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SOVIET INTENTIONS 1965-1985

Volume I An Analytical Comparison of U.S.-Soviet Assessments During the Cold War

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Special Acknowledgment

Of all the former Soviet officials who participated in this effort, one stands out for his breadth of knowledge, patience, and openness. General-Colonel Andrian A. Danilevich, acknowledged by his peers to be perhaps the single most credible authority on the evolution of Soviet Cold War strategy and operational thinking from the perspective of the General Staff, devoted countless hours to helping the research team to document, from his own voluminous and unusually precise memory, the ideas, perceptions, and debates that generated General-Staff decisions during the Cold War. General Danilevich died on June 6, 1995.

Introduction/Preface

Interviews with former senior Soviet officials who participated in Cold War policy making have created the opportunity to begin a historical review of U.S. assessments of Soviet nuclear strategy and force planning. A comparison of these assessments with the information provided by Soviet interview subjects suggests that most U.S. observers understood the basic tenets of Soviet nuclear doctrine but in some instances seriously misjudged Soviet military intentions. The inaccuracies in U.S. assessments seem in retrospect to have had little impact on the course of the arms race, because Soviet nuclear force building was relatively unresponsive to U.S. actions and policy pronouncements, mostly for reasons U.S. analysts did not fully understand. Nevertheless, these inaccurate estimates had the potential to mislead, to some extent, U.S. decision makers in the event of an extreme crisis in which misjudgment could have had very serious consequences.

Through a series of private discussions with retired Soviet officers, analysts, and Communist Party Central Committee and government officials, the authors gathered information related to long-standing disputes among U.S. specialists over interpretation of Soviet national security aims. The interview material helped the authors to judge in several cases which U.S. interpretations of Soviet behavior were more accurate. Many of the weaknesses in the U.S. assessments may be attributed to a serious misunderstanding of the Soviet decision-making process, and specifically to an underestimation of the decisive influence exercised by the defense industry.

The authors do not attempt to provide a comprehensive record of all Western analysis nor even of all U.S. assessments of Soviet strategic intentions. Of the great volume of policy statements and analytical work produced in the West during the Cold War, the authors chose to concentrate on reviewing a representative sample of U.S. beliefs and assessments, both to limit the scope of the work and to focus on those views that were known to enjoy significant support in some parts of the U.S. policy and operational communities at various times during this period. This work does not pretend to be a history of actual Soviet military planning, nor do the authors intend this as a comprehensive history of the Cold War, even from a Soviet perspective. The purpose of the work is to reveal what was learned from Soviet Cold War leaders and analysts concerning Soviet strategic intentions and the relationship of those intentions to Soviet strategic force development, and to relate these findings to other sources and contemporary U.S. assessments. Finally, we compare the Soviet findings to official U.S.

assessments in order to draw some lessons from analytical misconceptions made by both sides that might help to improve the accuracy and utility of future research and analysis of international confrontational relationships.

The main body of the paper is divided into three sections. The first examines the Soviet view of the superpower strategic relationship, the second the evolution of Soviet strategy, and the third the factors that influenced Soviet force-building policy and strategy. The sections are divided into topical chapters, each of which begins with a sampling of interpretations of Soviet intentions by some of the most astute and influential U.S. analysts of that period. The views of senior U.S. government officials are then presented, indicating which assessments most represented views informing U.S. national security policy. Discussion of U.S. assessments is followed by an analysis of the Soviet interview material. Each chapter concludes with a summary of the similarities and differences between U.S. assessments of Soviet military intentions and the characterization by the Soviet officials themselves of the forces and motives affecting Soviet behavior.

The information gained through the interviews supports several basic conclusions and generalizations about how and why the Soviets behaved as they did during the Cold War. In this volume, the citations refer to interview material that comprises the accompanying *Vol. II: Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*. These conclusions and generalizations are summarized in the chapter entitled "Macro Trends in Soviet Strategy 1965 - 1985," which is intended to serve as an overview as well as a "road map" of the analysis for the reader. The structure of this chapter recapitulates that of the work as a whole.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS - DEBRIEFING UNHAPPY COLD WARRIORS

Three kinds of primary sources are available to scholars seeking information about Soviet intentions during the period of the Cold War: open Soviet and post-Soviet literature, materials from secret archives, such as those of the Ministry of Defense, KGB, and the Communist Party, and, for a relatively short period of time, interviews with Cold War participants themselves. This report is based largely on the latter set of sources. Beginning in 1990, the authors held numerous private discussions in Moscow with former Soviet officials, including senior officials of the defense industry and Defense Industrial Department of the Central Committee, military analysts and planners, as well as with high-ranking military officers who served on the General Staff or with the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) at critical times since 1965. Given the access they enjoyed to the process of formulating and implementing Soviet defense policy, these officials often provide insightful and credible explanations for the USSR's strategy and force posture. The citations of Soviet materials refer mostly to the authors' interviews.

