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"THE SOURCES OF MILITARY DOCTRINE -
A LESSON FROM THE COLD WAR"

BY

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PART TWO

LOCAL WARS AND THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF
CHAPTER FIVE
LOCAL WAR DOCTRINE TO 1969 - A BEGINNING

This chapter reviews military writings up to 1969 for evidence of doctrinal views in the General Staff of the unique military problems associated with local wars.

Small Wars 1936-1958

Before the German attack on the USSR in 1941, Soviet military writings took some cognisance of the military lessons of individual local wars. Works were published in 1937 on the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-19051 and the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935-1936.2 In the following four years, several more works on local wars appeared,3 including works on the Japanese campaign in Manchuria4 and the Spanish Civil War.5 The Chinese Civil war was also studied.6

The public record was possibly just the tip of the iceberg. The following information, from an unpublished article by a researcher from the

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1 A Svechin Strategia xx veka na pervom etape. Planirovanie voiny i operatsii na sushe i more v 1904-1905 gg [Strategy in the Early 20th Century. Planning of the War and its Operations on Land and Sea in 1904-1905] Moscow, 1937. Svechin was the author of the last important work on strategy published before the Stalinist crackdown of the late 1920s. He was Chief of the predecessor of the General Staff, the All-Russian Main Staff, and killed in the repressions in 1938. See Harriet Fast Scott and William F Scott Soviet Military Doctrine - Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1988, pp5, 16
2 Opvy Italo-Abissinskoj voiny [Experience of the Italo-Abyssinian War] Moscow, 1937
4 I S Bushmanov Boeveye deistvii iaponskoj armii v Man'chzhurii i Shanghae 1931-1933 [Combat Actions of the Japanese Army in Manchuria and Shanghai] Moscow, 1940
5 S Liubarskii Nekotorye operativno-takticheskie vyny iz opvy voiny v Ispanii [Several Operational and Tactical Conclusions from the Experience of the War in Spain] Moscow, 1939
6 I A Korotkov Istoriia sovetskoi voennoi mysli (1921-1941) [History of Soviet Military Thought] Nauka, Moscow, 1980, p104
Military History Institute, demonstrates the extent to which these subjects were studied behind closed doors.\textsuperscript{1} The picture presented is somewhat different from that obtained merely from open source references.

In March 1937, a Deputy Minister for Defence, Marshal Tukhachevskii, ordered comprehensive analysis and discussions of the lessons of the Spanish Civil War. By the end of the year, 57 digests of materials, 13 booklets and three books had been published for the Supreme Command, presumably for restricted distribution. By 1940, these reached a total of 57 books and booklets. Several theses had been written at military academies, front commanders from Spain lectured at the academies, and training in military districts was conducted on the basis of documentation sent from Moscow.\textsuperscript{2}

In 1938, the Defence Minister issued the following instruction to the Air Force:

\textit{The experience of the wars in Spain and China is studied inadequately as regards its use in combat training, the improvement of aircraft, the organisation of field repairs and redeployment of units in conditions of hostilities. ... [One task for 1939] is to study and apply to combat training all the best experience of the operation of the air force in Spain and China.}\textsuperscript{3}

Notwithstanding vigorous study of these wars, the evidence appears to be that most works did not see local wars as having a special character of their own. They were seen as examples of implementation of military art that should be

\textsuperscript{1} Lt.-Col. Iu Rybalkin "The Importance of the Lessons of the Spanish War for the Military Policy of the Soviet Union before the Second World War". Rybalkin, a specialist on Soviet involvement in the Spanish Civil War, had access to military archives but was not permitted (even in 1991) to footnote his work. He assisted General Volkogonov in his research on Stalin and Trotsky using military archives. The article was translated into English.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{ibid} p7

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid}
studied in preparation for war in general.\textsuperscript{1} Soviet military operations against Finland in 1939-1940 and against Japanese forces in Manchuria between 1937 and 1939 were studied in the same light.\textsuperscript{2} Soviet military leaders of the day assessed the relevance of study of local wars to Soviet military strategy and military science as fairly limited.\textsuperscript{3}

Yet these authors themselves seemed to foreshadow the subsequent development of a view that local wars did have a special character of their own because of their limited, localised nature. For example, Isserson wrote:

> The war in Spain can be counted among those so-called small wars \textit{[malye voiny]}, which in the sphere of strategy yield relatively little experience. This war was giving, of course, an incomplete picture of the armed struggle between two large modern armies.\textsuperscript{4}

