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PREFACE

This report is one of 13 separate papers by different authors which, assembled, will constitute the chapters of a Festschrift volume in honor of Professor Vera S. Dunham, to be published by Westview Press. The papers will be distributed individually to government readers by the Council in advance of editing and publication by the Press, and therefore, may not be identical to the versions ultimately published.

The Contents for the entire series appears immediately following this Preface.

As distributed by the Council, each individual report will contain this Preface, the Contents, the Editor's Introduction for the pertinent division (I, II, or III) of the volume, and the separate paper itself.
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IV. Sources of Soviet Stability

Vera Dunham is primarily a literary scholar, but the implications of her work go far beyond the purely literary. Her analysis of literature is informed by sociological insights, and her conclusions about Soviet society and culture have influenced Western scholarly interpretation of the Soviet system as a whole. Disputing the view that the Soviet system, lacking popular legitimacy, remains basically unstable, Professor Dunham has identified sources of social support for the regime and emphasized elements of stability and cohesiveness in the Soviet system.

The following essays explore the question of stability -- which may imply inertia and ossification as well as systemic strength -- with reference to the economic and political system of the contemporary Soviet Union.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

This paper, the bulk of which was evidently written before the advent of the Gorbachev era, reviews some of the sources of stability in the Soviet Union, (several of which constitute formidable obstacles to change) and concludes that in the rest of this decade the Soviet regime faces a crisis of effectiveness which is greater and more difficult of resolution than any of the issues faced in the 1970's. Whether and how that crisis is met may raise new dangers of instability.

In the final analysis, stability of regimes depends on the strength of their legitimacy as understood by their population, on the extent and intensity of support for the structure, goals and policies of the regimes. The question of legitimacy is especially important for revolutionary regimes in which the revolution has ostensibly broken with traditional sources of authority and the regime still draws on the revolution itself as the key source of legitimacy.

Despite the impression that the popular legitimacy of the Soviet regime has declined, especially in the last 5-6 years, the regime still enjoys both significant popular support and, as importantly, the absence of strong opposition. There are a number of factors which both explain and illustrate this situation.

*Prepared by the staff of the National Council
The Soviet regime "enjoys" the lack of democratic tradition in its own and its tsarist past. As a matter of fact, there are many indications that the erosion of popular legitimacy in the last years is connected not with any democratic yearning of the Soviet populace but with the lack of strong rule and order. The popular desire for a strong boss in the last years of Brezhnev and the short rule of Chernenko were unmistakable. This lack of democratic tradition and a desire for strong rule is not limited to the lower classes but also prevalent among the professional strata, let alone in the bureaucratic hierarchies. In those strata, including even parts of the dissent movement at home and abroad, the contempt for and isolation from the working classes, the fear that democracy would give license to the lowest instincts of the popular mass, and that a disintegration of the Soviet regime in its present form would reawaken the popular violence which reappears in Russian history so often, is implicitly and sometimes even explicit in the views of the professional strata and the middle class.

Popular legitimacy rests on the active support of a part of the population and the political disinterest of the rest of the population. In the Soviet Union, the active support for the regime comes only from a part of the population. It is the part which actively participates in the political process on the command level or in the Soviet political, economic, cultural micro-institutions. This part of the population is not small at all if one considers that it centers it the communist party
which includes almost one third of the adult male urban population, and includes the activists of the very numerous Soviet intermediary associations and organizations, such as the local Soviets, the Komsomol, the Trade Unions, the DOSAAF, etc. As important as this support might be, the political apathy of the rest of the population concerning "high" politics, performs a singular political role in underwriting the regime as it exists today.

Despite its revolutionary origin, the Soviet Union started relatively early to utilize and promote the symbols of traditional Russian legitimacy. Overall, the Soviets were successful in tapping the sources of traditional legitimacy—Russian nationalism, Russian international ambitions, Russian messianic views on their national and international mission. In a specific way, the Soviet world view is a result of the fusion of Marxist-Leninist ideology and Russian nationalism and messianism. In a specific way the official Soviet outlook also constitutes a reconciliation of the Slavophile and Westernizing streams in Russian political thought.

Because of the Russified sources of popular legitimization, this legitimization is strongest among the Russian population and weakest among the non-Russians and non-Slavs.

The active legitimizing popular support for Soviet power is limited, as shown partly by the widespread deviant behavior. Yet the acquiescence of the population, the dramatic and overwhelming sense of a lack of alternatives, is very strong.
The Soviet authoritarian system requires much less support than democratic systems, and can function and survive with only limited active support. The foundations of the Soviet system rest on both power and authority, but their mix is different than in democratic societies; being skewed in favor of power over authority.

Finally, the strength of Soviet popular legitimacy in the post-Stalin era, while not tested through major crises or traumatic events, has nevertheless passed some tests: the death of Stalin itself and the end of personal dictatorship and mass terror, and the anti-Stalin campaign of Khrushchev; and last but not least, the emergence and development of political dissent in the Soviet Union. The continuity of Soviet power after Stalin's death was immediate and uninterrupted. The preservation of mass political obedience despite the abolishment of mass terror was never in question. The destabilizing effects of the anti-Stalin campaign were clear but exactly because of their negative effects from the leadership's point of view the campaign was abandoned relatively quickly and without major negative repercussions. Finally, the Soviet leadership and its power machine was able to isolate and neutralize the political dissent movement to such a degree that today within the Soviet Union it is only a shadow of its own post-Stalin past.

