention against Soviet Third World clients. 48 For example, seeing off the Egyptian War Minister at the Moscow airport on the eve of the June 1967 war, Grechko advised, "Stand up to them! The moment they attack you, or if the Americans make any move, you will find our troops at your side." 49 Later, during the war of attrition, when Kosygin was telling the Egyptians to "cool the situation" and avoid "anything that can be taken advantage of by the Israeli warmongers," Grechko was urging the opposite: "You should be more daring.... why are you afraid? The Soviet navy in the Mediterranean is following the American Sixth Fleet like a shadow. They can't do anything. If the Americans put their marines into Israel we are ready to land our troops in your territories. And then

49. Heikal, Sphinx and Commissar, 28.
I should like to see who would win!" Finally, in June 1972, Grechko told the Politburo in the presence of the Egyptian Chief of Staff that, contrary to the Soviets' policy up to that point of restraining the Arabs by limiting arms supplies, "Egypt must be supplied with the weapons to ensure victory." 

These anecdotes show not only that the Soviet military leadership came to abandon the hedgehog strategy for a more assertive stance. In addition, they show the military adopting arguments reminiscent of the logic of offensive detente, extended to provide a theory of escalation control in limited conflicts. Thus, Soviet military capabilities would constrain American escalation, even while a Soviet client used Soviet-supplied arms to achieve "victory" over an American ally. This logic was also applied in preparing for a limited conventional war in Europe. The Soviet Army would strive for a decisive victory using conventional forces only, and realists in NATO would be deterred from retaliating with nuclear by the threat of Soviet escalation.

Flush with increased capabilities, the Soviet military was weaned from the hedgehog strategy and coopted into a

coalition favoring the more assertive strategy of offensive
detente.\textsuperscript{52}

The military's interest in such a strategy is not
difficult to imagine, since it posed a demanding task that
would justify open-ended expenditures on conventional
forces. Why the military was politically worth coopting
into a ruling coalition is a less straightforward question.
Surely the political power of the military does not stem
from any fear that it will mount a coup against a leader it
dislikes. Rather, the military's power over policy stems
from its virtual monopoly of information and analytical
expertise in many aspects of national security debate.\textsuperscript{53}
Its value to a ruling coalition, and the political danger it
poses to potential enemies, stems from the same source. The
military can enhance the political credibility of leaders
that it favors by endorsing their national security
strategies on technical grounds. On the same grounds, they
can undercut the credibility of leaders that they oppose.
This power to persuade cannot be used to dictate to a
unified leadership, but it can be used to good effect when
civilian leaders are jockeying against each other, as was
the case during much of the post-Stalin period.

\textsuperscript{52} For more details in support of this interpretation, see
Snyder, "Gorbachev Revolution," 123-4, and for background on
the strategy itself, see Mcgwire, \textit{Military Objectives}.
\textsuperscript{53} Making this argument are Condoleezza Rice, "The Party,
the Military, and Decision Authority in the Soviet Union,"
\textit{World Politics} 40:1 (October 1987), 66-71; and Stephen
Meyer, "Civilian and Military Influence in Managing the Arms
Race in the U.S.S.R.," in Robert Art et al., \textit{Reorganizing
America's Defense} (Washington: Pergamon Brassey's, 1985),
37-61.
Zhdanov, the Militant Party, and Progressive Change Abroad

The essence of the Zhdanovite strategy was the militant use of party instruments to promote "progressive" political change abroad. Its constituency was the Communist Party bureaucracy and its orthodox ideologues, who needed a strategic ideology to use as a weapon in struggles against a competing faction led by Malenkov. As early as 1941, Malenkov was attempting to promote the professional interests of the new technical elite against meddling party bureaucrats. He decried the "know-nothings" and "windbags" in the party bureaucracy who exercise "petty tutelage" over industrial experts, reject sound technical advice, and spout empty quotations about "putting the pressure on."54 The war greatly increased the autonomy of technical experts, so by 1945 Stalin needed to use Zhdanov to promote a "party revival" to redress the institutional balance of power.

