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Paper 8 of 12
"Politics and Priorities in the Soviet Union: Prospects for the 1980s"

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--The Soviet leadership no longer resorts to mass terror as the means of controlling, shaping, or changing society. Terror and police state methods are no longer employed in controlling and shaping elite behavior and resolving elite disputes. As it enters the 1980s, the Soviet political system resembles very much a highly regressive, inclusionary, authoritarian state, where the forces of repression and the enormous police machine which safeguards it are used in a more traditional and rational way. Their actions are quite predictable to the citizenry, are orderly and directed against the actual violators of the established rules of behavior, and, in their punitive force, commensurate with the weight of the offense perpetrated.

--The Brezhnev era saw the development and spread of a new phenomenon in Soviet society, cultural and political dissent. Yet, despite its unprecedented character under Soviet conditions, the Soviet leadership achieved a situation where the impact of the multi-faceted dissent movement in the Soviet system remains marginal at best. The international consequences of Soviet dissent are incomparably stronger and more meaningful than their effects and prospects at home.

--The Brezhnev period was a highly conservative period in Soviet history. This conservatism was embraced both by the elites and by the society at large. The elites displayed an overwhelming desire for stability and security. The professional classes directed their aspirations towards material achievements and professional attainments. The broad strata of the population displayed a high degree of apathy with regard to political questions and remained preoccupied with the "politics" of everyday life on the local level. Soviet youth has basically retained its career orientation. The conservatism of
SUMMARY
Politics and Priorities in the Soviet Union:
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Developments in the Soviet Union in the 1980's will result from the interaction of the preexisting political and economic system with pressures and opportunities emerging in that decade. The stability which characterized the Soviet system in the Brezhnev era will be challenged by economic stringencies and by the political effects of a sweeping succession. Such a succession will also raise the opportunity to carry out reforms required to respond to the new economic difficulties. The likely prospect, however, is for a less benign political climate and for successful systemic resistance to attempts at reforms.

Political, social and economic factors account for the stability of the Brezhnev period. Political power has been directed primarily at solidifying, rather than changing, institutional structures and at maintaining an elite consensus; the low turnover of elites has both reflected and also promoted the conservatism of the policy. High economic growth rates permitted satisfaction and relative harmony of the bureaucratic sectors represented in the ruling oligarchy. They also resulted in the mass consumption demands of the population and particularly the working class, to which the elite has been carefully responsive; at the same time, popular material aspirations have remained moderate, with the dangerous spiral of expectations thus being avoided.

The leadership group's low turnover, and its resulting current advanced age, will result in a political challenge to stability in the succession which is inevitable in the 1980's. The unpredictable process of succession in the USSR always raises the potential for elite conflict, and acts as a catalyst for submerged tensions in such a period. The coming succession will have particular impact due to the massiveness of the personnel replacement compressed into a fairly short time-span, and to the generational turnover. The likely expanded political agenda, the breakdown of elite consensus, and other destabilizing features opens up the possibility of systemic reforms.

The 1980's will also be marked by serious economic difficulties, the result not only of demographic, energy and agricultural problems but also to the exhaustion of the extensive development pattern of the economy. The resulting low overall economic growth rates will shatter the stability of the Brezhnev system based on at least partial satisfaction of almost all institutional groups. At a time when the move to intensive growth will require plant modernization, the inter- and intrasectoral competition for investment will become fierce. Potential stagnation of mass consumption after years of a steady rise would at best make greater worker productivity difficult to attain, and perhaps even disrupt the political docility of the working class. Likely interregional resource competition would also exacerbate nationality tensions.

Domestically, these developments will elicit a strengthened emphasis on authoritarian measures, including an enhanced role for police institutions. Implications for foreign policy will likely be enormous, though less easily predictable, with probable contradictory pressures on the Soviet leadership. Economic considerations might promote a more aggressive expansionism, notably through alliances in the Middle East and Western Europe; such a pattern may be supported by the need to spur xenophobia at home to counteract domestic discontent, or the promotion of an aggressive stance by a potential candidate for succession seeking an issue to attract political allies. Yet the perceived need for Western technology, and the desire to cut military expenditures at a time of tight investment restraints might promote a more moderate foreign policy position.

Despite the need for far-reaching reforms and the unique opportunities arising in the 1980's, the prospects of successful reform are not good. The confluence of conditions
which is required for significant change -- including broadly held perceptions of the need for change and the lack of fear of its consequences, the support of a strong leader, the objective economic technical and economic capacities -- is unlikely to appear in the 1980's. More likely will be a series of partial reforms which at best ameliorate one aspect of the economic system without changing its basic parameters.
It is a truism that the relationship between politics and economics in the second half of the twentieth century is very close in all societies. It is especially close in modernized societies. If politics, by one standard definition, deals with who gets what, when, and how, then economics provides one of the key parameters of political actions. By the same token, and to an increasing degree, it is politics which provides the context of economic activity.

It is of course an exaggeration to state, as Lenin did, that politics is nothing else but condensed economics. It would be foolish to overlook the high degree of autonomy of each sphere. Each has its own rules and laws independent of each other, each generates its own momentum, and each has concerns with other aspects of societal activity. Yet the autonomy of economics or politics from each other is relative. It does not help to deny the autonomy of economics and politics, but it does not help either to overlook the relativity and the limitations of this autonomy.

Far from being an exception to this rule, the Soviet Union is the closest embodiment of this relationship. In fact, the Soviet political system was developed largely to run the economy and was shaped by a specific economic growth strategy. On the other hand, it is impossible to understand this growth strategy and the configuration of Soviet economics--its shape and developmental tendencies--outside of the context of the
Soviet society, primarily political, also expresses itself in other spheres of Soviet life, particularly in the cultural area. The old conservative themes of law and order, national unity, and intolerance towards those who defy these norms remain the ruling principles of Soviet society. 2

--A major dimension of the conservatism of the Soviet polity as it enters the 1980s can be discerned in the stability of the composition of the Soviet leadership and the elites. To a degree unequalled in any other period of Soviet history, the Soviet leadership and key elite groups remained stable and unchanged throughout the Brezhnev era. One index of this stability can be seen in the low turnover in the membership of the Central Committee of the Party, as the figures below demonstrate:

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This stability is partly a spontaneous reaction to the experimentation and turmoil of the Khrushchev period and partly a secular trend representing the further bureaucratization of the Soviet political system, with its stress on gradualism and orderliness. Until recently, this stability represented the basic yearnings of key Soviet elite groups and the leadership responded positively. But whatever the reasons for this stability, the Soviet Union enters the 1980s with the oldest leadership and central and regional elites in its history. 3

It is a leadership and elite at the apex of the system, composed of people from the same generation. They have worked together for an extraordinarily long period of time, and were able to design a set of rules for their working relationships which were relatively benign in the light of Soviet tradition.
This paper will deal with Soviet politics and policies in the coming decade, but from the point of view of how they will be influenced by economic developments and how they may influence economic development. In doing so, it will try briefly to answer four questions:

First, what is the basic profile of the Soviet political system as it enters the 1980's? In other words, what are the key political characteristics of the Brezhnev period, which is now coming to an end?

Second, what are some of the most important political developments which can be expected in the 1980's and which are generated within the political system? In other words, what will be some of the developments which will be indigenous to the Soviet political sphere itself?

Third, how may those political developments be influenced by economic developments projected for the 1980's? What will be the most probable political consequences of the developments generated by the Soviet economy?

Fourth, and last, how will the interconnection of Soviet political and economic development in the 1980's influence one crucial aspect of the Soviet economic scene, the chances for structural reform?

What are the major characteristics of the Soviet political system as it enters the 1980's? What impact did the Brezhnev period have on the Soviet polity?
The Soviet leadership was transformed from a personal dictatorship into a relatively stable oligarchy. The top leadership which developed in the Brezhnev era is collective; almost all the major bureaucratic interests are represented within the top leadership. No one bureaucratic group and no one personal machine dominates the leadership. Although the role of the First Party Secretary and his "loyalists" within the Politburo gave clearly increased in the last few years, his role is more limited than in the past. The most important differences with the Khrushchev leadership cannot be expressed adequately by such terms as "less" or "more"; these differences are exemplified by the question of "power for what purpose." The powers of a leader are not static; their limits and scope can be evaluated only in practice. In this perspective, Brezhnev's power differs from Khrushchev's, in as much as the former uses his power differently. Khrushchev's power was expended most notably in his efforts to change institutions and policies, and its limits were tested most visibly in alternate advances and retreats in the face of the leadership's and elite's opposition. Brezhnev's power has never really been tested in those terms. It has been expended primarily in assuring the continuity of Soviet institutions and in the gradual adjustment of policies. Within the context of these aims, his position has been very strong and stable. While Khrushchev often tried to form a new consensus or to undermine an existing one within the elite, Brezhnev has been concerned primarily with maintaining consensus.