There was some appreciation of the high manoeuvre aspect of local wars, in which the normal principles of Soviet military strategy - especially use of mass force at a decisive point - were inapplicable.\textsuperscript{5}

Even local wars of the unconventional, guerilla type did not receive the attention before 1941 that Soviet experience of partisan warfare in its own Civil

\textsuperscript{1} This is made clear in a chapter on the subject in Korotkov's history of Soviet military thought. In the chapter entitled "Study of the Experience of Local Wars and the Current World War", the author says that at conferences of the High Command Staff in April and December 1940, the experience of local wars was evaluated and conclusions drawn for the preparation of the armed forces and defence of the country. Korotkov \textit{op cit} pp107-108. See also a footnote in a contemporary article that small wars were small in scale "but not in character". See G S Isserson \textit{"Novye formy bor'by" [New Forms of Combat]} (1940) in A B Kadoshev (Chief Editor) \textit{Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskikh voennykh trudakh 1917-1940} [Questions of Strategy and Operational Art in Soviet Military Research Work 1917-1940] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1965, p422n
\textsuperscript{2} Korotkov \textit{op cit} p104
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid} p108; Isserson \textit{loc cit} p423
\textsuperscript{4} Isserson \textit{loc cit} pp422-423
\textsuperscript{5} A A Svechin \textit{Strategiya} [Strategy] 2nd ed, Moscow, 1927, excerpts in Kadoshev (ed) \textit{op cit} p235. Svechin rejected the notion of a special military art in colonial wars, noting that the only definitive characteristic was combat between a powerful state and a much weaker enemy (as Calwell had noted).
War and the Trotsky/Frunze polemics of the early 1920s on guerilla warfare\(^1\) might have foreshadowed.

Like local wars, guerilla warfare was studied prior to 1941 for its relationship to war in general - that is, as one tool alongside conventional types of warfare rather than as a distinct type of war in which guerilla methods might predominate. As Garthoff observed in 1962, Soviet interest in revolutionary warfare for twenty years after their own Civil War was very circumscribed.\(^2\) It is noteworthy that the main General Staff periodical, Military Thought, dropped the term "revolution" from its title in 1937.\(^3\)

In 1942, the USSR produced its first manual on partisan warfare and in 1944 added a chapter on the subject to its regular army’s Field Regulations, but these dealt with guerilla operations in support of regular units.\(^4\) The USSR simply did not develop a doctrine - and in fact did not have the direct experience - for a predominantly guerilla war.\(^5\)

Between the end of the Second World War and 1958, Soviet military writers in open sources did not concern themselves with problems of national liberation wars, and dealt with the military aspects of small wars mostly as manifestations of military art in general. Terms such as "local", "small", "minor" and "liberation" were used with little attention to definition beyond merely

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\(^2\) Raymond Garthoff "Unconventional Warfare in Communist Strategy" Foreign Affairs vol. 40, no. 4, July 1962, p568

\(^3\) *Voennaia mysl'* was published under that title after 1937, having previously been *Voina i revoliutsiia* [War and Revolution] (1925-1936), *Voennaia mysl' i revoliutsiia* [Military Thought and Revolution] (1922-1924), and *Voennaia nauka i revoliutsiia* [Military Science and Revolution] (1921-1922).

\(^4\) Garthoff "Unconventional Warfare in Communist Strategy" loc cit p573

\(^5\) *ibid* p570. The leading theoreticians of revolutionary warfare (Mao Zedong, General Giap, and Che Guevara) were non-Russian.
indicating wars other than world wars.¹

Where the question of local war in general was addressed, the threat
of inevitable escalation to world war was the theme:

local wars can only be the first stage of a nuclear war. ...Thus the
results of any war - local or total - will be absolute destruction,
particularly in the thickly populated countries of western Europe.²

Two days after US marines landed in Lebanon in 1958, the USSR asserted that the
move could lead to world war.³

Between 1945 and 1958, the General Staff periodical, Military
Thought, carried only a handful of articles on local wars: the Chinese Civil War;
the Korean War; and the Russian Civil War.⁴ A few books were published prior to
1957 on the Korean War but these were largely of a political nature.⁵

An article in a popular journal on international affairs of events in

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voiny - istoriia i sovremennost' [Local Wars - History and Contemporary Significance] Voenizdat,
Moscow, 1981, pp5n referenced an entry in a Russian military encyclopedia of 1913-1914 on "Small
War" [Malaia voina] in which one work in Russian of 1811 Malaia voina i uchenie o boe [Small
War and Instruction in Combat], by Valentini, and three other (German and Swiss) works on small
war were mentioned.