Zhdanov used foreign policy ideas as a weapon in this struggle. He inflated the threat of ideological subversion from abroad in order to justify the priority of ideological orthodoxy at home. He argued for the thorough communization of Eastern Europe, including East Germany, relying heavily

54. William McCagg, Stalin Embattled (Detroit: Wayne State, 1978), 117 for this quotation; passim for the interpretation on which this paragraph is based.
on the mobilizing skills of the party to carry it out.\textsuperscript{55} And he emphasized the strategic value of Communist fifth columns in the West.

Though interest-group politics clearly influenced the Zhdanovite strategic ideology, it is less clear that this militant view prevailed in Soviet policy after 1947 because of the power of this group. Stalin may have backed this viewpoint after the adoption of the Marshall Plan because international conditions seemed to require such a militant approach. Some authors, however, suggest that Stalin had to inflate the foreign threat in this period as a means to reassert social controls that had been relaxed during the war. In addition, they note that Stalin maintained his own power in part by playing off his lieutenants and their institutional constituencies against each other. In promoting the "party revival" as a counterweight to Malenkov and Beria, Stalin may have found it tactically expedient to support the militant Cominform strategy that the Zhdanovites preferred. Some sources note that Stalin was often ill during this period, that he made virtually no speeches to publically assert his own policy preferences, and that he feared Beria and was unsure how to control him. Other sources assert that the Berlin Crisis and the Korean attack were strictly Stalin's own ideas. They also note his phone

conversations directing Zhdanov's strategy at the founding meeting of the Cominform and his personal role in reversing Zhdanov's pro-Yugoslav policy. On balance, domestic political explanations for the militant Soviet strategy after 1947 are neither clearly proved nor refuted.

Upon Zhdanov's death in 1948, the heir to his strategy and position in the Central Committee Secretariat was Mikhail Suslov, who defended the Zhdanov line against Malenkov's criticism that it had served only to unify and militarize the West. Until Suslov's own death in 1982, he served as the proponent of militant and ideologically orthodox means for promoting progressive change abroad and as the enforcer of the party's corporate interests in the domestic coalition-making process.

Malenkov, the Intelligentsia, and the Relaxation of Tensions

Malenkov argued for a relaxation of tensions in Soviet policy at home and abroad, echoing Eugene Varga's arguments that the strengthened capitalist state was better able to control the aggressive monopoly capitalists. Consequently,

57. On Suslov and the International Department ideologues, see Roy Medvedev, All Stalin's Men (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1984), chapter 3; Arkady Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow (New York: Knopf, 1985), 180, 190-1, 220, 262; Bruce Parrott, Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union (Cambridge: MIT, 1985), 193-8; also, the works cited above by Gelman, Tatu, Linden, and Ploss.
the increasingly realistic imperialists could be deterred with a small nuclear force, whereas a more menacing military and diplomatic stance would only play into the hands of the military-industrial complex in the West.

Malenkov sought a constituency for these views among the urban middle class and the cultural and technical intelligentsia. The charges leveled by Zhdanovite inquisitors against Varga's book read like a sociological profile of Malenkov's would-be constituency: "technical" and "apolitical," suffering from "empiricism," "bourgeois objectivism," and a "non-party" outlook. Malenkov's conception of international politics served the interests of the intelligentsia by removing the major justification for oppressive petty tutelage over them by party ideologues and bureaucrats, for the economic priorities that impoverished their living standard, and for a renewal of the purges.

This strategy failed, however, because the class that Malenkov hoped to recruit was subject to counter-pressure: many of them worked in the military-industrial complex, and many had benefited from Stalin's "Big Deal" with the new intelligentsia, receiving some of the minimal trappings of petty bourgeois status and life-style in exchange for

absolute political loyalty to the orthodox regime. 60 Even a decade later, Kosygin still found that this stratum constituted an inadequate social base for a similar strategic ideology. 61

The Khrushchev and Brezhnev Synthesis

The strategies articulated by Molotov, Zhdanov, and Malenkov were each associated with one of the key constituencies that formed around the institutions left over from the First Five-Year Plan. That is why each of them failed. None of these strategic ideologies had a sufficiently broad-based appeal to prevail in Soviet politics. Khrushchev and Brezhnev succeeded because they used the concept of offensive detente to achieve that broader synthesis.