During the Brezhnev period, the Soviet elite became inundated as never before by real politics. The cult of the top leader, the centralization of the Communist Party and state, and the "planning" that supposedly permeates all aspects of Soviet life cannot hide the real interplay of the
give-and-take of politics. The major actors in the Soviet political process are the major bureaucratic structures and their subsections, alliances on particular issues between various bureaucracies, and, finally, territorial interests. During the Brezhnev era, they developed a high degree of corporate existence and identity and displayed a broad range of opinions on specific issues that came up for decisions, and were able, as never before, to resolve those issues by bargaining and compromise. 5

—The role of one group in Soviet politics, the military, requires special consideration, not so much because of its actual importance but because of the many misconceptions concerning this group's role. Without a doubt, the role of the military factor in Soviet policy-making is a crucial one. The question of military security is the uppermost priority in the minds of the Soviet leadership. Sometimes, however, an erroneous conclusion is drawn from the role of the military factor in Soviet policy, assigning an exaggerated role to the military sector in Soviet politics. Without a doubt the military is one of the key groups in the Soviet decision-making process of the early 1980s. Under Brezhnev, the military broadened specialized powers, in contrast to the previous period of Soviet history, it attained a higher degree of professional autonomy, a greater voice in matters concerning military questions. Yet at the same time it must be stressed that its subordination to the political leadership remains unquestioned, and its role in influencing nonmilitary matters is quite limited. Its success in attaining so much in terms of the allocation of key resources during the Brezhnev period is not a result of its independent political weight.
but rather the result of a symbiosis of the views of the military and the political leadership. 6

-- The Brezhnev period saw a very rapid growth of the size of the professional strata in Soviet society. At the same time, it saw a clear increase in the influence of professionals, experts, and especially technocrats and economists in the decision-making process. The experts, both inside and outside of the bureaucracy, increasingly provide advice and technical judgment for the policy-makers to act upon. They also have a more visible role at the stage of policy implementation. It would be wrong, however, to regard the professional strata as being composed of cohesive groups. Their organization is very loose, and their corporate identity very weak and fragile; but most importantly, their views and judgments concerning policy issues are very heterogeneous. In this situation, the policy-makers and high-ranking bureaucrats, who avail themselves of the services of the experts to an increasing degree, are in most cases free to choose between their conflicting advice, according to their own judgment and interest. Thus, the dependent, service role of the experts in the Soviet political process remains undiminished. The experts provide a range of feasible choices open to the policy-makers, but the selection from among those choices remains the prerogative of the policy-makers themselves. However "rational" the process of designing policy options in the Soviet Union has become, the actual selection among these options remains primarily political.7
The expectations of Soviet citizens have risen noticeably in the last fifteen years. What is most striking, however, especially when compared to the situation in the West, is that, first of all, these expectations in absolute terms are very modest for an industrial nation, and, secondly, they are not far removed from what is realistically possible, though often unrealized under Soviet conditions.

To put it differently: although material expectations are ahead of reality, I doubt whether there is a widening gap between expectations and reality. This situation, unusual in a system which for decades overindulged in utopian promises, suggests a restraint, based on past experiences, in popular expectations. Visible and significant improvements in the material conditions of the population of the Soviet Union have not yet produced the phenomenon familiar to other industrial societies: a self-generating spiral of expectations which cannot be realized. The intensity of popular pressures to which the Soviet authorities are exposed is rather limited, and as long as some improvements continue to occur, the situation will probably remain stabilized in this respect. The primary pressures which produced the institutional and policy innovations in the post-Stalin era have not been the actual pressures of social groups or strata, but the changing material conditions in the society and the changing political conditions within the elite. As for example, the need to raise the standard of living of the population as a means to improve the incentives to increase productivity, or the introduction of bargaining among the elite groups as a substitute for the iron rule of terror.

But, however we evaluate the amorphous pressures in Soviet society today, the responsiveness of the Soviet leadership to some of these aspirations is clearly much greater now than in the past. To what kinds of pressures is the leadership responsive? In part, of course, it is responsive to changes in the distributive
sector of the Soviet economy, where the population acquired for the first time in the Soviet era a limited possibility to express its demands through selective buying. In part, this responsiveness is due to the importance that the Soviet leadership attaches to material incentives in its economic programs. But in large measure, this responsiveness can be described as an anticipatory reaction; not a response to the actual behavior of workers, but to the leadership's fear that if the interests of the workers are not sufficiently considered, their behavior might become disruptive and dangerous. The lessons of the dangers of workers' dissatisfaction in the East European countries—and especially in Poland—have not been lost on Soviet leaders. In a country where such a high premium is placed on stability, an organized dissent movement is active, mass terror is absent, popular expectations have long been encouraged, and the opening of Soviet society to foreigners has made material comparisons possible, the Party must pay more attention to the material satisfaction of the population, in order that it can continue to curtail cultural freedom, withhold political freedom, and preserve political stability.9

--In contrast to their Western counterparts, the Soviet political leadership and elite still retain a belief in the idea of progress to a very high degree. They are still committed to the goal of growth, particularly economic growth. Their belief in the inherent goodness and instrumentality of technological progress and of science remains a deeply rooted, normative commitment. This is one of the reasons why, despite widespread political cynicism and the clear decline of the instrumental effects of the Communist doctrine, they still retain a basically optimistic outlook and a belief in the solvability of the problems which face them as well as an attachment to the belief in the possibility of improving their social order. Their belief in the idea of progress remains consistent with the
"comparativist" attitude about their "progression to progress". This progression is still defined by the standards established by the developed Western societies and by the Soviet desire to "catch up."

--Foreign policy and international relations in general have attained an increased salience in the Soviet policy-making process. More than ever before, foreign relations is the subject of attention of the Soviet leadership and major elite groups and the preoccupation of major deliberative bodies. At the same time, the connection between internal politics and external policies has become closer than ever before. This is partly a result of the decline of the Soviet economy's isolation from the world economy, and of the deliberate attempt to use foreign technological resources to stimulate Soviet economic growth as a surrogate for internal reforms. This connection is also in part a result of the decline in the isolation of the Soviet professional classes from foreign professional influence, which, in the eyes of the Soviet leadership, has clearly proven to be an obstacle to the development of their expertise. But this connection is, for the most part, the result of new Soviet capacities and new foreign policy resources accumulated by the Soviet Union during the Brezhnev era, which transformed it from a regional and provincial power into a global power and changed its appetites and aspirations.10

During the Brezhnev era, the Soviet Union faced a number of difficult problems. Its achievements were impressive, but very spotty. When the Brezhnev era started, Western analysts of Soviet affairs published long lists of trouble spots and potentially destructive problems which would confront the Brezhnev leadership. In my opinion, this leadership, on the whole, performed better than was expected of it. Most importantly, despite the fact that it did not solve or sometimes even diminish any of the major problems facing the Soviet Union, it prevented any of those problems --taken singly or in their cumulative effect-- from becoming a
source of systemic crisis. In the last few years, the Soviet leadership has exhibited a sense of drift and of exhaustion (particularly in regard to its domestic aspects); some strata of the population have yearned for strong leadership, and members of the elites have hoped for policies which will "get the country moving again." Yet, despite this lack of vigor and these aspirations, the USSR is entering the 1980s as a basically stable state, without visible pressures for fundamental changes and without imminent threats of disintegration.

II

The shape of Soviet politics and policies changes very slowly. One must always count on the built-in tendency of the Soviet political system to retain the above-mentioned characteristics and directions typical of the 1970s. Yet, in the 1980s, the Soviet Union will be facing issues and events which may influence incremental changes, if not --though this seems less likely-- more fundamental changes in the nature of politics and the direction of policies.

Of the many political issues that the Soviet Union faces two seem especially important. The first concerns military policy, which is clearly at a crossroads. Before the Soviet Union achieved strategic parity with the United States and possessed a global military reach, its goal was clear, and not a matter of significant dispute. Now, however, the basic aims of long-term Soviet military policy, according to the evaluation of most Western observers, have been achieved, or, as some Western observers would even argue, overachieved. But it seems that the Soviet military build-up continues by the sheer force of inertia and drift. There are no signs that major disputes are taking place about the aims of Soviet military policy under the new circumstances or that an effort is being made to define more
clearly what Soviet security interests are. The Soviet military build-up is, to a point, clearly beyond the range of its traditional defense needs. The change in the East-West military balance brought about a major reaction from the Western alliance, particularly from the United States. If counteracted by the Russians, the Western reaction will undoubtedly start a new, major and uncontrollable arms race spiral. This prospect may initiate a re-evaluation of Soviet military growth policy in the top echelons of the Soviet leadership and among the experts who advise them. I am not at all optimistic about the results of such a re-evaluation, and I have major doubts whether our own policies, with their clear denigration of arms control measures, will have any positive influence here. Yet, it seems to me that, for a number of economic and political reasons which will be discussed below, the inertia of Soviet military policy may be broken and at least the question of its redefinition may enter the Soviet political agenda of the 1980s.