² Maj.-Gen. M Talenskii "Voennaya strategia i vneshniaia politika" [Military Strategy and Foreign

³ John R Thomas "The Quemoy Crisis of 1958" in Raymond L Garthoff (ed) Sino-Soviet Military
Relations Praeger, New York NY, 1966, p125n

⁴ N Tsygichko "Pobedy Narodno-osvoboditel'noi armii Kitaya" [Victory of the People’s Liberation
Army of China] Voennaya mysl’ 1949 (11) 48-63; P Nikolaev "Dva goda amerikanskoi agressii v
Koree" [Two Years of American Aggression in Korea] Voennaya mysl’ 1952 (7) 50-60; G
Khoroshilov "Artillieria armii Ssha i Anglii vo vtoroi mirovoi voiny i v Koree" [US and British
Artillery in the Second World War and Korea] Voennaya mysl’ 1953 (9) 69-79; Col. V Mochalov
"Osobennosti nastupatel’nnyk deistviy polevoi armii v sovremennykh usloviakh" [Features of
Offensive Operations of a Field Army in Contemporary Conditions] Voennaya mysl’ 1954 (7) 74-84;
V Lantsov "Iz opyta boevykh deistviy voenno-morskikh sil v Koree" [From the Experience of Naval
Combat Operations in Korea] Voennai mysl’ 1956 (11) 72-82; Col. A Bagreev "Nekotorye
osobennosti sovremenennogo amerikanskogo voennogo iskusstva" [Some Features of Contemporary
American Military Art] Voennaya mysl’ 1956 (11) 72-82; I I Shinkaev "O voennom iskustve
Narodno-osvoboditel'noi armii Kitaya v Tret’ei gruzhdanskoi revoliutsionnoi voine" [On the Military
Art of the People’s Liberation Army of China in the Third Civil Revolutionary War] Voennaya
mysl’ 1957 (8) 57-77

⁵ For example, I Kravtsov Agressiia amerikanskogo imperializma v Koree (1945-1951 gg) [The
foreign countries, *International Life*, in February 1958 (before the Taiwan Strait crisis) by a Major General identified the Taiwan Strait as one area where the USA might use nuclear weapons in a limited war.¹

The main thrust of Soviet military policy in respect of local wars in these years was limited to subversion through local communist parties, in preference to direct support for liberation wars. Soviet support for the Chinese Communist military effort had been substantial but the degree to which this type of activity impinged on Soviet military thinking was marginal.² For example, very few books were published in the 1950s on the military lessons of the Chinese Civil war.³

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 attracted some interest.⁴ But, the Spanish Civil War was not a permissible subject for open source monographs at this time.⁵

There was some hint in the open literature prior to 1959 of Soviet interest in local war as an appropriate subject for study by Soviet military science. For example, the 1956 edition of *Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army*⁶ and a

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¹ Talenskii "Voennaia strategiia i vneshniaia politika" *Mehdunarodnaia zhizn*, 1958 (2) p26 cited in John R Thomas "The Quemoy Crisis of 1958" in Garthoff (ed) *Sino-Soviet Military Relations* p121n
⁵ Two former chief military advisers in Spain had been shot by Stalin because of Soviet failure in Spain, including the founder of the intelligence department of the Red Army, Jan Berzin, and Col.-Gen. G Shtern, head of a Main Department of Air Defence (Rybalkin *op cit* p12). Many other officers who were subject to repressions arising from their duty in Spain, including more than 20 recipients of the Hero of the Soviet Union medal. These repressions and the Soviet failure in Spain made public discussion of Soviet involvement difficult.
1958 article in Military Herald\(^1\) mentioned the need to study the problems of local war. Several articles on limited war appeared in 1958 in The Military Abroad [Voennyi zarubezhnik], including one on the army in limited war.\(^2\) While this periodical was about foreign military forces, the subjects selected may have reflected what the Soviet military leadership regarded as higher priority for study. Moreover, reference to the opinions or activities of foreign military specialists was a well established method of treating subjects too sensitive from a political point of view for Soviet military officers to discuss in terms of their application to Soviet force structure.