The authors' repeated attempts, all of which proved unsuccessful, to gain access to useful material from the Central Committee and the Ministry of Defense archives for the post-1960 Cold War period indicate the continuing difficulty of obtaining Soviet documents related to the USSR's strategic intentions during the middle and latter parts of the Cold War. Although some documents dating from the 1940s and 1950s have been made available to scholars¹ those dated later than 1963 remain virtually inaccessible. For the time being, oral testimony on Soviet decision making during the later Cold War period remains far more accessible than written records.

The authors are aware that reliance exclusively or primarily on interviews has its disadvantages. The passage of time tends to distort the memory of facts and events. The human mind's recall of the past is often subconsciously selective, defensive, or self-promoting. An individual's institutional loyalties also may color his recollection of the roles of different personalities or organizations in decision making. Finally, an interview subject's experience may be limited or irrelevant, and his access to information

¹ Scholars participating in the Cold War History Project sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Ford Foundation, have begun to publish the result of their work. Most work to date has focused on the events surrounding the Korean War.

incomplete, depending on his place and position in the system. To counter the effects of such tendencies, the authors sought to minimize expected and group responses and to facilitate validation within the interview sample. To the extent possible, the authors used identical questions for all interview subjects and attempted to interview representatives from a variety of organizations within the Soviet national security apparatus. The authors sought to avoid contamination of interview responses with suggestions from other sources both by isolating, whenever possible, each interview subject and by minimizing the use of information in each interview from other subjects (except when necessary for follow-up or to provoke a response from a singular subject and then without attribution).

Given the general distrust and even hostility evident in many of the Soviet subjects, enforcing such controls was often difficult, especially early in the research process (1990-1991). Fearful of isolation with foreigners, many Soviet officials sought security in large groups which provided the opportunity to make individual appointments for another time. In some cases, the authors were required to cultivate a valued subject through several meetings over three to four years to build the level of trust required to elicit responses of any research value. Because the research environment was so complex, one of the most important "validators" of the information provided in the interviews often was a correlation with information already available to the U.S. analytical community. As time passed and trust developed, the content, detail, and interpretative explanations of the information provided by some of the interview subjects grew and exceeded the expected objectives of the research design.

While interview research has special limitations, it also represents a special contribution to the historical and analytical record. Cold War participants are unique, and in this instance highly perishable, primary sources that are in many respects superior to open source and classified written records. The archives still will be waiting long after the Cold Warriors themselves have died. Moreover, collections of documents can help us understand what happened but rarely can tell us why. Finally, unlike archives, living participants in the Cold War can answer specific questions and suggest from first-hand experience which factors in the written record are more or less important thereby indicating to archival researchers where in the many miles of folders the most relevant

information might be found. In that spirit, the authors hope that the interviews obtained in this effort will help to guide subsequent archival research as such material becomes more accessible.

Of the former Soviet officials and analysts interviewed for this study the more noteworthy include:

Military Analysts:

Dmitrii S. Chereshkin, Head of a Department in the All-Union Scientific-Research Institute for Systems Studies (VNIISI). Dr. Chereshkin specialized in cybernetics and automated communications networks.

Gen.-Maj. Vladimir Z. Dvorkin, Director of TsNII-4, the Central Scientific-Research Institute of the Strategic Rocket Forces. Gen. Dvorkin worked for over two decades within the SRF carrying out or directing analysis in support of Soviet nuclear strategy and strategic missile developments and deployments.

Col. Petr M. Lapunov, Department Chief in TsOSI, the Center for Operational and Strategic Research, Russian General Staff. Col. Lapunov is a serving General Staff officer with over two decades of experience in the Soviet Army analyzing force structure.