The second issue concerns the direction of Soviet foreign policy in general. What we have witnessed in recent years, in my opinion, is not a fulfillment of some master plan of expansion, but a foreign policy which exploits targets of immediate opportunity with a relatively low cost and risk. In its ability to relate the tempting options of temporary or partial gains and strategic improvements to its other professed goals of reducing international tensions and conducting a policy of detente with the West, overall Soviet foreign policy showed a very limited coherence. Clearly, the Soviet leadership has not yet resolved the question of the proper ordering of priorities for Soviet foreign policy in the new situation. One has the impression that the leadership has not thought through, in a long-range way, what to do and how to use their newly-acquired capacity for international action.

Their policy in this respect may well continue to be incremental in responding to any possible targets of opportunity, regardless of how this policy affects
the central axis of world politics, the relations between the superpowers. Yet, for various political and economic reasons which will be described later, one may predict that the issue of the overall direction and the order of priorities of Soviet foreign policy may enter the agenda of Soviet politics in the 1980s.

But the most important stimulus for political change in the Soviet Union in the 1980s will not be the new political policy issues, but the policy-making process itself. It will originate in the impending turnover of the leaders and elites. The term "succesion", in its most precise meaning, describes the order in which, or the conditions under which, a person or group succeeds to political office and the effects of this process on the structure and policies of the political system of a nation-state. While the term may be applied broadly to an entire leadership group or even top elite stratum, in dealing with the Soviet Union the term is traditionally used to denote the patterns of political life and their effects on current policies during the interval between the death, ouster, or possible retirement of the top leader --usually the First or General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party-- and the emergence of a new leader who consolidates his power.

There are a number of reasons why succession is such a highly important phenomenon in Soviet political development and at the same time so difficult for both participants and outside observers to evaluate and analyze. No predetermined tenure of office is ascribed to the position of the top leader. The terms of the office are not predetermined; the attributes of rights and obligations, and of power and influence are not standardized for all the occupants of the office; nor is the manner by which the incumbent of the top leadership position relinquishes his post. Most importantly, the degree of unpredictability and uncertainty in the procedures of selecting a new leader and in the process of consolidating his position
is much higher than in other societies. This situation injects a more pronounced element of unpredictability and uncertainty into the entire Soviet political process than is characteristic of its operation in "normal" times.

The consequences for the political system are profound. The probabilities of deep personal and policy conflicts within the top leadership structure are increased. The possibilities for resolving these conflicts in more extreme ways are maximized. The tendency toward large-scale personnel changes within the leadership itself and among the top elites and bureaucratic hierarchies is heightened.

The period of succession offers a high potential for destroying the bureaucratic inertia of the departed leaders and for changing the inertial drift of their policies. It is a period with a high potential for ferment, for greater responsiveness to pressures, real and anticipated, for broadening political participation and for opening the political process.

In sum, the succession, aside from its own intrinsic importance, acts as a catalyst for pressures and tendencies which already exist within society, but which previously had limited opportunity for expression and realization.

The approaching succession is in many respects different from those in the past. It combines a number of characteristics which make it fraught with very important political implications in the 1980's, for better or for worse from the Western point of view. The most important of these characteristics is the fact that it almost inevitably will combine the replacement of the top leader with that of the core leadership group and a large part of the central elite, and with the beginning of a generational turnover
among the Soviet elites. Moreover, the age-cohort characteristics of the Soviet leadership and elites is such that the replacement will not only be massive, but also will be compressed in a relatively short time-span.

The importance of the passing of the top leader himself should not be minimized. Leonid Brezhnev has led and dominated Soviet political life for longer than all but one leader in Soviet history. Yet, if it were only a matter of the replacement of the top leader, the potential for stress and change should not be overemphasized. If one can say that the period of his leadership has represented the maturation of the Soviet system and embodied its stability, one can argue similarly that his departure could be handled at least as routinely as the post-Khrushchev succession. His very style of leadership, his very achievement and legacy, will most likely make the fact of his departure in contrast to that of his predecessors less crucial in terms of the accompanying ferment, opening for change, and political vacuum.

First of all, given the required combination of qualifications for the top leadership position and the extraordinary circumstances which at present severely limit the field of available candidates, the man selected for the top post, if Western evaluations are correct, will certainly be an interim leader. The most important questions concern who will succeed Brezhnev's immediate successor. Thus, we will in all probability see two successions to the top leadership in the 1980's.
Secondly, the coming succession will inevitably bring about a massive replacement of the top leadership stratum and will compress the turnover into a relatively short time-span. It will especially affect the inner core of the stratum, those leaders who worked together for such a long period of time. This massive replacement will occur because the most striking characteristic of this group as a whole is its advanced age; it is the eldest in Soviet history and of any preceding succession, and, incidentally, the eldest of any industrial society.

If the advanced age of this leadership group has no precedent in Soviet history, there is also no precedent for the clustering of such a high proportion of the members of this group in the highest age-bracket. What is even more important from the point of view of our inquiry is the lack of a precedent for the described type of age configuration on the eve of succession. The approaching succession will not consist simply of the replacement of the top leader, but also of a massive replacement and reshuffling within the highest echelons of the Soviet hierarchy during the coming years.

Thirdly, the age structure of the top leadership, far from being limited to that group, is very nearly mirrored in the case of the central elite, both with regard to its advanced age and the clustering of this age group. Its massive replacement in the 1980's is unavoidable.

Fourthly, and finally, massive replacements at the levels of the top leadership and central elite, which would certainly accompany the second if not the first stage of the upcoming succession, will most probably produce
political conflicts over policies and procedures, regardless of who the new leaders will be. Such a prospect is especially likely because, on the one hand, the succession will follow a period of extraordinary and long-lasting stability, during which policy differences were submerged in the name of unity, stability, and compromise, and bold initiatives, especially on the domestic scene, were lacking. On the other hand, the succession will come at a time when the Soviet Union will begin to face difficult economic choices, when the possibility of satisfying diverse interests and pressures through compromise solutions will become more difficult than in the Brezhnev period.

The massive turnover of elites, especially when compressed into a short period of time, can in itself be significant in determining the formation of the styles and behavior of the new leadership and elites. By breaking the official routine inculcated in a bureaucratic and centralized structure, by undermining the inertia of a set style of work, by disrupting the existing and fixed, informal ties, and by weakening the interests vested in long-established substantive policies, this turnover will provide a setting which will facilitate the elaboration of changed modes of political behavior. Yet the key questions still remain. Will the newcomers be favorably disposed to make use of the opportunity to be different? How much pressure will they exert and in which direction in order to change the policies and processes of the Soviet government? In short, just how different will they be from their predecessors?

The most important question, then, is whether and to what extent the succession and the subsequent replacement of large segments of the
elites will coincide with the emergence of distinctive differences between the incoming group and the outgoing group, irrespective of the diverse personalities within each group. Such a coincidence will occur in the upcoming succession. A generational change within the Soviet elite will take place concurrent to the inminent replacement of the top leader and a large part of the highest leadership, because a large proportion of the new elite will have entered politics after Stalin's death. Thus, the approaching succession, whatever the form and results of its initial stage, will involve the eventual replacement of the top leadership and central establishment on a scale much greater than the previous two successions and will be combined with a higher generational turnover of the Soviet political elite. This conjunction of successions in both the broad the narrow sense has no precedent in Soviet history. It will be a political development of long-term duration and significance.

The stability and longevity of the existing pattern of leadership has been conditional on two internal structural factors: gradualism in major policy changes and gradualism, to say the least, in personnel replacement. We do not know whether the first condition will still obtain during the succession or whether, after the cycle of cautious adjustment and traditionalism of the last decade, the mood of the leadership and the elite will swing toward revitalization and major reforms, just as the frozen conditions of Stalin's Russia were replaced by the flux of the Khrushchev period. Certainly, during the succession, the nature of this tendency will depend ultimately on whether the Soviet leaders and elite will become more perceptive of the pressures and frustrations stemming from failures or dangers at home or abroad. We do know, however, that the second condition --gradualism in personnel replacement-- will most probably not persist.

The effects of the pressures created by the forthcoming successions, in
combination with the political issues which will become a part of the political agenda, may become significant. They may and, in all probability, will lead to the destabilization of the central policy-making which, in a highly centralized polity such as the Soviet Union, may have very important consequences. The destabilization will involve a breakdown of the consensus among the leadership and the elites, the intensification of factional struggles at the top and middle levels of the bureaucracy, possible realignments of existing alliances, the exploitation of policy issues for the accumulation of power by individual leaders and groups, and sharp twists and turns in central policies.

One may expect all these developments to be generated within the political system itself or to be triggered by issues which are directly political in nature.

III

How will the economic problems which the Soviet Union is facing influence this political situation? In the 1980s, the impact of these problems on the political system and its relation with the society will be extremely significant, probably more so than it was in the 1970s. There are important disagreements among the specialists about what the economic environment of the Soviet Union will be in the 1980s. The art of predicting the future is no more certain in the field of economics than it is in the field of politics. Moreover, the discussion among economists demonstrates that they are far from agreement about the degree to which the economic trends expected in the Soviet Union during the 1980s will be realized. I want to stress that it is precisely this question of degree which is a matter of central importance for political analysis. Yet, on the basis of a survey of Western and Soviet
economic literature, and on the basis of numerous discussions with Western and Soviet economists in academia and in government, a political scientist can at least form a clear impression about the main tendencies of development of the Soviet economy in the 1980s and about the direction of the trends already discernible today.15 On this basis, I can advance a few cautious, consensual propositions, which have a very high probability of being realized.