In the period 1953 to the end of 1958, there was negligible commentary on generalised, military aspects of local war in professional military publications, compared with the volume of commentary on war in general, especially world war. For example, a bibliography of books and booklets on military theory or war in general compiled in 1957 lists 27 important works published between 1953 and 1957.\(^3\)

**Doctrinal Interest Emerges in the Open 1959-1961**

Colonel S. Kozlov, one of the most prominent military theorists of the post-Stalin period, wrote in January 1959 of what he called the impending or already existing change in US strategy toward a policy of limited or local wars.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Col. M Mikhailov "Sukhoptyme voiska v ogranichionnoi voine" Voennyi zarubezhnik 1958 (10) p82ff

\(^3\) Raymond L Garthoff Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age Atlantic Books, Steven & Sons Ltd, London UK, 1958, pp259-263

\(^4\) S Kozlov "Deistvitel'nii peresmatrivatiutsia osnovy voennoi strategii SSHA" [Has the USA Really Revised the Foundations of its Military Strategy] Voennai mysl' 1959 (1) 65-76, p76
Kozlov did not elaborate on the concept in military terms except to note that the US Army Information Digest of January 1958 said the US Army must be able to operate in local wars as well as nuclear war.

The same change in British military strategy was noted in the next issue of Military Thought but with some elaboration of what the concept of local war involved. The author noted the principal elements of the new British views as follows:

a "small" war must not be protracted and can use all services of the armed forces;

a small war may involve use of nuclear weapons;

specially trained mobile troops must be created for such wars and formed into so-called 'fire brigades'; and

with the aim of quickly entering a small war, Britain should maintain at key strategic points around the world groups of forces and pre-prepared materiel.¹

In 1959, a work on the Korean War, classified Secret, was printed by the Military Publishing House² and an abridged translation of Henry Kissinger's work of 1957, Nuclear weapons and Foreign Policy, was published and reviewed in the November edition of Military Thought.³

In 1960, Military Thought showed increased interest in the subject of local wars. In the February issue, Colonel V. Mochalov, to be one of the more prolific authors on this subject, wrote that the US Army was talking of the

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¹ Col V Tortsov "O sostojanii i tendentsiakh razvitija voennoi mysli v Anglii" [On the Content and Trends in Military Thought in Britain] Voennaia mysl' 1959 (2) 62-73, p72
³ Foreign Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1959, 507pp reviewed by Captain V Kulakov "Manevr pobornikov iadernoi voiny" [Manoeuvre of the Adherents of Nuclear War] Voennaia mysl' 1959 (11) 88-95
possibility that war may be conducted without weapons of mass destruction.¹

The article was followed in May by a review of American strategy which included a summary of a US army brochure of 1958 on limited war. Of the seven points in the summary, the following three were the most significant:

limited war is more likely than total war;

deterrent forces must remain in readiness - to give strategic credibility to their use in limited war; and

ready reaction forces are necessary for limited war.²

The article was written with the full expectation that the limited war doctrine would become official US doctrine.

An article on the Korean War appeared, aiming to analyse the reasons for the success of the Chinese volunteers in what it saw as a "war of limited scale".³

Osgood’s book on limited war was published in translation by the Ministry of Defence Publishing House in 1960, with a foreword by Col. Mochalov.⁴

Two major works were published in 1960 by the Ministry of Defence Publishing House: National Liberation Wars in the Contemporary Era by Lt. Col. E. I. Dolgopolov,⁵ a political officer who became a principal commentator on this subject in subsequent decades, and Behind the Veil of Limited Wars by A.

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² G Iofin "Krisis amerikanskoi stratehii 'massirovannogo vozmezhdiia'" [Crisis in the American Strategy of Massive Retaliation] Voennaia mysl', 1960 (5) 71-76, p76
⁴ R Ozgud Ogranichionnaya voina Voenizdat, Moscow, 1960
Dolgopolov identified the "doctrine of so-called 'small', 'limited' or 'local' wars" as an integral part of the official military policy of the USA, Britain and other imperialist powers.\(^1\) He highlighted Kissinger's observation in 1957 that these wars took place at a considerable distance from home territory, and also cited an alleged call by a US General James Gavin for use of atomic weapons in "small wars" against the peoples of colonies and dependent countries.\(^2\) Theoretical work in imperialist countries on the unique features of war against national liberation movements, including France's efforts to develop a doctrine for counter-revolutionary war, was acknowledged.\(^3\)

Some of the practical measures taken in those countries included the creation in 1958 of the US Strategic Army Corps (4 divisions totalling 150,000 men, armed with both conventional and atomic weapons), designated "for use in limited wars in the jungles or other regions of the world";\(^4\) continued reliance on the Marine Corps and the Navy; the British practice of holding specialised exercises in air mobility of troops for such wars; and the French armed forces' establishment of special training centres for "subversive" warfare, accompanied by creation of detachments especially trained for local conditions and methods of combat in Algeria.\(^5\)

The book set out at considerable length the alleged role of the new

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\(^2\) Soviet terminology on these types of war was not consistent or rigid at that time.