Col. Vitalii N. Tsygichko, Head of the Theater Forces Modeling Department of the Scientific Research Institute NII-6 of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the General Staff (1967-1977), and Senior Analyst at VNIISI (1977 to present). NII-6 carried out the primary analytical and modeling work for the GRU and, through the GRU, supported the General Staff Main Operations Directorate (GOU) in the preparation of strategic and operational force comparisons (nuclear and conventional) with a focus on the U.S., NATO, and other "probable enemies."

Military-technical specialist:

Aleksei S. Kalashnikov. Kalashnikov worked for more than 25 years in the area of missile and nuclear weapons testing. For five years he headed the Strategic Rocket

Forces (SRF) Committee on Science and Technology and for 10 years served as Chairman of the State Commission on Nuclear Testing at Semipalatinsk, a major Soviet nuclear testing facility.

Civilian industrial managers:

Konstantin Cherevkov, Deputy Director, Scientific Industrial Conglomerate (NPO) for Space Instrumentation.

Evgenii Fedosov, Director of the Scientific Industrial Conglomerate (NPO) for Aviation Systems (Air and Anti-Air missiles).

Iurii A. Mozhgorin, Director for 30 years of the Central Scientific-Research Institute of Machine Building (TsNIIMash), the USSR's leading institute for evaluating and developing missile technology.

Vladimir Rubanov, a former official in the Soviet Ministry of Aviation.

Viktor Surikov, former First Deputy Director, Central Research Institute of General Machine Building (TsNIIMash) and assistant to Anatolii Zaikov, head of the Central Committee's Defense Department, the Party body responsible for force-building, procurement, and arms control.

General Staff officers:

Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergei F. Akhromeev, Chief of the General Staff's Main Operations Directorate (1977-1980); Representative of the Supreme High Command in Afghanistan (1980-1982); Deputy Chief of the General Staff (1982-1984); Chief of the General Staff (1984-1988); and advisor to the President of the USSR (1988-91).

Gen.-Lt. Geli V. Batenin. Gen. Batenin began his career as an artillery officer, transferring in the 1960s to the Strategic Rocket Forces. In the late 1970s and through the mid-1980s, Gen. Batenin worked for Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergei F. Akhromeev in various roles when the latter was chief of the General Staff Main Operations Directorate and then as First Deputy Chief of the General Staff under Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.

Gen.-Col. Andrian A. Danilevich. Gen. Danilevich served in sensitive, special-access positions in the Soviet General Staff for 26 years beginning in 1964. His assignments included: Assistant (*Pomoshchnik*) to Director of the General Staff's Main Operations Directorate (The Planning and Operational Center of the General Staff) until 1977 and Special Advisor for military doctrine to the Chief of the General Staff (1977-1988). He was a close associate of Marshal Ogarkov. General Danilevich is credited by other Soviet Generals who worked closely with both him and Marshal Ogarkov with being the author of much, if not most, of the writings credited to Ogarkov in the 1970s and 1980s. In the mid-1970s, Danilevich headed a collective that produced the only comprehensive articulation of Soviet military doctrine and strategy since Sokolovskii's seminal *Voennaia strategiiia*, (*Military Strategy*) published in 1962. Danilevich's three-volume work carried the force of a directive (*nastavlenie*) and has been described by Soviet general officers as the best such work ever to come out of the General Staff.

Gen. Makhmut A. Gareev, Chief of the Tactical Training Directorate of the General Staff (1974-1977); Deputy Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff for Training and Readiness (1977-1984); Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Scientific Work and Operational Readiness (1984-1989); and Special Representative of the Soviet Ministry of Defense in Afghanistan (1989-1990).

Gen. Iurii A. Kirshin, Chief of the Strategy Department of the Military Science Directorate, General Staff (1977-1989); and Deputy Director, Institute of Military History, Ministry of Defense (1985-1992). Gen. Kirshin worked for Gen. Makhmut A. Gareev for much of his career as a senior officer, including his time in the Military Science Directorate of the General Staff. He is especially knowledgeable about Gen. Gareev's career and the special relationship he had with Marshal Ogarkov.

Operational military staff:

Gen.-Col. Varfolomei V. Korobushin, First Deputy Chief of Staff of the SRF (10 years); and Director of the General Staff's Center for Operational and Strategic Research (TsOSI).

Gen.-Lt. Nikolai V. Kravets, an SRF officer with over 30 years experience in force design, systems acquisition, and testing and evaluation.