In promoting offensive detente, Khrushchev and Brezhnev were acting as political entrepreneurs, cementing a broad political coalition with a strategic ideology that promised something for everyone: progressive change for Suslov and the ideologues; military modernization and enhanced national security for the military-industrial constituencies; detente and increased foreign trade for the cultural and technical intelligentsia. The problem was that this political formula worked at home but not abroad. In practice, it led to

61. Parrott, 182-6, 190, 197; Gelman, 85 and passim; Heikal, 194.
overcommitted, contradictory policies that provoked the hostility of the West, revealing (as Gorbachev has put it) that its strategic vision was "a world of illusions."62

This process played itself out somewhat differently under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, reflecting the different political uses to which the two leaders put the strategy of offensive detente. In the early Khrushchev period, offensive detente was a strategic ideology that served to legitimate the outcome of political logrolling. This was also how Brezhnev used the strategy. But in the period between 1958 and 1962, Khrushchev tried to use offensive detente as a tool to escape the constraints of his logrolled coalition, provoking the worst of the cold war crises as a consequence.

Khrushchev's version of the strategy of offensive detente hinged on nuclear technology and especially the ICBM, which was to serve as a cheap cure-all, changing the correlation of forces and leading to detente with the West, a favorable political settlement in Europe, low-cost security, and the freeing of resources for a rise in Soviet

living standards. Such arguments were an attractive element in Khrushchev's political platform during the succession struggle. They had the further advantage that they could not fully be tested until the ICBM was actually produced. By 1958, Khrushchev had his ICBM and was eager to move on to the next phase of his domestic game plan, capping military expenditures and increasing investment in chemicals and other sectors that would benefit agricultural and consumer production. However, the West refused to play its part in the script. Instead of becoming more "realistic," the Americans rejected pleas for a summit, refused to move toward recognition of the German Democratic Republic, and seemed headed toward the nuclearization of the Bundeswehr.

Khrushchev sought to push on with his budgetary reversal despite this, but several Politburo members balked.

63. Richter, adding nuances, develops a similar argument from an analysis of leadership speeches, which can be corroborated by a variety of other kinds of sources. See Arnold Horelick and Myron Rush, Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966) on nuclear diplomacy; Parrott, 131, 158-163, and 171-2 on the political role of nuclear and other high technology policies; Parrott, 137, for Khrushchev's ideas about "the social significance of the ICBM"; Heikal, 97-98, 128-9, for an exposition to Nasser of Khrushchev's strategic theory.

64. As early as 1954, Khrushchev had used nuclear strategy as a successful political weapon against Malenkov and, in a passage from a speech that his colleagues excised from the Pravda version, Khrushchev bragged that "we were even quicker than the capitalist camp and invented the hydrogen bomb before they had it; we, the Party and the working class, we know the importance of this bomb." Wolfgang Leonhard, The Kremlin without Stalin (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1975), 88.

65. For some minor qualifications, see Breslauer, 67-71.

"Until the aggressive circles of the imperialist powers reject the policy of the arms race and preparations for a new war, we must still further strengthen the defenses of our country," said Suslov. This had been "the general line of our party...in the period 1954-1957," and implicitly it had been Khrushchev's own personal pledge during the succession struggle. Thus, Suslov called on Khrushchev to "honestly fulfill [the Party's] duties and promises before the Soviet people."67 The Berlin crisis offered Khrushchev a way out of this impasse. Using it as a lever to gain a summit, the recognition of the GDR, and progress on the test ban, Khrushchev hoped to demonstrate that the correlation of forces had already changed enough to achieve detente on favorable terms, allowing radical cuts in conventional forces and a leveling off of nuclear expenditures.68