1. In the 1980s the Soviet Union will face a secular decline in the growth rates of its economy, involving almost all sectors. Extensive development has reached such limits that retention of the high growth rates of the past is no longer possible. Even without the intervention of other negative factors, and assuming no decline in the quality of the traditional Soviet leadership of the economy, the growth of the Soviet GNP in the 1980s will be approximately 2.5% per year.

2. The Soviet political-economic system of management, pricing, and incentives is ill-prepared to maximize the possibilities for intensive growth. The conditions for a relatively rapid change to intensive growth would require fundamental changes in the economic-political system and are unlikely to be accomplished in the foreseeable future. Among the steps already undertaken by the Soviet government to counteract the declining tendencies of growth, none will have any major impact on the Soviet economy.

3. The Soviet Union in the 1980s is also facing unfavorable demographic trends. There will be a rapid decline in the growth of new labor resources. The situation will be further complicated by changes in the composition of the new labor force, which will be overwhelmingly non-Russian.

4. The Soviet Union will face an energy balance unfavorable to its economic growth. This is especially true in the production of oil. It is a matter of
major contention among economists as to how much this production will decline. Even if one rejects the worst-case scenarios, which predict an eight million barrel-a-day oil production, the decline will be sufficient, it seems, to impose major constraints on the Soviet economy and, under certain conditions, limit Soviet ability to utilize fully their existing economic capacities.

5. The enormous agricultural investments of the Brezhnev era have produced limited and, at best, uncertain results. Soviet agriculture in the 1980s will remain a highly volatile sector of the Soviet economy. Moreover, because of the decline in secular growth in other sectors, the unavoidable agricultural fluctuations will have a growing influence on the size of the Soviet GNP.

There can be little doubt that the Soviet Union faces a difficult economic situation in the 1980s. How difficult it will be is a matter of conjecture. According to the worst-case scenarios, it will be a period of low growth intermingled with economic stagnation. But even according to the more optimistic scenarios under which the range of Soviet growth will be about 3 - 3.5%, the Soviet Union will face an economic crunch far more severe than anything it encountered in the 1960s and 1970s.

I must reiterate that the differences between the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios are a matter of great importance; they signify the difference between a difficult situation and a deep crisis. Moreover, the choice of the most likely scenario among the various scenarios is not the result of a belief in more or less precise and complex computations (or, for a political scientist, due to his faith in the skills of one or another group of economic forecasters) but a result which should include unpredictable elements, such as vagaries of nature, or, as importantly, the seriousness and the effectiveness of counteracting policies adopted by the Soviet leadership. Even assuming that the more optimistic scenario better
reflects the reality of the 1980s, what will be the effects of the growing economic difficulties on the Soviet political scene? (Needless to say, those effects will be magnified many times if the worst-case scenarios become a reality.) The two most important consequences will be a sharply increased sectoral and regional competition for scarce resources.

Historically, the Soviet political system, in both its micro- and macro-economic decision making levels, became used to scarcities, shortages, and stringencies went hand in hand with a process of highly uneven development, concomitant with rapid overall economic growth. Moreover, during the time of extreme stringencies and particularly sharp one-sided development, the system was guarded by a mass terror apparatus introduced by Stalin and dismantled by his successors. In the post-Stalin period, the relatively high ratios of growth, while still sustaining an uneven development, assured the flow of new resources to all sectors of the economy, including those totally neglected during the Stalin era.

A consideration of the changes made in the structure of the Soviet party-state over the last decade, together with a look at the policies pursued by the Brezhnev leadership and with the general political mood in the Soviet Union will support a conclusion which at first glance appears somewhat paradoxical. The establishment of the collective leadership, and the policies of this leadership in organizational, political, economic, and ideological matters led, in its first few years, to an improvement in the power position, or in the satisfaction of the group interests of almost all institutional segments of the Soviet political elite. In the years that followed, the positions of these institutional segments were not noticeably undermined. While probably no elite group welcomed all the changes or all of the policies, a rare situation has emerged. The fears of almost all elite groups have been allayed and their desires satisfied to some extent. This
was the basis of the impressive stability of the elites and the elite-leadership consensus, and the basis of the social peace without terror during the Brezhnev period. While accustomed to shortages, stringencies, and scarcities, the Soviet political system is not accustomed to dealing with prolonged periods of low overall economic growth.

With regard to the question of how to stimulate higher growth rates and how to overcome critical bottlenecks, the Soviet system is ill-prepared to deal with these problems for exactly the same reason that growth has declined: the decline in the effectiveness or the exhaustion of the extensive factors of growth. Its past experience in responding to economic difficulties was based on a mass mobilization of extensive factors of growth. Its response today must be based on a measured mobilization of intensive factors of growth: a policy not of the sledge hammer but of the scalpel.

On the distributive side of the equation, the Soviet political system, on both the mass and the elite levels, will have difficulty in dealing with prolonged low overall rates of growth. This difficulty arises from three sources: 1) the absence of a paralyzing mass terror which would make all sacrifices and demands palatable; 2) the existence of powerful organizational groups and issue-alliances in the decision-making apparatus, complicating the implementation of cutbacks and restraints; and 3) the emergence of new social constraints to such cutbacks.

The sharply increased sectoral competition for resources and the dilemmas which it will create are not difficult to envisage. The policy of guns, butter, and growth -- the political cornerstone of the Brezhnev era -- is no longer possible. To keep the rate of growth in military spending at the level of the last decade would necessitate a redirection of resources from other sectors. Yet in light of past Soviet behavior growing Soviet insecurity in the face of what they consider the formation of an alliance of the United States, NATO, and China, and the new fear of
encirclement, the growing determination of the United States to change the existing balance of military power, and the breakdown of SALT talks, it is highly unlikely that any configuration of Soviet leaders will decide to slow down the growth in military expenditures, let alone cut actual arms spending, without a major breakthrough, both in the Sino-Soviet dispute and in the SALT negotiations, or without a major disavowal of their global ambitions. If arms spending will continue at the same pace as in the past decade, the burden of keeping the Soviet military juggernaut in shape will be felt to a much greater extent than at any time in the Brezhnev era. It will constitute one of the key internal political issues of contention.

Another issue of contention, with an even greater potential for divisiveness, concerns the whole complex of questions connected with the rate of growth and direction of Soviet non-military investment resources. Throughout their history, the Soviets have persistently kept their share of investment in their national economy and the levels of investment growth very high. How difficult it is to maintain such high rates of investment under the present circumstances is demonstrated by their recent decline. Yet, if there ever was a period when the Soviet Union needed a very large scale investment in their national economy, it is now. It is difficult to envisage how the Soviet leadership can lessen the difficulties brought about by the limitations of the existing pattern of extensive growth without keeping the percentage of investment in the economy, and even the growth rate of investments, at high levels.
Intensive growth, given Soviet conditions, requires a thorough modernization of the industrial plant and major investments in new technology. Without a very major, persistent, and creditable effort in this direction, there is little chance that any increased productivity of Soviet labor will overcome the downward pull of the exhaustion of the extensive factors of growth.

The energy problem facing the Soviets in the 1980's will demand mammoth and prolonged investments, which have already begun. The development of the Siberian oil and gas reserves will constitute a new, major, and increasing burden on Soviet investment resources. Yet it is a burden that the Soviets cannot avoid and can neglect only at their own peril.

The achievements of Soviet agriculture under Brezhnev -- the growth in grain production, but especially the stress on meat production -- was accomplished by an extraordinarily large expenditure of capital. Yet even with those very large-scale expenditures, Soviet agricultural productivity remains uneven from year to year, and the agricultural sector continues to be highly volatile. The Soviets have not yet devised a way to assure the present inadequate levels of agricultural production without infusions of long-range massive investments. In the coming decade, when the Soviet economy slows down, the divisive pull of conflicting claims concerning investment resources will increase to a level unknown during the Brezhnev era.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the Brezhnev era was the prolonged and substantial growth of Soviet mass consumption. The last fifteen years saw a growth in the standard of living of the Soviet people that
was rapid by any --but especially the Soviets'-- standard, particularly in the area of durable consumer goods. What was especially notable about this achievement is that it was accomplished simultaneously with the rapid growth of Soviet military power. In other words, the Brezhnev leadership possessed a guns and butter policy. The stability of the Brezhnev period in the absence of terror can be explained to a large degree by the leadership's basic ability to satisfy more fully the demand of the Soviet consumer, whether a member of the working or the professional class. Whatever the deficiencies of the Soviet consumption system (and we all know that they still have a very long way to go to reach the level of their Western counterparts), the Soviet citizen --worker, peasant, and professional-- became accustomed to an uninterrupted upward trend in his well-being and has become more demanding in what he expects from the government in terms of goods and services in the Brezhnev period. While we must stress, again, that there does not exist in the Soviet Union anything resembling a revolution of growing expectations, the Soviet citizen seem to expect more in terms of services and consumer goods than he expected in the past. In view of the major demands placed by other sectors on Soviet resources in a period of a declining growth rate, it will be extremely difficult for the Soviet leadership to continue its policy of consumption growth even at the lower rates of the last Five Year Plan.