Political staff:

Gen.-Col. Igor' V. Illarionov, an Aide (*Pomoshchnik*) to Ustinov in the Central Committee Secretariat (1965-1976); and Assistant to Ustinov for special assignments (1976-1984).

Vitalii L. Kataev, Senior Advisor to the Chairman of the Defense Industrial Department of the Communist Party Central Committee (1967-1985).

Boris A. Strogonov, an expert on missile technology in the Central Committee Defense Industry Department (1955-1987).

Interview subjects at times contradict each other on details, such as the number of minutes required to launch Soviet land-based ballistic missiles, but tend to agree on the larger issues of Soviet strategic intentions. The authors attempt to make judgments on more significant differences and establish the relative credibility of sources on a given issue when differences do occur. Many of the interviews with former Soviet officials corroborate each other's description of events. Moreover, the interview material is largely consistent with the Voroshilov General Staff Academy lectures, which present the established Soviet military doctrine from 1973 to 1975,² as well as with the information and data that was available to the U.S. analytical community and that the senior author himself spent many years examining.

The interviews have generated unique research material, the sources of which will continue to remain available for only a short time. During the course of this research project Marshal Akhromeev committed suicide after having granted two interviews, the last six months before he died, and three retired Soviet officials (including Marshal

² The basic doctrine laid out in the Voroshilov lectures remained relevant into the mid-1980s, according to Raymond L. Garthoff, "Introduction: U.S. Considerations of Soviet Military Thinking," in Graham Hall Turbiville, Jr. (ed.), *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials from the Soviet General Staff Academy*, Vol. 1. *Issues of Soviet Military Strategy*. National Defense University Press, Washington, 1989, pp. 8-9.

Ogarkov) who had agreed to be interviewed passed away. While they and many of their former colleagues may leave diaries or other private papers behind, they will no longer be able to answer specific questions posed by Western researchers.

Almost all of the former Soviet officials who contributed to the research gave follow-on interviews over a period of months and years. Two of the best informed sources spoke to the authors on several occasions over the course of the last three years. Follow-on interviews were used to revisit responses given in previous interviews.

As in most interview efforts, there is an unevenness in the quality and quantity of materials provided by various interview subjects. Some, such as Gen.-Col. Danilevich, provided a great volume of information of considerable quality given his many years in very sensitive, influential positions within the General Staff. Others, such as Gen. Kirshin, were of greatest assistance in helping the authors to understand the knowledge and possible prejudices of various sources as well as relationships among the sources themselves. Others listed in the bibliography, but not cited in the text, did not add substantively to the work even though they contributed immeasurably by helping the authors to understand structure and relationships or to make judgments about testimony of other interviews by independently corroborating or qualifying the statements of other contributors to the project.

The subsections presenting the opinions of U.S. decision makers are based entirely on interviews conducted by the authors in the Washington, D.C. area during the last three months of 1991. These top-level U.S. government officials, including former Secretaries of Defense, explained their personal understandings of Soviet motives and pointed out areas of contention that arose during their tenures. The interviews with U.S. policy makers are designed to offer a representative sample of internal U.S. government interpretations of contemporary Soviet military intentions. This was further supported by an examination by the authors of declassified Top Secret executive summaries of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimates (NIE) from 1976 and 1983, as well as the 1976 "B"-Team estimate.

The Soviet Force-Building Policy Apparatus: Hierarchies, Relationships, and Influence

Figure A (subsequent page) is a simplified organizational chart showing the principal members of the Soviet force-building policy apparatus as it existed in the early 1980s. It illustrates the formal relationships among the various State and Communist Party bodies responsible for defense and defense-industrial policy preparation, as well as the relative magnitude and direction of their informal channels of influence. This chart helps to place the individuals who contributed information for this research effort within the overall Soviet policy structure, and may help in evaluating their credibility. The chart shows that the industrialist camp (on the left-hand side of the chart) was deeply imbedded in the Party's Central Committee and constituted a powerful lobby within the Defense Council on all questions pertaining to weapons design and production. It should be noted, however, that in matters of military strategy and doctrine—how these weapons would be used in time of war—the General Staff, and specifically the Main Operations Directorate within the General Staff, remained the highest authority.