This attempt to use offensive detente to escape from the constraints of political promises helped put Khrushchev on the slippery slope that led to his replacement in 1964 by the team of Brezhnev and Kosygin. Brezhnev learned from this that offensive detente could not be used to escape the strictures of coalition politics, but he did not learn that offensive detente was an inherently self-defeating policy. Indeed, the story of his own coalition-building strategy

67. Pravda, March 12, 1958. Richter alerted me to this speech.
68. Linden advanced the hypothesis that, in some general way, a victory in Berlin would give Khrushchev the prestige he needed to check his domestic opponents and push on with his economic program. Richter, however, is the first to clarify this argument conceptually and to show in convincing detail how it worked.
suggests that he thought that the distribution of political power in the 1960s still made offensive detente an indispensable tool in domestic politics.\textsuperscript{69}

At first, Brezhnev maneuvered to create a coalition on the moderate left. As part of this, he attracted ideologues and the moderate military with a foreign policy stressing support for "progressive" Third World states, notably the Arabs, and a military policy that emphasized a huge conventional buildup, while opening the door to nuclear arms control. This isolated Kosygin and Podgorny on the right, who were vulnerable because of their insistence on reduced defense spending, and Shelepin on the extreme left, who apparently hoped to use a platform of even more reckless Third World adventures and domestic economic reform to attract a social-imperialist coalition.\textsuperscript{70} But soon a flaw appeared in Brezhnev's policy of moderate appeasement of the cartels of the left. The strategy was extremely expensive, making him vulnerable to Kosygin's charge that it was wrecking the economy and scuttling indispensable reforms.

To parry this charge, Brezhnev developed a revised version of the "correlation of forces" theory and the

\textsuperscript{69} The following reconstruction draws on Gelman, Parrott, and Richter.

strategy of offensive detente. The improved military balance and the liberation of progressive forces in the Third World would encourage realism in the West, leading to detente, arms control, and technology transfers that would solve the Soviet Union's economic problems without Kosygin's structural reforms. The memoirs of defector Arkady Shevchenko show graphically how these pie-in-the-sky arguments were crafted to appeal to the delegates to the 1971 Party Congress, which ratified the strategy and for the first time gave Brezhnev a commanding political advantage over his rivals.71

Despite this political victory, Brezhnev was nonetheless stuck with a strategy that was too costly and overcommitted. Through the mid-1970s, he fought a running battle with Marshall Grechko and the military over the budgetary implications of detente in general and SALT in particular. Only after 1976, with Grechko's death and the installation of a civilian defense minister, did strategic force procurement flatten out and nuclear warfighting doctrines wane.72 The battle revived, however, as a result of the Reagan defense buildup, with Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Ogarkov insisting that it would be a "serious

71. Shevchenko, 211-2.
error" not to increase military outlays. In the wake of the Polish crisis, however, the civilians were more worried about the danger of cutting social programs, and Ogarkov was fired.73

Signs of growing skepticism about backing radical Third World regimes also began to surface in 1976,74 but could not proceed very far until Suslov's death in 1982. A year later, Andropov himself was stressing the need to limit the cost of Soviet counterinsurgency wars in support of pseudo-Marxist regimes, noting that "it is one thing to proclaim socialism, but another to build it."75 Thus, through the failure of Brezhnev's strategy of offensive detente, some of the intellectual and political precursors to Gorbachev's new thinking were already in place.

In sum, Soviet expansionist behavior and strategic concepts have had their roots in the institutional and intellectual legacy of Stalin's revolution from above. Atavistic interests with a stake in military-industrial budget priorities and militant promotion of "progressive change" abroad have exploited the ideological baggage of Stalinism to legitimate the continuation of their dominant social role. When Malenkov tried to change this, pushing forward new ideas and a new social constituency, Stalin was quoted to justify his removal from office: "In face of

73. Parrott, BMD, 46-7; see also Garthoff, 1018, fn 21.
75. Pravda, June 16, 1983; CDSP, 35:25, 8.
capitalist encirclement...'to slacken the pace means to lag behind. And those who lag behind are beaten.' "76 To gain power, an innovator like Khrushchev had to distort his policies to try to attract or outflank the atavistic interests and ideas, leading to contradictions and overcommitment at home and abroad.