The existence and strength of Soviet popular legitimacy should not be exaggerated. Such legitimacy is without doubt much weaker than in traditional societies or modernized, democratic societies. Yet it is important to note that a
regime's legitimacy defines not only the extent of its popular support but the relation between the extent of such support and the ability of the elites to rule and extract obedience. The relative narrowness and thinness of Soviet popular legitimacy is counterweighted by the commitment of enormous powers of coercion, control and manipulation at the disposal of the regime. The invisible hand of political legitimation through internalization and socialization is supplemented more than in any other industrialized country by the visible hand of organization and control. In a future time of major trouble or protracted crisis, the limitation of Soviet popular legitimacy may create serious dangers of survival for the Soviet regime. But with respect to everyday life, and more or less "normal" challenges, as long as the will to rule of the Soviet leadership and political elite remains as strong as it is today, the continuation of Soviet authoritarianism is assured.

Legitimacy of regimes has another dimension, as important or maybe even more important than popular legitimacy, namely, the regime's legitimacy among the system's elites. The unity of the elites and leadership provides for the ability of the regime's leadership to utilize reserve powers in time of challenge and crisis. It is a legitimizing factor of decisive importance which answers such questions as - Will the security forces shoot against the population if given the order to do so? Will the army support the political leadership in times of major unrest? Will the cohesion of the party survive during difficult and challenging times? Will the compact between the leadership
and elites continue in times of failure?

In the Soviet present and in the foreseeable future, the answer to all those questions should be affirmative. This is why the systemic crisis to which the Soviet regime is exposed at the present and will be even more exposed is not one of survival but of effectiveness. In the Russian experience, it was the elite dimension of the legitimacy of the existing regime which made the difference between the outcome of the 1905 revolution and the February and October revolutions in 1917.

The relative stability of the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era does not of course create conditions which insure such stability in the 1980's. The nature of the challenge to the Soviet regime in the 1980's, which becomes more and more clear, is greater and more difficult than the challenges which it faced in the 1970's. The combination of the economic crisis of growth and the socio-political crisis of popular discipline and bureaucratic inertia, of the national crisis of corruption and the spiritual crisis of nihilism and cultural pessimism may produce instabilities of the regime which were absent or weak until now. The successor leadership can afford the luxury of inertia at their own peril. They will have to face the dilemmas of economic reform in the Soviet Union, the danger to labor peace if economic stagnation and military growth continue, a sharper interelite conflict about the allocations of declining growth resources, the greater assertiveness of non-Russian elites and population, the decline of the Soviet empire in
Eastern Europe, the danger of a new arms race spiral which they can ill afford, and the disintegration of their foreign policy line if even a semblance of detente with the United States cannot be restored. How the Soviet leadership meets these challenges will largely determine the level of stability and the dangers of instability of the Soviet regime in the last decades of the twentieth century.
A prominent student of socio-political revolutions concluded towards the end of his career that the major question to be resolved is not why revolutions occurred in the Twentieth Century, but rather why, considering the conditions in so many countries in the world, socio-political revolutions were not much more frequent. That is to say, what are the conditions of stability of modern nation-states?

A brief note on the meaning of instability is in order. One can, in my opinion, recognize two meanings of instability which are quite divergent from each other. In the first meaning, the crisis would refer to a state of affairs in which the very survival of the political system is at stake. The second would depict a situation in which the effectiveness of the system is strongly impaired, but the survival of the system is not in question. Of course, the systemic crisis of effectiveness may, at some point, transform itself into a systemic crisis of survival if it is not successfully counteracted. But these two dimensions of instability are quite distinct from each other.

In my opinion, the Soviet Union is and will be for the foreseeable future, in the throes of a systemic crisis of effectiveness with no signs that its intensity is abating. I do not believe, however, that the Soviet state is, or will be in the 1980s, in danger of bankruptcy, nor will its people be in a revolutionary mood. The conditions of stability and instability of the Soviet Union which I will dis-
cuss concern, therefore, on the one hand, various degrees of effectiveness of the Soviet leadership in attaining its proclaimed goals; on the other hand, the extent to which those goals are ambitious or rather declining in the tasks which they set for the Soviet people and elites. I propose to discuss the conditions of Soviet stability in the past three decades.

There are still some writers in the West who treat the Soviet Union as a giant socio-political experiment which has already failed or will fail in the near or distant future. There are others who in a similar vein consider the Soviet system as an "unnatural growth" on the global body politic which should be excluded from the allegedly tolerant Western attitude to the existence of a pluralistic world. Yet the Soviet system has already existed for over two-thirds of a century—a period sufficiently long in the dynamic twentieth century to mock the idea of its "experimental" character and to proclaim its ability so far to adapt and adjust to its internal and international environment. As to its "unnaturalness," there is very little in the Soviet system inconsistent with the national and imperialist tradition from which it grew and developed. As a matter of fact, as Zbigniew Brzezinski remarked in his article about the Soviet Union today, "From the Future to the Past," the Soviet socio-political-economic tendency of development is now much closer to the Russian past than to the original scheme of the founders of the Soviet state.