It is probable that even without major agricultural disasters or a particularly severe energy crisis, Soviet consumption may stagnate in the 1980s. The consequences of such stagnation are difficult to assess, but they will be undeniably negative. First of all, it is difficult to see how the crucial goal of increasing Soviet productivity can be attained without an increase in remunerative incentives for the labor force. Secondly, the stagnation of the standard of living will be experienced by the working population at a time when the other basic avenue of betterment, upward mobility,
also shows a downward tendency. Thirdly, and most importantly, neither the Soviet leaders, nor we, know how the Soviet industrial working class will react to such changing circumstances. The post-Stalin experience of a society without terror was at the same time the experience of a society with a steadily increasing standard of living.

The desire of the Soviet population for a better life never, to our knowledge, became unmanageable, never assumed the form of a revolution, or of a vicious spiral of rising expectations. In the words of one sociologist, "The key to the stability of the Soviet system lies in its management of expectations rather than in the power of the KGB." Yet one should not forget that it was a "management of expectations" which went hand in hand with a sometimes rapidly and steadily growing rate of consumption. This growth in consumption may have been a substitute for and a damper on growing political expectations.

To what extent can the existing police controls and the management of mass expectations keep the Soviet working class docile during a prolonged stagnation of their living standards is an open question. One has the impression that the specter of "Polonization" of the Soviet working class is never far from the minds of the Soviet leadership and the elites.

Of course, not only the intersectoral competition for resources, but also the intrasectoral competition for specific priorities will be much sharper. Specific elite constituencies represent each of these priorities in the national leadership.

The sharply increased inter- and intra-sectoral competition for resources will be intertwined with and complicated by a stronger, more tenacious com-
petition for resources among the various regions of the Soviet Union.

Such a competition was a normal facet of Soviet politics already in the 1970's. The budgetary squabbles and the fights concerning the plans of development between the Ukraine and Siberia, and among the other republics and among the oblasts of the RSFSR can be documented very well. They are certain to increase in the 1980's.

The difficult political decisions of how to distribute the available resources are complicated by the underlying economic dilemma: the European part of the Soviet Union has a well-developed infrastructure, and investments here would be relatively cheap and would provide a higher return. But at the same time, the European part of the Soviet Union is on the verge of exhausting new labor resources and it is poor in natural resources; Central Asia has large labor resources, but is poor in natural resources and has a limited infrastructure, especially in the technological sector. In addition, the political claim of Central Asian elites in seeking new resources would probably be fiercely debated by the dominant Slavic elites. The regions in the RSFSR where the natural resources are located are extremely poor in labor resources and lack any infrastructure; investments will be extremely expensive and difficult to manage.

The regional struggle for resources will be conducted during a period of succession in the Soviet leadership. During such periods, the influence and the political clout of the provincial and the republican elites traditionally increases. The regional leaders assumed the role of real king-makers during Khrushchev's rise to power. The potential for playing good politics instead of good economics is quite considerable.
The first and foremost response of the Soviet authorities to the difficulties that they face—the economic difficulties and the volatile political situation—will be to strengthen the authoritarian character of the Soviet party-state. The stress on law and order, social discipline, unswerving loyalty, nationalism, and on punitive and restrictive measures taken against anti-social behavior may become more pronounced than they were in the 1970s. Not surprisingly, the role of the secret and not-so-secret police may increase. When the situation becomes difficult, when no prospects for rapid improvements are available, and when a tightening of the belt is in order, the natural response of the Soviet leadership—whether old or new—is to tighten the screws of political and social controls. The capacity, the potential, and the instruments for such policies already exist.

It is an open question whether such a policy will be sufficient to keep the lid on under the conditions of new and prolonged economic stringencies. In my opinion, one may expect an increase in the restlessness of the industrial labor force. It is a clear possibility that, after the Soviet population realizes that it will experience a prolonged decline in the growth of its living standard, the basic stability of the Brezhnev period and the compact between the elites and the workers may be weakened. An increase in labor unrest, work stoppages, industrial demonstrations, and growing communal dissatisfaction is a clear possibility. The degree to which this will occur may have an effect upon the allocation policies adopted by the government.

In the new situation, the nationality problems may also become aggravated. This may be the case regardless of the kind of policy which the leadership adopts vis-a-vis the non-Russian regions. The ability of the Soviet leadership in the
1970s to contain the nationality problem is partly related to the fact that the nationality areas enjoyed a quicker growth than the rest of the country, especially growth in the standard of living and in the conditions of the rural sector. If the party, under conditions of greater stringency of resources, decides to slow growth of those regions, the relative peace in Soviet relations among the nationalities will weaken.

But, in this respect, the leadership's manner of responding to the dilemma posed by the new demographic trend in the growth of Soviet labor resources will be the most important issue on the Soviet agenda concerning the nationality question in the 1980s. The need to exploit the increasing non-Slavic labor resources --particularly Central Asian-- poses two options for the Soviet policy makers: First, migration of the non-Slavic labor force to the industrial areas; second, an increase in the industrial development of Central Asia. Both options carry a major destabilizing potential for nationality relations in the USSR. In my opinion, the second option is more likely to be adopted. If this is the case, aside from the major investment costs that it will involve, it may produce, in some Central Asian regions, social displacement associated with rapid industrialization. It will also involve a rapid and massive influx of Russian bureaucrats into those regions, creating dissatisfactions and tensions between the local, native elite and the newcomers. The non-Russian republics, including those of Central Asia, have only recently developed native administrative and technical cadres sufficient to administer their own affairs without Russian help. Under these conditions, local elites' awareness of their own identity may increase and provide difficulties for the central authorities.

I would like also to suggest a number of consequences of the interaction of political and economic developments in the Soviet Union in the
the 1980's on Soviet behavior and development, which seem to be directly linked to Soviet foreign policy, and which could have important international repercussions.

First, one has to mention the impact of those developments on the military policy of the Soviet Union, especially on the question of the growth of military expenditures. The pressures will be clearly contradictory. On one hand, pressures will exist to keep up the further expansion of Soviet military might at any cost. In an era of declining achievement in other fields, Soviet military might will remain a showcase of achievement and glory of the Soviet state to an even greater extent. Moreover, military power will remain the dominant foreign policy resource of the Soviet Union for a long time to come. The inertia of the planned military build-up will maintain the importance of likelihood of high military spending, as well the fact that in periods of succession and interim leadership, the Soviet military establishment traditionally carries a greater political weight as the potential ally of many contending factions and groups.

On the other hand, pressures will develop to limit the growth of the Soviet military and to respond positively to timely and realistic proposals from the West for arms limitation and cut-backs. In a time of declining growth and increasingly scarce resources, the costs of a continuing military build-up at rates similar to those of the 1970's will impose a burden on the Soviet economy and polity much greater than at any time during the seventies. Pressures for cutting the military budget, unknown since the early 1960's, may develop among sectors of the leadership and elite groups which are competing for resources. The ties between the military-industrial complex and the upcoming generation of Soviet elites are
much weaker than they were with the elites of the Brezhnev era. The symbiosis of the Soviet political and military leadership, characteristic of the Brezhnev period, may break down or weaken considerably. One, however, should not have any illusions concerning this matter. If any configuration of Soviet leadership considers the basic security interests of the Soviet Union to be endangered or the hard-won parity with the West put into question, it will respond with a military build-up, regardless of the costs and sacrifices such a build-up will entail. This is why the slogan of regaining military superiority over the Soviet Union, so recently popular among some politicians and analysts in the United States, seems unrealistic. Yet what I am suggesting is that in the difficult and volatile political and economic environment of the 1980s, the new Soviet leadership's response to the demands of a continuous military build-up may not be as automatic—almost a conditioned reflex—as it was in the 1970s. Much, of course, depends upon the behavior of the American leadership, which must steer the difficult course between the absolute need to safeguard American strengths and interests and the need to be sensitive to new Soviet dilemmas and to avoid belligerent actions.

Second, the Soviet expansionism and international aggressiveness, which have lately caused so much concern in the West are rooted almost entirely in political and strategic reasons, which will almost certainly continue to push the Soviet Union on a quest for greater influence and power in the international arena. In terms of global interests, the Soviet Union is, after all, still a young and expanding power, fighting for its place in the sun. This in itself would pose an extremely difficult challenge to the West in the 1980s. What is disquieting, however, is that, in the 1980s, a new economic rationale may be added to the traditional reason for Soviet expansion.