The Gorbachev Revolution

Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, Soviet politics became less unitary and increasingly cartelized, but the Gorbachev reforms may succeed in breaking this mold. If so, logrolled coalitions, cemented by an ideology of offensive detente, will no longer be the prevailing pattern in Soviet politics and foreign policy. If Gorbachev's domestic strategy works, the Soviet system will become less cartelized, more unitary, and at the same time more democratic, as the reformist elite tries to enlist market forces and grassroots political participation in its struggle against entrenched interests.77

Several factors make such a development feasible, if not inevitable. These include the requirements of the intensive stage of economic development, the discrediting of the old institutions by the stagnation and foreign policy failures of the late Brezhnev period, and the increasing size and importance of the intelligentsia as a result of the

76. Pravda, January 24, 1955; CDSP, 6:52, 6.
77. For elaboration on the arguments presented in this section, see Snyder, "Gorbachev Revolution."
natural processes of modernization. Ironically, a final factor favoring the Gorbachev reforms is the Stalinist legacy of centralized institutions suited to the task of social transformation from above.

Gorbachev realizes, however, that the needed reforms cannot simply be forced through in the Tsarist and Stalinist "top down" manner, using administrative coercion and exaggeration of foreign threats to whip the population to greater efficiency. Intensive economic development will require economic decentralization, initiative from below, increased production for the consumer sector to provide incentives for initiative, and probably a fuller integration into the world market. In its foreign policy component, such a reform strategy would require not just a short respite from heavy military expenditures, but a durable, long-term detente. Unlike his predecessors, Gorbachev understands that "changes in the correlation of forces in the favor of socialism" hinder detente, rather than promote it, because they provoke balancing reactions from the West. Soviet military build-ups serve only to provoke a high-technology arms race that starves Soviet civilian sectors of scarce in-puts and heightens Western vigilance against

78. The New York Times, December 4, 1987, quotes Gorbachev's economic adviser, Abel Aganbegyan, as saying that "we have set ourselves a task to make our ruble convertible. But to do that we have to change our pricing system to bring it closer to the outside. We will be conducting price reform in 1989 and 1990."
technology transfers to the East. 79 To reduce the West European's sense of threat from Soviet military capabilities, Gorbachev has consistently proposed a restructuring of both military blocs to de-emphasize offensive types of forces, which were the hallmark of the Brezhnev era.

It remains to be seen whether Gorbachev will succeed in breaking the pattern of cartelized politics which dominated the Khrushchev and especially the Brezhnev years. If he does, and if my theory is correct, increasing the power of the unitary leadership and the democratic grass roots will have a moderating effect on Soviet militarism and expansionism. If this new domestic pattern prevails, Gorbachev's detente will not go the way of Khrushchev's or Brezhnev's offensive detente.

CONCLUSIONS

The Soviet Union has three times flirted with overexpansion: in the early cold war, during Khrushchev's missile diplomacy, and during Brezhnev's overextension in

the Third World. But each time the Soviet leadership has learned to retrench before major damage was done. Apart from these three interludes, Soviet grand strategy has been realistic and moderate.

The moderate periods, the effective learning, and even the overly aggressive behavior during the fluid period immediately after 1945 can all be plausibly explained as rational responses to prevailing international circumstances. Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's wishful attempts to reconcile detente and expansionism cannot.

Cognitive explanations, such as the Bolshevik operational code, fare even worse, despite their current popularity. These explanations are either non-falsifiable, or in their falsifiable versions, they posit a largely mythical Bolshevik intellectual legacy. The offensive behavior depicted in the operational code becomes a hallmark of Soviet diplomacy in 1947-48, not in 1917. Moreover, even after Khrushchev ostensibly revised the philosophical basis of the operational code in 1956, Soviet behavior remained offensive. Finally, Gorbachev's successful learning about the realities of grand strategy may be the result of a cognitive process, but why he has had more success in implementing a new strategy that previous good learners, like Malenkov and Kosygin, is a domestic political question.