An entirely different question is whether the Soviet system fits into the dynamic socio-economic and political-participa-
tion revolution which is still shaping the advanced capitalist societies in the second half of the twentieth century—to which the answer is that the Soviet Union fits into this cardinal process in a very limited way. And, of course, it is also a basically different question whether the Soviet Union, as its founders arrogantly hoped represents the wave of the future for the world at large—to which with some confidence we can now say that the universalistic aspirations and claims of the Soviet Union have not been and will not be validated by history.

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

Without any doubt, the key question regarding the stability of the Soviet system in the post-Stalin era concerns the viability and effectiveness of the coercive apparatus and policies. During the rule of Stalin, Soviet society and elites were virtually paralyzed by the terror which was both massive and unpredictable. The social peace in the Soviet Union under Stalin was that of a cemetery. After Stalin died, Beria was killed, and the KGB apparatus was purged and placed firmly under the control of the party, the major question was whether the Soviet system could
survive without mass terror.

The proponents of the theory of totalitarianism on the one end of the system, and unorthodox Marxists, such as Isaac Deutscher, on the other end of the spectrum considered mass terror to be the decisive glue of the Soviet system, and expected in the first case a return to mass terror and in the second case a basic change in the Soviet system. Both were proven wrong. They were correct, however, in identifying the abolishment of mass terror as being the most dramatic and important change in a post-Stalinist Soviet Union.

Aside from the crucible of the Second World War, the abolishment of mass terror was the greatest test of the limits of the Soviet system. How and why did the Soviet Union survive this test? I see three key groups of reasons for the Soviet survival without mass terror. First of all, for the generations brought up under Stalin and their children, the memory of the Great Terror served for many years — and even now—as a restraint on unorthodox behavior. There was and still is in the back of the mind of the generations brought up under Stalin, or socialized by their families who had lived under Stalin, an instinctive fear that argues and suggests the wisdom of conventional behavior because of the uncertainty of the future, because of the real possibility that mass terror would be introduced again. In my travels to Russia I encountered this kind of an attitude so often as to make me believe that it is a generalized pattern of behavior that diminishes in intensity only very slowly.

Secondly, while the mass terror was abolished in post-Stalin Russia, the apparatus and mechanism of terror were purged but not
dismantled. The Soviet Union without mass terror is still a highly authoritarian and highly coercive police state. The highly coercive nature of the Soviet political system differs from the terroristic times of Stalin by its magnitude, by its predictability—one is tempted to say rationality—and by the nature of its punishments commensurate by Soviet standards to the nature and extent of deviant behavior of those who are punished.

The army of police informers which covers the Soviet Union in a tight net precludes the formation of intermediate and independent associations which, if not controlled or destroyed, could challenge Soviet power. Moreover, gradually after Khrushchev's ouster the police apparatus was rehabilitated and assumed a growing role in everyday Soviet life. While during the Khrushchev period with its anti-Stalin campaign the visibility and prerogatives of the police were limited, the Andropov succession marks the final rehabilitation of the KGB as the junior partner of the party apparatus in ruling the Soviet Union. What still remains untouched is the exclusion of police methods from the intra-elite competition and struggle.

Moreover, the abolishment of the mass terror of the Stalin era and its supplanting by a “normal” highly coercive police state, while keeping very high the dangers of deviant political activities, diminished the dangers of deviant economic behavior. The energies of the Soviet working classes, middle class and officialdom were channeled not into political activities and spiritual aspirations, but into bribery, corruption and economic crimes. The economic deviant behavior, while costly to the attainment of the Soviet leadership's economic goals, is not politically very dangerous. It
acts as a substitute for political aspirations, and to some extent, as I will discuss later, performs the function of a safety valve for the pent-up dissatisfactions of the broad strata of Soviet society.

Finally, the limited impact of the abolishment of terror on the stability of the Soviet system points also in the direction of recognizing that Soviet stability both now and even in the Stalinist period did and does rest on factors other than mass terror and a highly coercive police state. I will now turn to an evaluation of those non-coercive dimensions and mechanisms of Soviet stability in the post-Stalin era.

Aside from coercive measures the stability of political regimes, as we all know from innumerable examples, depends on economic performance and on the ability of those regimes to satisfy the material needs of various strata of the society. Yet it should be remembered that this factor is a relative one, that is to say, it concerns not the absolute level of economic performance, but rather the relation of the performance to the expectations of the population. From this point of view I will argue that Soviet economic performance in the post-Stalin era was not outdistanced in a radical way by the rising expectations of the key strata of Soviet society, the workers, the peasants, and the professional and middle classes.

We are all well aware that in the 1960's and particularly the 1970's Western societies underwent a revolution of rising expectations, whereby the real and unprecedented improvement in the standard of living was outrun by the exaggerated expectations of the population and by its evaluation of what is just and attainable.
Such a revolution of rising expectations did not occur in the
Soviet Union. Due probably to their past experiences and to the
learned process of discounting the promises of the government, the
expectations of the various strata of Soviet society were and
remain quite low.