In light of Soviet economic and political difficulties, I see two main
directions for such expansionism. The first is the obvious one and has to do with possible attempts to solve increasing oil problems through adventurism and expansionism in the Persian Gulf area. I do not at all suggest an inevitably forthcoming Soviet invasion of Iran. In the present circumstances, such an adventure seems almost out of the question. But circumstances do change, and in the long run a Soviet effort to secure Iranian oil cannot be excluded. The Iranian revolution is now only in its initial stages. The direction of and timetable for its further development and settlement are impossible to predict. If, for example, the irredentist pressures within Iran lead to a disintegration of the country and of its central government, or if leftist forces sympathetic to the Soviet Union assume an important voice in the Iranian revolution, the temptation for a Soviet intervention into Iranian affairs cannot be excluded, and would be maximized by internal economic and political difficulties.

Expansionism into the oil regions is not, of course, the only way in which the Soviet Union may try to solve its energy problem by means of foreign policy. A much more likely development may consist of overtures to friendly Arab regimes (e.g., Iraq, Libya) and the intimidation of conservative regimes (e.g., Saudi Arabia) for the purpose of buying large quantities of oil and of negotiating barter agreements. If successful, (and they may well be), these agreements will be of a clearly political nature, because the civilian goods involved in the barter will not be competitive on the world market.

The second direction is less obvious, but it may grow in importance in the 1980s: The temptation to exercise increasing political and military pressures on Western Europe in order to secure high technology on favorable terms for the Soviet economy. The Soviet need for Western technology, know-how, and especially credits will, in all probability, increase in the 1980s. The pattern of recent Soviet-
American relations indicates that there is a rather limited likelihood that the United States will serve as a key partner of the Soviet Union in mutual economic enterprises. The economic role of Western Europe within the Soviet Union will probably increase substantially. In order to serve their political and economic interests, Soviet foreign policy in the 1980s will probably try to decouple the detente with the United States from detente with America's Western allies. The mood in Western Europe today and probably in the 1980s as well is such that, despite growing signs of Soviet expansionist ambitions, the political classes are determined to have detente with the Soviet Union at almost any price; without meaningful Soviet concessions on military matters and without a change in the direction of the military balance in Europe itself. This seems to me to be particularly true not only for France, but for the most influential European country, West Germany. In their efforts to improve economic relations with Western Europe and to split further the Western alliance, the Soviet Union may adopt a tactic of taking a hard stance vis-a-vis the United States regarding strategic global military and political matters, with which the Europeans have little concern, while at the same time taking a concessionary attitude towards European questions. But the policy of a European carrot does not exclude a simultaneous policy of a European stick. The Soviets cannot help noticing that the European attitude toward their increasing military power is rather conciliatory and that European resistance to Soviet political pressures is weaker than ever before. In any case, one can expect, for political and economic reasons, an increased Soviet attention to the European theater and an increased Soviet need to expand their economic relations with Western Europe.

Third, the political and economic situation of the Soviet Union may have significant and troublesome effects on their East European empire in the 1980s. Soviet problems will coincide with similar ones in some of the East European
countries, particularly in the key country, Poland. The Soviet commitment to maintain control of its East European empire is unshakeable and will certainly remain to be the case in the foreseeable future. But, due to Soviet economic difficulties and to the arsenal of tools relied upon in controlling Eastern Europe, intimidation through naked force and the threat of the use of such force assume the greatest importance. Nevertheless, the economic interdependence of Eastern Europe and the USSR is in a decline. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union will have a much more limited supply of economic muscle with which to maintain its hold on Eastern Europe. A situation will develop where although most East European countries will remain politically dependent on the Soviet Union, they will become increasingly economically dependent on the West. A crucial question here is the degree to which the Soviets will be forced to cut their oil deliveries to Eastern Europe, and to let the East European nations compete for available oil resources on the international market. The East European countries are ill-prepared for such competition. Their exportable resources and hard currency reserves are very limited. The cut-off of Soviet oil deliveries, even if partial, may undercut the already precarious economic situation of many East European countries, particularly that of Poland. In Eastern Europe, serious economic difficulties have a way of being directly translatable into social and political unrest and internal destabilization, to which the Soviets are very sensitive. One cannot help but expect a strong movement for basic economic reforms which may be unacceptable to the Soviets in a country such as Poland. Until now, the Soviet Union has been quite lucky in its dealings with its East European empire. The revolts, rebellions, unrest, and reform movements in those countries were almost always isolated in one country. It may well be that in the coming decade Soviet luck will run out and they will have to concern themselves with increasingly restive elites and populations in more
than one East European country. 23

Fourth, the expansion of foreign trade, the infusion of advanced foreign
technology, and the attendant questions of credits, foreign indebtedness, and
corporative arrangements will acquire an importance for the Soviet leadership
surpassing even that of the 1970s. The significance of this question may appreciably
influence Soviet foreign policy. Is the infusion of foreign technology and economic
cooperation with advanced Western nations regarded by Soviet leaders as a temporary
affair or as a long-range commitment? It is unanswerable a priori. The answer
depends partly on their ability to find domestic resources to arrest the decline in
productive growth, which, even with major economic reforms, is very unlikely; and
partly on the consistency and the cost to the Soviet Union of Western policies and
cooperative arrangements.

The importance of the infusion of foreign technology for the Soviet leadership
lies not only in its own intrinsic value, but, also in the largely misguided belief
that technological imports will diffuse throughout the economy and significantly
influence Soviet domestic technological progress without major reforms. The need
for foreign technology and know-how, and especially the much greater need for credit
arrangements in the difficult 1980s, is not in itself a sufficient or overriding
factor in determining future Soviet foreign policy. But one may presume that this
need will, by means of the domestic political process, exert an additional pressure
to restore detente with the United States, and to preserve and enlarge the economic
relations with American and European allies, partly through intimidation and partly
through concessions.

Fifth, the struggle for the top leadership position under conditions of
economic stringencies and the efforts of the first victorious contender to solidify
his position and to amass all the attributes that a strong leadership may create, at
some points in the 1980s, a situation where foreign adventures may look attractive. The basis for the struggle for top leadership in the Soviet Union consists almost always of the building of alliances within the Politburo and among various elite groups, and of the advancement of a program on which such alliances are often transitory, temporary, and tactical in nature. From the long term perspective the problem of getting the country moving again and of providing an attractive program for resolving its economic difficulties will be one of the two cornerstones building alliances which will carry a contender to power. (The other cornerstone is the development and expansion of Soviet influence in the international arena.) On a short-term basis, the utilization of a timely opportunity for a foreign adventure as a rallying point for a leader, giving him the chance to show his mettle, cannot be excluded. This is especially true in a situation where the military establishment will be one of the key groups courted during the succession struggle, and at a time when the reserves available for the long-range improvement of the economic situation and for quick and flashy economic fixes will be in short supply.

Sixth, in the political-economic situation that will prevail in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, the Soviet leadership will search for methods in order to counteract the effects of the decline in the growth and possible stagnation in the population's standard of living, counteract the frictions which will develop among the elites, to justify the greater sacrifices which will be demanded, and mobilize the population for greater productivity. In all probability, coercive means will be used for these purposes, in a less-restrained manner than in the 1970s. An additional possibility has to be mentioned. It is highly probable that, in the political mood of the 1980s, the Soviet leadership will try to increase its persuasive, normative efforts for the purpose of mobilization and sacrifice.
One such effort may be, clearly, an attempt to recreate the atmosphere of a besieged fortress, to mobilize around the theme of external enemies, and to resort increasingly to a xenophobic public mood. Détente, particularly when it concerns relations with the United States, is dead at this point. The harsh conditions and demands that will prevail in the Soviet Union in the 1980's are not conducive to the mood of détente.

While I do not think that the need for an "external enemies" syndrome will constitute a crucial obstacle to the restoration of some sort of détente, if countervailing pressures are present, it still seems to me that this need will be an important factor in determining Soviet international behavior, particularly in the Soviet relationship with the United States and China.

The pressures of the economic situation on Soviet politics and policies, especially on foreign policy, will often be very contradictory. Yet their main effect will be to reinforce those tendencies which have been generated within the political system itself, and which would already have been present even without the influence of these economic issues. The economic realities of the 1980's will sharply strengthen the tendency toward a markedly less benign political climate than that of the 1970's, and will contribute immensely to an environment of sharp competition, confrontation, and discord. Without a doubt, the difficult economic issues will constitute, in my view, the most important content of the disputes, conflicts, and realignments which will accompany the Soviet successions.
The complex economic difficulties and the uncertain conditions of succession and strife will most likely create strong pressures for change in the Soviet system. The major dilemma of the Soviet system, as Thane Gustafson has remarked, is how to impose effectively new priorities on old structures and processes. What are the chances that, under the pressure of necessity, a successful attempt will be made to transform those old structures and processes? If by transformation one means market socialism, or anything even close to it, as for example the Hungarian model, then the odds are overwhelmingly against it.