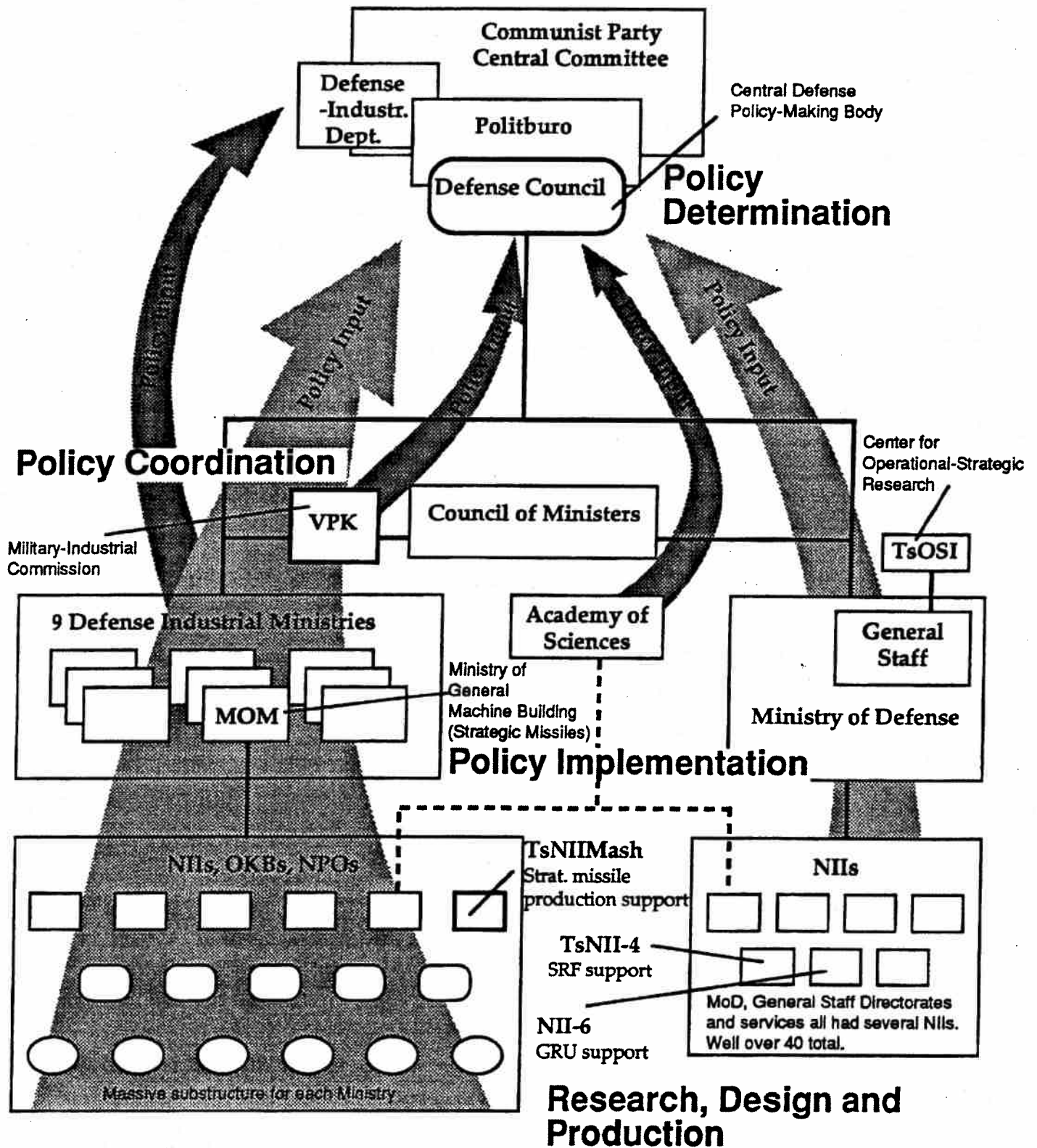
Of necessity, this diagram greatly oversimplifies the relationships, both hierarchical and lateral, that existed among the various components of the military-industrial structure of the Soviet Union. NIIs, for example, normally were subordinated either to an industrial ministry or an NPO within the ministry, to an element of the Defense Ministry or the General Staff (the staff directorates were not identical), to one of the five services or, in some cases, to the Academy of Sciences. Some NIIs, such as the Kurchatov Institute, were dual-subordinated, usually to the Academy of Sciences as well as to an industrial ministry. Because Kurchatov was responsible for nuclear weapons research, the Institute's director reported to the Ministry of Medium Machine Building (responsible for nuclear weapons production) and to the President of the Academy.