The Soviet economic performance of the 1960's and 1970's with
regard to the improvement of the popular standard of living was
probably not radically below what the Soviet population did expect
from the regime. Concentrating on the present serious difficulties
of the Soviet economy, one can easily forget that the standard of
living of the Soviet population changed very substantially in the
post-Stalin decades. The urban working class saw a major improve-
ment in its living conditions: the growth of the minimum wage, a
major increase in the standard of living, better food supply—parti-
cularly regarding higher quality items such as meat, milk and butter—
a radical expansion of industrial consumer-durable goods, and an
improvement in the expenditures for collective social welfare. The
peasants for the first time in the Soviet post-collectivization era
became integrated into Soviet society as full-fledged citizens. They
received internal passports, were included in the social security
program, were guaranteed a minimal cash income, were able to insure
their collective farms against bad harvests, and altogether achieved
with regard to durable and non-durable industrial consumer products
a standard only ten years behind that of the industrial population.
With regard to the Soviet professional and middle classes, one can
say with assurance that for the first time in Soviet history they
were able to attain some of the consumer items available
at the beginning of the era of Western mass consump-
In Stalin's time the stratification of Soviet society was to a large extent a division between the nachal'stvo—the upper class of officialdom—and the rest of society. In the post-Stalin era there developed a differentiated stratification matrix.

Of course the Soviet standard of living today is so much lower for every class of society than that of its Western counterparts as to place it in a different era of development of mass consumption societies. Yet as low as it is, it is a marked improvement over the Stalinist period and, most importantly, does not seem to express a radical gap between what is expected and what exists. (In this respect I would venture a guess that the biggest gap between expectations and performance exists with regard to the Soviet professional and middle classes in whose case, however, the danger to the stability of the Soviet regime, for many reasons which will be discussed later, is probably the lowest.) Finally, one should add that the enormous expansion of unofficial activities, in which almost everybody participates and from which almost everybody gains, provides a social safety valve for the material expectations which the official system does not provide. The unofficial economic activities, the stealing, bribery, exchange, the whole na levo network were conducted in the 1970's with very limited risk, and constituted in fact a secondary redistribution of the national income, thus keeping the Soviet standard of living above its official data and measurements.

A very major factor of stability concerns the acceptance of an existing stratification system by the society at large. One of the most destructive popular moods which is highly conducive to instability is that of a sense of a lack of justice in the way in which
different strata of the society live. It is this sense of injustice which was a crucial factor in triggering the Polish rebellion in the summer of 1980. Everyone who has studied the Soviet Union knows of the inerasable existence of the division between "we" the people and "they" the rulers--the nachal'stvo. Yet I would argue that the popular tolerance of such a sharp distinction in the people's mind is much higher than in Western societies and is rather closer, due to Soviet and Russian heritage, to the oriental acceptance of the inevitable. Moreover, there are a number of factors at work with regard to the Soviet stratification system which mitigate its potential destabilizing impact. One is the simple fact that by design the stratification differences, particularly between the upper political class and the people, have low visibility. The media, the main disseminator of such knowledge in the West, does not perform this role in the Soviet Union. Another factor is the predominantly low origin of the upper political class in the Soviet Union, which provides for the similarity of cultural attitudes and tastes of the lower class and the upper class and its official culture and language. Still another, and central, factor was the high level of mobility from the working classes into the middle and professional class, and particularly into the political class. Partly a result of rapid economic development and the expansion of educational institutions, the major channel of this mobility; partly a result of self-selection, where the children of the professional class follow in the footsteps of their parents, while children of the lower classes are much more prone to enter the political class; and partly a deliberate policy which by various rules and regulations attempts to equalize the educational chances of individuals of middle and lower
class origin, upward mobility in the Soviet Union was quite high. (Incidentally, the Lipset study of mobility from physical labor to white collar class which argues comparable levels of mobility in the West and in the Soviet Union, which may be true, did not consider the mobility within the white collar class of individuals of lower class origin into the managerial and political classes. In this regard, it seems to me, Soviet mobility is much higher than that of the West.) One can seldom find an extended family in the Soviet Union, some members of which do not belong to the official class.

Finally, while because of the overall low standard of living economic differentiation in the Soviet Union may be more obnoxious than in the West, the economic stratification distance between various classes seems to fit into a relatively narrow range. This is particularly true about the Brezhnev regime with its high subsidies for basic commodities, its efforts to improve the economic position of the peasant, its upgrading of the minimum industrial wages, its increase in the standard of living of the worker--particularly the skilled worker--and its much more limited improvement in the remuneration of the middle and professional classes.

As we all know, instability can often result not from material wants, but from unfulfilled political and spiritual aspirations. The most explosive combination is often brought about by the fusing or alliance of the unfulfilled material expectations of the workers or peasants and the spiritual and political aspirations of the intelligentsia. (This was exactly the case in Poland and in almost every major political unrest in the Communist countries.)

The Soviet regime is highly repressive with regard to the pol
tical and spiritual aspirations of its citizens whenever they deviate from the established norms. The question, however, is how frequent and extreme is such deviant behavior in the Soviet Union? And, secondly, how successful is the Soviet regime in isolating the nidus of such behavior? In all probability, one of the most important sources of relative Soviet stability in this regard is simply the extraordinary apathy, lack of interest, and feeling of total powerlessness which cannot be changed, as far as Soviet "high" politics is concerned, that permeates the working and middle classes of Soviet society. It would take a major shock to change such a situation at all, and I have a suspicion that if such a shock occurs it will be of local origin, having to do with a particular intolerable injustice, and will take the form not of organized and directed action but rather of a blind fury, the unleashing of the pent-up proclivity for violence.