First of all, the vested political and economic interests against such a change are very powerful, and will remain so even when the turnover of elites and leadership will be very high and when the pressure to get the country moving again will intensify. It is not only the political and economic apparatus which is afraid of the potentially negative political repercussions of such reforms, as well as the central planners and central bureaucracies whose amassed powers would decline, but also the medium and low-level managers and technocrats, who learned to live with the system and who are trained and experienced only in how to work within the system as it now exists. One author has aptly remarked: "After sixty years of experience with a socialist economy run by government agencies .... nearly everyone seems to have found ways to turn its shortcomings to individual advantage."
Secondly, as the preceding discussion suggests, the initiative and the push for such reform in the face of widespread and strong opposition at all levels will not come from a powerful coalition from below, but, to be even modestly successful, will require an energetic initiative and constant push from above, from a strong leadership, especially from the First Secretary.

An oligarchic leadership, which by its very nature has to act by means of bargaining, trade-offs, and compromises, is ill-suited for initiating and executing major reforms of structures, procedures, or even policies. Thus, the future of such reforms in the Soviet Union depends to a large degree on the inclination of the top leader, and on his ability to pursue and realize those inclinations.

One cannot expect such an initiative and push from the Brezhnev leadership during its last days in power. But can a more innovative leadership emerge during the coming succession? Even assuming that the emergent leader becomes convinced of the necessity for such far-reaching reforms — and this is a very big assumption — it will take a long time until he is strong enough to make serious efforts in this direction. If our predictions about the upcoming successions are correct, Brezhnev will be replaced by an old interim leader, probably Kirilenko, who will not have enough time to infuse the nominal position of First Secretary with the real powers required to push for a radical reform. Such a leader may emerge only during the second succession; but if the past is any indication, it will take him several years to amass the necessary powers. Moreover, in the process of amassing such powers it is unlikely, in the light of the powerful forces allied against radical reforms, that he could do it under the banner of
radical reform.

The conditions necessary for the top leadership to implement reforms are complex and contradictory. They require a divided leadership, from which through the process of purges -- a strong leader with a loyal, personal base of support will emerge. It is unlikely that such a leader can achieve this position of power while promoting radical reforms. However, once he achieves a position of strength, he must reverse his position and wholeheartedly promote these reforms.

Thirdly, when describing the Soviet political system under Brezhnev, we stressed the growing dependence of the leadership and the elites on the expertise and advice of professional groups. Stephen F. Cohen is probably quite right when he stresses that the spirit of reforms and liberalism is not dead in the USSR, but only dormant under the Brezhnev leadership. It is among the professional groups, especially among the economists, that one would probably find the greatest support for radical reforms. In light of their significant advisory capacity, it is very important that these groups unify the pro-reform advice which they provide to the leadership. (This, incidentally, was the case in Hungary, and was an important factor in explaining the implementation of their radical reforms.)

Yet in the Soviet Union, these groups are fragmented and divided in their orientation as to what kinds of reforms are needed. Moreover, they are easily manipulable by the various factions in the leadership and by the various sectoral and functional segments of the elites. If they continue to speak with a divided voice, they will neutralize their potential for
influencing liberal reform. Both the proponents and opponents of reform in the leadership will be able to find or to mobilize the support of experts for their respective positions.

Fourth, one should not minimize the purely economic and technical difficulties of a thorough reform in the Soviet Union. Such a reform would most certainly involve a temporary decline in production and in productivity, would significantly increase the need for real incentives, and would entail the enormous task of reeducating the labor force and the management. The difficult transitional period from the old to the new system would require very large reserves of capital and consumer goods.

Yet, the 1980's will be a period when the Soviet economy will be stretched to its outer limits, when planning will be especially taut, with reserves dwindling. Radical reform will be extremely difficult in such conditions. Here we again have a contradiction: in order for a reform to be initiated, an enormous pressure stemming from actual failures of the economic system must be present, but in order to be successful, a reform requires a cushion of economic performance which will subsidize the transition. The political risks of attempting a thorough reform during a period of economic decline must seem very great to the leadership, probably graver than the consequences of living with the old system and its shortcomings.

Fifth, Eastern Europe very often is regarded as the funnel through which Western influence and reformist tendencies are channeled to the Soviet Union. There is undoubtedly some truth in this assertion. But more often, Eastern Europe is a thoroughly conservative influence on the domestic Soviet scene. The very fact of the Soviets' total commitment to existence of Eastern Europe as their imperial sphere of influence
and the potential instability of the East European domestic and international situation, exerts a powerful pull on Soviet domestic policy. The more restless Eastern Europe becomes, the more conservative this influence.

When attempting a thorough -- or even timid -- liberalizing reform in the Soviet Union, any configuration of Soviet leaders must anticipate its potential impact upon Eastern Europe. Such an impact could only encourage the forces of liberalism in Eastern Europe, the ascendency of which, in the final analysis, would endanger Soviet rule over its East European empire. In these circumstances, it would require an enormously confident -- or desperate -- Soviet leadership to initiate internal policies which would undermine its external holdings. The situation in Eastern Europe in the 1980's will probably be very difficult economically, explosive socially, and precarious politically, and will influence the Soviet leadership in an anti-reformist direction.

Sixth, the multi-national and nominally federal nature of the Soviet system also exerts a conservative influence on reformist tendencies among the Russian leadership and elites. A radical liberalizing reform would undoubtedly diffuse economic authority within the Soviet Union. Such a diffusion -- if the pay-offs are sufficiently high -- might be tolerated by the leadership with regard to the Russian elites and sub-elites, but much less so with regard to the non-Russians.
The Soviet leadership during the Brezhnev period was able to achieve, through a shrewd carrot and stick policy, relatively peaceful relationships between the centrally-dominant Russian elite and the non-Russians. But the balance of those relations is quite precarious, and is susceptible to destructive conflicts on both the mass and the elite levels. To institute a thorough liberalizing economic reform in the Soviet Union could -- and probably would -- upset the existing balance. In the minds of the Russian leadership, it may be tantamount to the acceptance of the restructuring of the relationship between the nationalities in the Soviet Union, a price which I highly doubt they are willing to pay, and a danger which they would hardly like to face.

Seventh, a thorough liberalizing economic reform in the Soviet Union would constitute an overhaul of the system which would require a basic change in the working style of the leadership, elites, and sub-elites, and would have -- as mentioned before -- a significant impact upon other spheres of Soviet life. One does not embark on such an extremely serious undertaking, to say the least, without being convinced that the old system is really played-out and absolutely needs to be abandoned. This is not the case with the old leadership and the elites, and there is no compelling evidence that the emerging leadership and elites share such a conviction.

It seems that the old leaders and elites believe in the basic viability of the system in which they work, and which they directed throughout their lives. They are realistic people who see many of the system's operating shortcomings, and they are trying to improve its functioning. But they have not lost their faith in the correctness of the system, and are not
ready to abandon it. Although they are no longer as naively optimistic as Khrushchev once was, their outlook on the present and the future of the entire system remains basically optimistic.

We know little about the potential of the new younger leaders and elites. We know that they are much less patient with the deficiencies of the system than are the present leaders. We know that they would like to see the country moving again. We cannot exclude the possibility that there are individuals among them who are fed up with the system. But the basic impression one gets is that they do not feel that the potential of the system is exhausted. They believe, instead, that the system is not run well and that they will be able to run it much better. Such an attitude is typical of successors in all countries. Only when they themselves are running the system do they acquire the conviction that it is the system which is the problem. This, of course, may happen, but it is equally possible that by the time they assume the leadership, they will have become so involved with the day-to-day operations of the system and its innumerable emergencies that they will be incapable of devoting their attention to any overview of the system, its basic flaws, and its long-range future. What is suggested here is that it is extremely difficult for the question of the basic viability of the system to enter the political agenda in the Soviet Union. But without it, a thorough overhaul of the system is unlikely. (An item of related importance is how the Soviet leaders and elites perceive the long-range outlook for the Soviet economy, its prospects beyond the 1980's. There are indications that they are conscious that the 1980's will be difficult. But the question is whether they regard it as a temporary aberration which can be corrected by
the turn of the decade. Their evaluations in regard to the energy problem might be decisive here. If they consider that the energy outlook in the 1990's will be much improved over the 1980's, it will create an additional argument against attempting to revamp the system.

Eighth, a key obstacle to a successful liberal reform in the Soviet Union concerns the mechanism of the reform: i.e., the usual pattern in which reforms have developed under the conditions of post-Stalinist Soviet politics. To be effective, the introduction of far-reaching reforms must be carried out across the board without hesitation, and not in a piecemeal fashion. But, until the effects of such a reform are tested and recognized as effective, the necessary determination and persistence will most likely be lacking.

As we know from past Soviet experience, the response to this contradiction tends to be largely self-defeating. From the various possibilities for reform, the leadership selects a compromise solution which will cause the least disturbance and will require the least cost and effort. Instead of introducing an across-the-board reform with determination, they try it on an experimental basis and on a limited scale. Consequently, the results of the reform are far from conclusive and even disappointing, an outcome that, in turn, fuels the arguments of opponents who prevent its further implementation. The leadership reverts to the traditional way of doing business and continues to tinker half-heartedly with the system. Instead of transforming the traditional economic system, the well-intentioned, piecemeal reforms are absorbed and changed by the system. This political mechanism explains the inherent stability of the traditional economic system and the inherent instability of reform efforts in the Soviet Union.