As suggested by the line connecting the various NPOs, OKBs, and NIIs to one of the industrial ministries (in this case General Machine Building, responsible for strategic missile development and production), each ministry stood at the pinnacle of a massive collection of NPOs, NIIs, and OKBs, and prototype and serial production factories that normally were subordinated to various NPOs. OKBs enjoyed a certain degree of special prestige and practical autonomy from their governing ministry even in budget matters, which often were separated from those of their parent ministry. The OKBs' special status, even in the 1980s, was derived from the dominant role played by the chief

designers during World War II and during the Post-War period until they were subordinated by a system of ministries in the early 1960s. (Source: Separate discussions on March 30, 1992 with two senior Soviet-era military industrialists. Dr. Konstantin V. Cherevko was the First Deputy to the General Director of the NPO, "Space Devices," (*Kosmicheskoe priborostroenie*). He was formerly in an NPO in the Ministry of General Machine Building that was responsible for the development of large missiles and related guidance and communications systems as well as for the Soviet space program, to include most satellites. Dr. Evgenii A. Fedosov was director of the State Research Institute for Aviation Systems, (*GosNIIAvs*), an NII in the Ministry of Aviation.)

As will be evident in the body of the thesis, considerable tension existed between the industrial and operational "camps" of the military sector, a division that deeply affected the kinds and quantities of arms produced by the Soviet Union. This competitive tension even extended to the NIIs that supported elements of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) on the one hand and those that supported the industrial ministries on the other. Competitive analysis, if you will, of the same issue having bearing on a given weapons program might be developed and presented in various fora, the most important of which were the VPK and Defense Council. The operators very often were on the losing side, according to both the military and the industrialists. The relative quality of the analyses did not seem to have much bearing on the outcome.

Fig. A: Soviet Force-Building Policy



Key:

- NII - Scientific Research Institute (large basic R&D and analytical organization)
- NPO - Scientific Production Conglomerate (very large enterprises - 10,000 - 45,000 pers.)
- OKB - Experimental Design Bureau (generator of specific line of weapons associated with specific Chief Designer)

CHRONOLOGY OF SOVIET N

MILITARY POLICY		ANALYSIS	
1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRF created (1959); reliance on nuclear weapons • maximum strategic use of ground burst to contaminate/irradiate enemy • ground burst planned to maximum contamination of U.S.—80% of targets • strategic superiority objective • preemption of enemy nuclear initiation preferred strategy/<i>not</i> initiation of war with first strike • forced retaliation (failed preemption) (massive retaliation for <i>any</i> nuclear use anywhere—maintained until late 80s) 	1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tested ground/air bursts, blast effects • Politburo + GS intent on massive retaliation for <i>any</i> use—deter U.S. NATO limited use. Real response <i>ad hoc</i>. • hardening discussed • ground burst found much superior to airburst against point targets • TsNIMash: no victors in nuclear war, conclusions—suppressed
1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yalta meeting accepts second strike as planning objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepared retaliation/LUA—accepted in theory* • preemption retained as option/preference • reduced reliance on ground bursts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politburo nuclear exercise • reliance on theater nuclear war • LUA confirmed as desirable/achievable objective 	1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creation of survivable second strike through hardening/mobiles accepted in principle/implementation delayed by Grechko • Academy of Sciences and GS modeling of nuclear war: nuke use counterproductive—suppressed • GS modeling of theater nuclear war: nuke use operationally counterproductive—suppressed.
1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new periodization of war—conventional, limited nuclear (theater), unlimited nuclear, conclusion • conventional phase accepted/extended • stopped using ground bursts 	1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GS modeling: nuke use at front level—unacceptably high losses, operational stalemate with use of 2% of tactical nuclear inventory—suppressed. • GS discusses limited strikes—Phase II in new periodization of war. Other scenarios considered.
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • renounced preemption • retain retaliation and adopt LUA • LNO dominant strategy (Theater only) • GS: nuclear ops counterproductive in Europe (reflects 1973 analysis**) • conventional war only now, possible/probable 	1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ustinov orders NII-4 (SRF) to model depressed trajectory strike against US silos—found ineffective
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parity doctrine 	1985	

*LUA — Launch under attack (in Russian *otvetno-vstrechnyi udar*) accepted as concept but not implemented until at least the late 1970s because of Grechko's opposition and lack of requisite early warning systems and responsive control.

**GS — General Staff

VIET NUCLEAR STRATEGY