Anyway, as far as the non-material aspirations of the Soviet working classes are concerned, I see no reason to expect that they are less authoritarian, less anti-intellectual, in a word, less traditional than the views of their political overlords. As for the class which in Soviet terminology is defined as the "intelligentsia" it has little to do with the meaning of the term as applied to the educated class of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. Then the term identified not only educational attainments but also and most importantly a critical spiritual and political mood, an alienation from the social and political system, the adherence to an idea of "the good of the people" which should inform their activities. Nothing is further from this traditional Russian class
than the overwhelming majority of the present Soviet "intelligentsia." With some exceptions, the Soviet "intelligentsia" is only a statistical term. The professional class in the Soviet Union is basically integrated with the system. It is a highly materialistic class, a class primarily career oriented, in other words an in-system class. In Vera Dunham's terms this class is the "meshchanstvo" of the old society, its aspiration again in Vera Dunham's terms, is not culture but Soviet kul'turnost'. Of course, I am speaking here about the core, the mass of this class which has grown immensely in the post-Stalin period. A thin overlayer of this very large stratum and some individuals and small groups in this stratum may and, as we know from our experience when in Russia, do resemble the old intelligentsia. This is particularly true of the small segment of this stratum which is designated by the Soviets as "creative intelligentsia"—writers, poets, actors, painters, scientists, etc. Yet even there they represent only a small, unorganized and non-integrated layer or rather collection of individuals. In addition, the Soviet intelligentsia is rather isolated from the "simple" people. More often than not, the working people have an only thinly disguised anti-intellectual attitude, while the "intelligentsia" holds an only thinly disguised contempt for the "simple" people. The material improvements of their position in the post-Stalin era, the higher degree of professional autonomy bestowed on them during the Brezhnev era, the disappearance of mass terror and the commensurate increase in private freedoms has only strengthened their inbred conformist attitude. This is a class from which the Soviet regime has little
to fear.

Yet as we all well know the most dramatic phenomenon of the post-Stalin Soviet Union is the appearance of dissent movements of various colorations and non-material aspirations. By now, however, the success of the regime should be clearly recognized in drastically weakening dissent activity inside the Soviet Union, by its persecution, arrests, commitment to psychiatric wards, exile, emigration, intimidation, economic blackmail, etc. While one should not prejudice the final long range potential impact of Soviet dissenters on the evolution of the Soviet regime in the future, the impact of dissent on Soviet society today is very marginal, and the dissenters' isolation from the people for whom they want to speak out is almost total. The international impact of Soviet dissent, I would imagine, is much more potent than its domestic impact.

From the time of the writings of the great sociologists of the XIX and early XX century, and especially Pareto, it is well recognized that conditions of stability are to a large extent also a function of the situation within the elite situation of the society. While Pareto stressed particularly the elites' will for power as a key indicator of stability, Marx and Weber stressed the unity of the various functional elites. The insight of these classic writers was confirmed by the entire experience of communist regimes. It is now an accepted axiom that in almost all cases of critical instability in East European communist countries, the decline of the will to rule and the internal divisions and conflict within the elite structure were the condition and the harbinger of the ensuing events.
In the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era, the will to power and the commitment to the existing system of the political elite and leadership seems to remain unshaken. While the elites have been conscious of the many shortcomings, primarily economic, of the efficacy of their regime, they still consider their rule as just and superior to that of western democracies, and best suited for Russia and its "internal" and "external" empire.

The divisions within the political leadership and among various functional elites were quite sharp during the Khrushchev period and his anti-Stalin campaign. To some extent, these divisions and conflicts represented systemic differences of opinion concerning the evaluation of the past, the attitude toward Soviet tradition and the image of the just and efficacious regime. Surely enough these divisions and conflicts weakened Soviet stability and were a decisive factor in the almost total unity of the Soviet leadership and functional elites in engineering and accomplishing Khrushchev's ouster in the winter of 1964.

The first steps of the Brezhnev regime were to end the anti-Stalin campaign, to reaffirm the elites' devotion to and acceptance of their past traditions, and to restore the structural configuration of Soviet power and administration shaken by Khrushchev's innovations and impulsive and chaotic reorganizations, the so-called "voluntarism" and "hare-brained schemes". Throughout its existence, the Brezhnev regime placed the utmost premium on stability of the elite system, continuity
of elite rule and compromise resolution of intra- and inter-
elite conflicts. The Brezhnev regime put the highest value
on leadership and elite unity and on bargaining and compromise
resolution of their differences of interests and policy.
The conflicts and differences of view within the leadership and
among the various functional elites concerned not, as sometimes
during the Khrushchev period, the basic normative questions of
justice, ideology, and regime goals, but only instrumental
questions of resource allocations, regime efficiency and power
distribution among the elites and within the leadership.

The Soviet regime under Brezhnev can be best described
as a stable oligarchy on the top directing stable bureau-
cratic hierarchies in quest for material progress, national
security, and international influence. While Khrushchev's
leadership granted to the Soviet elites security of life
by abolishing mass terror, Brezhnev's leadership granted to
the bureaucratic elites security of office. The turnover of
high office holders among all Soviet functional elites was lower
than at any time in Soviet history. The process of policy-
making through bargaining and compromise solution can be said
to have been institutionalized under Brezhnev. Towards the end
of Brezhnev's rule, the potential danger to the stability of
the regime was developing not from the disunity of leadership
and elites but rather from bureaucratic immobilism and inertia
which threatened the efficiency and performance of the system,
and created the danger of its stagnation.
It is not surprising therefore that Gorbachev started his rule in a similar fashion as his mentor, Andropov. He declared an open season against worker absenteeism, thieving storekeepers, and corrupt and incompetent officials.