To sum up, I am arguing that, despite the unprecedented pressures
brought about by the difficult economic situation and the very rare opportunities offered by the coming succession, the odds are against a successful, far-reaching reform, which would move in the direction of market socialism. I am not arguing that reforms in this direction will not be attempted. Rather, such reforms will be hesitant, linked in scope, and ultimately absorbed by the system instead of changing it. Furthermore, other types of reforms are more likely to emerge.29

One of the most likely courses of development is that the Soviet leadership will continue to tinker with the economic system, intensifying its "organizational" and "mobilizational" reforms. Characteristically, such reforms try, and sometimes succeed, in improving a particular aspect of the system or in counteracting a shortcoming but do not abolish the system's basic parameters. In other words, they do not approach the "watershed" dividing this kind of reform from one which would change the system. The late Polish economist, Janusz Zielinski, suggested: "It seems that such a watershed does exist and turns on the abolition (or retention) of direct planning at plan executants level. It is extremely important to notice that abolition of direct planning at plan executants level means also the abolition of the ratchet principle -- planning (and rewarding) from the achieved level -- with all its far-reaching negative economic consequences, both in the sphere of plan construction (bargaining for low-high input-output plans, falsifying information in the planning process) and its implementation (keeping "reserves" for use in the next planning period, which means keeping actual enterprise productivity permanently below what its managers know to be possible.)"30
There is a further probability that another option also will be selected. It may occur at the margins of the official economy, and be directed at relieving the pressures on the consumer sector. As suggested by Joseph Berliner, this would entail "a NEP-type reform which retains the centrally-planned economy largely intact, but allows for a flourishing small-scale private sector. Since it entails no retreat from central planning but, rather, the development of a new secondary economy that offers some promise of spurring new imitation and innovation, it may be entertained seriously by the proposed succession leadership." 31

Finally, we should consider the prospects of revolution of power in the Soviet Union and its influence on reform activities. In some areas, the stability of the Soviet system is narrowly based. It over-relies on political controls, administrative organization, and conscious manipulation and interventionism; and it is still not entirely based on socialization, tradition, and internalized controls. In the difficult conditions of the 1980's, one cannot exclude the possibility that large segments of the Soviet working class will imitate the behavior of the Polish workers and acquire a major influence on the economic policies of the Soviet government. Such an outcome, however unlikely, need not signify a turn in the Soviet leadership's policy towards the basic reform of the economic system. It will certainly necessitate a change in the distributive policies in favor of the consumer, but it may go hand in hand with the retention of the traditional economic system. The experience of East European countries demonstrates that the average worker who fights for a greater share in the system is not a proponent of fundamental economic change.
In sum, we can anticipate no fundamental changes in the Soviet Union during the 1980's despite intense and divisive discussions concerning economic reforms, a number of organizational policy initiatives, experimentation with the economic structure, and significant political conflict.

Some might consider my analysis of the prospect of systemic change unduly pessimistic. The confluence of conditions necessary for such a transformation may seem too restrictive and exaggerated to those who think in terms of a historical process which has to transform Communist societies. It is, of course, always easier to predict continuities on the basis of past experience. The difficulty in foreseeing discontinuities lies exactly in the fact that past patterns of behavior and past experience can give little guidance to the analyst. But perhaps, as Gregory Grossman has suggested, we are still—failing to appreciate fully the complicated conjuncture of favorable circumstances necessary for a successful transition of the Soviet system beyond its traditional mold.
FOOTNOTES


3. Consider the following data on age groups in the Soviet oligarchy in 1980. Among full members of the Politburo, 50% are 70 years old and older, while 7.1% are 60 years old and younger. As for that institution's alternate members, the respective figures are 22.2% and 33.3%. Fifty per cent of the Central Committee's Secretariat is 70 years old and older, while 20% is 60 years old and younger. Within the Presidium of the Council on Ministers, 35.7% of the members fit into our first age cohort, and 7.1% into the second. The figures for the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet are 26.6% and 33.3%, respectively. All told, 28.4% of the members of the present Soviet oligarchy are 70 years old and older, and 25.5% are 60 years old and younger.


11. A detailed discussion of the succession is contained in a special issue devoted to this subject: *Journal of International Affairs*, 32, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1978), especially the chapters by Seweryn Bialer and Myron Rush.

12. Consider the following data on the average ages of the Soviet oligarchy for the year 1952, 1964, and 1980. Regarding the full members of the Politburo, the figures were 55.4, 61.0, and 70.1 years of age, respectively. The average ages of that institution's alternate members were 50.9, 52.8, and 62.5. The median ages of those serving on the Central Committee's Secretariat in 1952, 1964, and 1980 were 52.0, 54.1, and 67 years. The Presidium of the Council of Ministers had average ages of 54.9, 55.1, and 68.1 for those three periods. All told, the representatives of the above-mentioned institutions had average ages of 54.1 in 1952, 56.0 in 1960, and 66.8 in 1980.

13. A breakdown of the ages of leaders in the central government and party elite in 1978 goes as follows. The members of the Council of Ministers had a median age of 65, with the ministers averaging 65.1 years of age and the chairmen of state committees--64.2. The figure for the heads of departments of the Central Party Secretariat was 63.6 for the armed forces' high command--65, and for the armed forces' political directorate--64. The leaders occupying all the above-mentioned national posts had an average age of 64.7 years. The highest-ranking bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs averaged 64.5 years of age in 1978, while the median age of leaders in the fields of communication and culture was 62.1. The top trade union officials had an average age of 58.6 years.

14. The post-Stalin generation is still represented to only a very small
degree in the central leadership and elite in 1980, comprising only 12.5% of these leaders whereas the Great Purge, World War II and late-Stalin generations make up 67.5%, 10%, and 10% of the members, respectively. However, on the republican and provincial levels, the post-Stalin generation already has significant representation among the leadership. Listed below are the data indicating the percentage of post-Stalin generation representatives occupying the top positions in various institutions in 1978: Presidium, Council of Ministers (RSFSR)–30.7%; first OBKOM secretaries (RSFSR: Russian provinces)–32%; second secretaries of republics (Russians)–45/4%; republican and first OBKOM secretaries (Ukrainians and Belorussians)–47.6%; Russian first OBKOM secretaries in non-Russian areas of RSFSR and non-Slav republics–38.5%; all above mentioned institutions–36.9%. Seventy-five percent of the leading party and Soviet officials of Moscow and Leningrad are in this category. Among the elites of the seven non-Slav republics of Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan, Kirgizia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Moldavia, the average age and representation of the Post-Stalin generation runs as follows: The Republican Secretaries have an average age of 55.3 and 27% of the positions are filled by representatives of the post-Stalin generation. The median age within the Presidium of the Council of Ministers is 55.7%, with 33.3% of the bureaucrats having entered the party after Stalin’s death. The Central Committee’s department heads average 51.1% years of age, with 46.1% of this group being comprised of post-Stalin generation representatives. Members of the Council of Ministers have median age of 54.2, and 35.2% of the leaders represent the generation in question. The percentage
of RAYKOM and GORKOM first secretaries having entered the CPSU after 1953 is 66%, with the average age of this group of bureaucrats being 47.8. RAYISPOLKOM and GORISPOLKOM chairman (including also some chairman of provinces) average 47.2 years of age, with 73.2% of the group representing the post-Stalin generation. For a more detailed discussion of this subject see Bailer, Seweryn: Stalin's Successor's: Leadership, Stability & Change in the Soviet Union, (Cambridge University Press, N.Y.: 1980), Ch. 6.

16. See chapter by Daniel L. Bond and Herbert S. Levine in this volume for conditions under which the energy question will not act as a cumulative factor depressing Soviet growth and may, therefore, not limit the utilization of existing economic capacities.


20. For a description of an American policy which will both safeguard U.S. interests and avoid belligerence, see Robert Legvold, "Containment without Confrontation," Foreign Policy, no. 40 (Fall 1980), 74-98.

22. For a discussion of the present state of the European alliance see Fritz Stern, "Germany in a Semi-Gaullist Europe," *Foreign Affairs*, 58, no. 4 (Spring 1980), 867-86; Giovanni Agnelli, "East-West Trade: A European View," *Foreign Affairs*, 58, no. 5 (Summer 1980) 10163


29. It is not clear at all whether even a radical reform that will both change the success indicators and dismantle direct planning will
largely solve Soviet problems of management flexibility and innovation as long as the full employment constraint is present. And to remove or decisively weaken this constraint in the Soviet-type economy is almost impossible, as the experience of the 1968 reform in Hungary has shown. This skepticism about the effectiveness of even radical reforms is most forcefully expressed by David Granick, Enterprise Guidance in Eastern Europe: A Comparison of Four Socialist Economies (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975). See especially his discussion of the Hungarian reform on p. 316.