The Soviet Union's domestic political character as a late, late industrializer provides the most complete explanation both for periods of overextension and
moderation. Stalin's Realpolitik and, more generally, the Soviet Politburo's ability to learn from its mistakes is due to the encompassing interests of the elite dominating the top of the unitary polity, which was created by the late, late pattern of development. The three periods of moderate post-war overextension can be explained as the result of the increasing cartelization of the political system, due to the ossification of the institutions and ideas of Stalin's revolution from above. Of these three, the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods are clear cases, while the Zhdanov period is at least plausible. Finally, Gorbachev's more moderate foreign policy is made possible by his mobilization of centralized and grassroots power to hamstring atavistic cartels.

Simple interest-group theories of overexpansion explain little of this. In the Khrushchev and Brezhnev cases in particular, the logrolling dynamic was crucial to the overextended outcome. Moreover, strategic mythmaking played a role in each period of overextension. Coalitionmakers succeeded by espousing a strategic ideology that convinced several groups that their conflicting interests could be simultaneously achieved.

Though domestic structure offers the single best explanation for variations over time in Soviet expansionism, this does not mean that the international system was irrelevant to Soviet behavior. On the contrary, the international system shaped Soviet behavior in several ways.
First, the international environment helped create the structure of the late, late polity by smashing the old domestic order in World War I and by providing the competitive environment that spurred Stalin's revolution from above. Second, during periods of relatively unitary politics, Soviet policy was closely shaped by the incentives of the balance-of-power system.

Finally, even during relatively cartelized periods, international conditions helped make or break strategic ideologies. Most episodes of Soviet belligerence or expansionism have had international triggers -- like the Marshall Plan, the rearming of West Germany, the U-2 affair, or the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and the post-Vietnam syndrome -- that made the strategic arguments of some Soviet factions more plausible, some less plausible. According to Herbert Dinerstein, Malenkov was done in by Dulles's massive retaliation speech. Kosygin's attempt to promote a low-profile foreign policy was made more difficult by the escalation of the Vietnam War.

Conversely, Western balancing reactions have at other times served to discredit expansionist strategies. The huge American military build-up in response to the Korean attack gave Malenkov an opportunity to press his conciliatory line in foreign affairs. America's stiff response to Khrushchev's Cuban gambit, followed by President Kennedy's

80. The clearest cases are perhaps the U-2 (Tatu, part one) and Jackson-Vanik (Gelman, 161; Urban, 1379).
conciliatory American University speech, convinced Khrushchev to shift to a less offensive brand of detente. NATO's successful deployment of Pershing missiles undercut Brezhnev's notion that a one-sided military build-up was compatible with detente in Europe.

Obviously, international events influence the viability of strategic arguments in Soviet domestic politics. What is less clear is which Western policies help the Malenkovs and the Gorbachevs and which help their foes. Two hypotheses might be advanced in this regard.

First, hard-line or highly competitive Western policies help Soviet soft-liners only when Soviet hard-liners are power. American firmness after the Korean attack, the Cuban missile adventure, and the late Brezhnev imperialist binge helped Soviet doves, because the American action was rather clearly provoked by the Soviets' own assertiveness. America's deployment of B-29 bombers to Great Britain in response to the Berlin blockade, for example, allowed Malenkov's faction to argue persuasively that the Soviets' militant foreign policy had placed atomic-capable aircraft within range of the Soviet homeland for the first time.82 Conversely, hard-line American positions simply discredit Soviet doves when they are already in power. This is the lesson of America's grudging response to Malenkov's thaw in 1953.

A second hypothesis is that Western firmness has a harmful effect on the credibility of Soviet doves when defensively-motivated moves are indistinguishable from offensive ones. The Marshall Plan undercut Varga's position in the Soviet policy debate because the economic instruments that were needed to shore up France and West Germany were indistinguishable from the means to lure Eastern Europe and create an American place d'armes on the continent.

In short, Soviet expansion and its waning under Gorbachev are best explained as the result of Soviet domestic political structure. This does not mean that Western actions are irrelevant to Soviet behavior. Rather, it means that their effects are filtered through the medium of Soviet coalition politics.