Compared to the paralyzing last years of the Brezhnev regime, Gorbachev and his close associates clearly seem in favor of economic reform. This contrasts with Chernenko's approach which was most conservative—do as little as possible, as slowly as possible, and on as small a scale as possible. The new Soviet leadership, however, still remains apprehensive of the potential negative repercussions from the type of radical reforms required. Even if Gorbachev is convinced of the necessity of such radical reforms, it will be some time before he can consolidate his power sufficiently to make serious efforts in this direction.
In the discussion of stability of political systems, political scientists in the west usually stress the importance of popular legitimacy. It seems, however, following Stinchcombe's imaginative work, that at least as important is the regime's legitimacy among the various elites. Such legitimacy, derived from the agreement among the various elites about the positive nature of the existing regime, is expressed in their mutual support vis-à-vis the society. Such within-elite legitimacy creates a situation whereby the unity among the elite and within the leadership is sufficient to meet the test of challenges from below and to draw on unused reserves of power in times of crisis and need. There can be little doubt that the elite legitimacy in the Brezhnev era was preserved and strengthened.

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

The potential for instability in the Soviet system due to ethnic and racial divisions and conflicts is enormous. One can assert with a high level of certainty that the Soviet national
problem is the most difficult to resolve without a drastic change of the Soviet system. It is also highly probable that the ethno-racial set of issues will become in the future the single most important cause of disintegration or drastic change of the Soviet system. Yet in the present age of anti-colonialism which witnessed the dissolution of all large-scale colonial systems, and of reassertion of ethnic interests and political participation, the Soviet multi-national and multi-racial state remains basically stable.

How can one explain this stability? Obviously I can only touch on selected aspects of the Soviet situation and policies, factors which in the post-Stalin era contributed to the Soviet ethno-stability, or at least the lack of intense and disintegrating mass ethnic conflict. Despite all the sensational books and articles in the West about the coming of national revolution in the Soviet Union and the looming disintegration of the multi-national Soviet state, as of today the forces of stability are much more pronounced in the Soviet Union with regard to its internal empire than the destructive centrifugal forces. After all, if for no other reason, empires do not disintegrate at a time when the metropolitan power is at the apogee of its military strength.

What are the most important factors working for the preservation of the "internal" Soviet empire and for its stability?
The key force working in this direction was and is, of course, the tight coercive system that is affirmed to destroy any indication among the population or within the elite of the non-Russian republics of political commitment or yearning for greater autonomy, let alone for independence from the Big Russian Brother. The toleration of political-national dissidence in the non-Russian republics has an even lower threshold of secret police intervention than in Russian proper. Moscow reserves for itself, and the Russians, the monopoly of means of violence in the non-Russian, but particularly non-Slavic, areas of the Soviet Union. The Republican KGB apparatus is thoroughly infiltrated and highly controlled by the Russians; most non-Russian draftees to the Soviet army serve as a rule outside their ethnically native areas; the command echelon of the military districts which overlap with the non-Russian Republics is always filled by Russian or Slavic commanders.

The non-Russian republics participated substantially in Soviet modernization, particularly in the post-Stalin period. Technological and economic progress both industrial and agricultural, in the politically most important non-Russian regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia, was overall faster than in Russia proper. Under the impact of economic growth and political modernization, the traditional national problems of authority have declined radically, while at the same time, the familial and communal patterns of authority have been preserved to a surprising degree. (In this respect, concerning the duality of patterns of authority,
the Soviet multiterritorial state should be considered an underdeveloped country.). The far-reaching erosion of the national patterns of authority, their interpretation in the centralized Soviet State, reinforces the Russian political and economic overall control of these areas; While the preservation of a large degree of traditional authority patterns on the familial and communal level provides a safety valve for the ethnocentric identity and aspirations of the native population in these regions.

The Soviet economic policy towards the Caucasian and central Asian regions provides the key "carrot" part of Soviet nationality policies. This "carrot" consists partly in Soviet wage policies, particularly in the agricultural sector, and partly in the greater tolerance of the authorities for the private initiative of the natives and for the activities of the "Second Economy". As a result, the Uzbek or Tadzhik, let alone the Georgian, peasant and city dweller seems to have a higher standard of living than the Russian peasant. (I suspect that the relatively greater accessibility to low cost foodstuffs, their variety and abundance are also explained by the better climatic conditions of those areas as opposed to Russia proper, and the lack of the necessary transportation, storage and refrigeration infrastructure which would provide greater accessibility to the native produce of the northern regions of the Soviet Union).

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

The administration of the non-Russian republics is infiltrated
thoroughly by Russian and Slavic officials who keep a check on the
native officials. At the top party level the second secretary of
the republic is always a Slav, as are most of the second secretaries
of the provinces, the deputy heads of republican central committee
departments and deputy ministers of all important ministries.
This type of Moscow control over the native administration has two
characteristics, however, which camouflage the extent of Moscow's
control and provide on the upper levels the semblance, and on the
lower level the actuality, of native rule within the republic.
On the upper level all the major power, and particularly symbolic,
positions are in the hands of the natives; on the lower and lowest
level; the average citizen of the republic comes in everyday
contact only with native administrators.
The native elites in the republics are in most cases and most of the time coopted by Moscow. The pattern of their careers within their republics is similar to that of the Russian elites, the rewards of their service are not different from their Russian counterparts, their socialization through secular and party education similar to that of the Russian elites. The native political and administrative elites are tested and tried, and usually occupy their offices longer than their Russian counterparts even during the recent period of high stability for Russian elites. In most cases, they are sufficiently Russified to satisfy the Russians, and yet retain sufficient ties with the local culture and custom to be seen by the native population as their "own" leaders. The most important thing denied by Moscow to these native elites is the chance of advancement to the central apparatus in Moscow. For the overwhelming majority of the native elites, their career begins and ends within the borders of their own republic. (This, incidentally, is the reason they display greater horizontal mobility than the Russian, and partly, Ukrainian elites.)

Moscow was able to prevent any visible sign or degree of unity between the elites or the sub-elites of the non-Russian republics. The budgetary process in the Soviet Union, the process of allocation of growth and consumption resources pits one republic against the other rather than the coalition of non-Russian republics against the Russians. The divisions and even enmity among the non-Russian republics, traditional and fostered by the Russians, leads to a competition for Moscow's favor and a lack of unified pressure on Moscow.

The nations of the Soviet Union and their elites are not equal
to each other in their importance for the preservation of the Soviet "internal" empire and in their potential effect on the ethnic tendencies in the empire. In these respects the Slav population of the Soviet Union, that is to say the Ukrainians and Belorussians in addition to the Russians, is of decisive importance. Both from the point of view of their size, about three quarters of the Soviet population, their location on the Western borders of the Soviet Union, and their contribution to the economic and military might of the Soviet Union, the non-Russian Slavs are a decisive factor in the preservation or weakening and decline of the Soviet "internal" empire. And it is exactly the Slavs of the Soviet Union which are most Russified and whose cultural patterns are most similar to those of the Russians. In addition, very importantly, the Slav elites are treated differently by Moscow than the elites of other nationalities, with the partial exception of the Armenians. First of all, the Ukrainians and Belorussians are often accepted to the central elite in Moscow (the latest example being the appointment of the Ukrainian trade minister Vetchenko to the post of Minister of Trade of the USSR) and well represented in many central hierarchies, such as the Gosplan, the Army, and the KGB. Moreover, it is the non-Russian Slavs who in part perform for Moscow the supervisory role of controlling the non-Slavic elites in their republics. As long as the junior partnership of the Ukrainians and Belorussians with the Russian Moscow establishment survives intact, the sheer weight and power of such a coalition is sufficient to prevent irredentist aspirations of the non-Slavs from getting out of hand.
In the final analysis, stability of regimes depends on the strength of their legitimacy as understood by their population. The stability depends on the extent and intensity of support for the structure, goals and policies of the regime. On the two extremes, delegitimization occurs either in a condensed crisis situation (such as a war through which the Soviet Union has successfully passed) or through a process of gradual erosion and decline. The question of legitimacy is especially important for revolutionary regimes in which the revolution has ostensibly broken with traditional sources of authority and, as in the case of the Soviet Union, the regime still draws on the revolution itself as the key source of legitimacy.

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

The Soviet regime "enjoys" the lack of democratic tradition in its own and its tsarist past. Authoritarianism still remains the only model of rule which the Soviet population en masse understands. As a matter of fact, there are many indications that the erosion of popular legitimacy in the last years is connected not with any democratic yearning of the Soviet populace but with the lack of strong rule and order. The popular desire for a strong boss in the last years of Brezhnev and the short rule of Chernenko were unmistakable.
It is my opinion that this lack of democratic tradition and a desire for strong rule is not limited to the lower classes but also prevalent among the professional strata, let alone in the bureaucratic hierarchies. In those strata, including even parts of the dissent movement at home and abroad, the contempt for and isolation from the working classes, the fear that democracy would give license to the lowest instincts of the popular mass, and that a disintegration of the Soviet regime in its present form would reawaken the popular violence which reappears in Russian history so often—in other words, the view that Russia is not ready for democracy—is implicit and sometimes even explicit in the views of the professional strata and the middle class.

All people are not equal. Even in western democracies, popular legitimacy rests on the active support of a part of the population and the political disinterest of the rest of the population. In the Soviet Union, the active support for the regime comes only from a part of the population. It is the part which actively participates in the political process on the command level or in the Soviet political, economic, cultural micro-institutions. This part of the population is not small at all if one considers that it centers in the communist party which includes almost one third of the adult male urban population, includes the activists of the very numerous Soviet intermediary associations and organizations, such as the local Soviets, the Komsomol, the Trade Unions, the DOSAAF, etc. As important as this support might be, the political apathy of the rest of the population concerning "high" politics, performs a singular political role in underwriting the regime as it exists today.
Despite its revolutionary origin, the Soviet Union started relatively early to utilize and promote the symbols of traditional Russian legitimacy. Overall, the Soviets were successful in tapping the sources of traditional legitimacy—Russian nationalism, Russian international ambitions, Russian messianic views on their national and international mission. In a specific way, the Soviet world view is a result of the fusion of Marxist-Leninist ideology and Russian nationalism and messianism. In a specific way the official Soviet outlook also constitutes a reconciliation of the Slavophile and Westernizing streams in Russian political thought. It may well be that a future historian will look at the Soviet period of Russian history as a partly successful revitalization movement comparable, let us say, to the Meiji restoration in Japan.

Because of the Russified sources of popular legitimization, this legitimization is strongest among the Russian population and weakest among the non-Russians and non-Slavs. One has the impression that the attempt to identify Soviet patriotism with Russian nationalism is successful only to a small degree.

The active, legitimizing popular support for Soviet power is limited, as shown partly by the widespread deviant behavior. Yet the acquiescence of the population, the dramatic and overwhelming sense of a lack of alternatives, is very strong. The Soviet authoritarian system requires much less support than democratic systems, and can function and survive with only limited active support. The Soviet system is like a jeep which can carry big loads through heavy terrain with little support. The foundations of the Soviet system rest on both power and authority, but their mix is different than in democratic societies, being skewed in favor of
Finally, the strength of Soviet popular legitimacy in the post-Stalin era, while not tested through major crises or traumatic events, has nevertheless passed some tests: the death of Stalin itself and the end of personal dictatorship and mass terror, the anti-Stalin campaign of Khrushchev; and last but not least, the emergence and development of political dissent in the Soviet Union. The continuity of Soviet power after Stalin’s death was immediate and uninterrupted. The preservation of mass political obedience despite the abolishment of mass terror was never in question. The destabilizing effects of the anti-Stalin campaign were clear but exactly because of their negative effects from the leadership’s point of view, the campaign was abandoned relatively quickly and without major negative repercussions. Finally, the Soviet leadership and its power machine was able to isolate and neutralize the political dissent movement to such a degree that today within the Soviet Union it is only a shadow of its own post-Stalin past. There is little doubt in my mind that Soviet political dissent is of greater importance from the viewpoint of Soviet image, prestige and goals abroad, than it is from the point of view of its domestic potential.

I do not want to exaggerate the existence and strength of Soviet popular legitimacy. Such legitimacy is without doubt much weaker than in traditional societies or modernized, democratic societies. Yet it is important to note that a regime’s legitimacy defines not only the extent of its popular support but the relation between the extent of such support and the ability of the elites to rule and extract obedience. The relative narrowness and thinness of Soviet popular legitimacy is counter-weighted by the commitment of enormous powers of coercion.
control and manipulation at the disposal of the regime. The invisible hand of political-legitimation through internalization and socialization is supplemented more than in any other industrialized country by the visible hand of organization and control. In a future time of major trouble or protracted crisis, the limitation of Soviet popular legitimacy may create serious dangers of survival for the Soviet regime. But with respect to everyday life, and more or less "normal" challenges, as long as the will to rule of the Soviet leadership and political elite remains as strong as it is today, the continuation of Soviet authoritarianism is assured.

As I mentioned before, legitimacy of regimes has another dimension, as important or maybe even more important than popular legitimacy, namely the regime's legitimacy among the system's elites. This kind of legitimacy is provided by the conviction of the elites in the justness of the existing system, their unity in defense of common interests and goals, and their support for the regime when the chips are down. I have already discussed this aspect of Soviet legitimacy and therefore will only add a few points. The unity of the elites and leadership provides for the ability of the regime's leadership to utilize reserve powers in time of challenge and crisis. It is a legitimizing factor of decisive importance which answers such questions as: Will the security forces shoot against the population if given the order to do so? Will the army support the political leadership in times of major unrest? Will the cohesion of the party survive during difficult and challenging times? Will the compact between the leadership and elites continue in times of failure?
I submit that in the Soviet present and in the foreseeable future, the answer to all those questions should be affirmative. This is why the systemic crisis to which the Soviet regime is exposed at the present and will be even more exposed in the 1980's is not one of survival but of effectiveness. In the Russian experience, it was the elite dimension of the legitimacy of the existing regime which made the difference between the outcome of the 1905 revolution and the February and October revolutions in 1917. In our own experience, let us remember that the American adventure in Viet Nam became doomed to failure only when important parts of the establishment ceased their support of the American war effort and openly questioned either the claims that the war could be won or the logic of its importance for the American international position.

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The relative stability of the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era does not of course create conditions which insure such stability in the 1980's. The nature of the challenge to the Soviet regime in the 1980's, which becomes more and more clear, is greater and more difficult than the challenges which it faced in the 1970's. The combination of the economic crisis of growth with the socio-political crisis of popular discipline and bureaucratic inertia, of the national crisis of corruption and the spiritual crisis of nihilism and cultural pessimism may produce instabilities of the regime which were absent or weak until now. The successor leadership and the leadership which will succeed it can afford the luxury of inertia at their own peril. They will have to face the dilemmas of economic reform in the Soviet Union, the danger to labor peace
if economic stagnation and military growth continue, a sharper interelite conflict about the allocations of declining growth resources, the greater assertiveness of non-Russian elites and population, the decline of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, the danger of a new arms race spiral which they can ill afford, and the disintegration of their foreign policy line if even a semblance of detente with the United States can not be restored. How the Soviet leadership meets these challenges will largely determine the level of stability and the dangers of instability of the Soviet regime in the last decades of the twentieth century.