\(^3\) Dolgopolov *Natsional'no-osvoboditel'nye voiny* p65


\(^5\) *ibid* pp66-67. The quote is attributed by Dolgopolov to unidentified US Department of Defense reports.

\(^6\) *ibid* p67
military blocs (NATO, CENTO, SEATO) in the global strategy of fighting national liberation forces but emphasised special agreements signed by the US in March 1959 with Turkey, Iran (both bordering the USSR) and Pakistan which provided for introduction of US troops both for direct threat situations and "so-called" indirect aggression.¹ Dolgopolov did not mention direct Soviet military aid to liberation movements or newly independent countries despite discussing Soviet political support against threats from imperialists, as well as Soviet economic aid.²

Efremov's book, Behind the Veil of "Limited" Wars, traced the development of Western views on limited war and small wars, with a supporting analysis of the history of some major local wars, including in Indo-China, Korea, Algeria, and the Middle East. His principal starting point is to debunk the US notion of limited nuclear war, and assert that the imperialist powers were forced to resort to "local, ‘small’ wars" because they were deterred from launching a world war.³ This work used the term "small wars" [malye voiny] in many places, indicating that at the time of publication, Soviet terminology was not consistent or rigid.

Efremov focused more directly than Dolgopolov on military aspects of US local war strategy and saw it as part of US global military strategy. Some of the reasons he gave for the US moved "from ‘big’ to ‘small’ wars" included interservice rivalries and criticisms from US European allies of the strategy of massive retaliation. In this way, he indicated that the US strategy of limited war resulted

¹ ibid pp68-71
² ibid pp76ff
³ Efremov op cit p5
from circumstances unique to the USA.¹

The new strategy, using wars of local significance, was aimed at, in Kissinger’s view, "delivering a defeat to the USSR or China in local confrontations", Efremov recounted. The new idea of limited war, based partly on the ideas of Osgood and Kissinger, grew out of Western recognition that there was no way capitalism could be restored to the USSR or other socialist countries.²

Efremov mentioned in one place, without any elaboration, Western theories that the USSR would not resort to massive retaliation in reply to limited nuclear strikes. Later, in the section of the book devoted to political analysis, he debunked the notion of limited nuclear war in accordance with existing political doctrine that local war had the potential to escalate into world war.³ Typical statements in this vein included:

The Government of the USSR has always seen the emergence of armed conflicts, especially conflict involving another Great power, as a potential threat to general peace ... Such are the incontrovertible lessons of the recent past ...⁴

It is impossible to think that in contemporary circumstances small wars will be local. If such wars break out, then they can quickly grow into a world war.⁵

Yet in other places his view was less categorical, and he talked more of the danger being "heightened".⁶

Western military interest in limited war against the USSR or China

¹ ibid pp16-24. According to Efremov, other US services were jealous of the primary role being given to the Air Force because of the strategy of massive retaliation. The fact that the USSR was the first to develop the hydrogen bomb and intercontinental ballistic missiles also contributed to the change, he said. He also cited Kissinger’s observation that the Soviet development of long-range aviation brought about a basic change in the post-war balance of power.

² ibid pp25-26

³ ibid pp26, 50-51

⁴ ibid p42

⁵ ibid p46. This is a direct quotation of Khrushchev from a statement in Los Angeles.

⁶ ibid p45
was seen as matched by equal interest in "local" or "small" wars against non-socialist countries of Asia and Africa. Reviewing a number of historical antecedents of modern views on "small" wars, especially Lenin, Efremov observed that many US strategists insisted that the whole organisation of the American armed forces would be better directed at conduct of "small" wars.¹

Efremov discussed in more detail than Dolgopolov the restructuring of US and Allied forces for limited or small wars, including:

- recognition of the need for mobile groups of forces positioned close to likely theatres, for a strategic reserve in the continental US; and for enhanced transport capabilities;
- considerable attention to training military personnel, both in terms of political willingness to fight small wars and in terms of intimate knowledge of the language, customs and history of the country where they will fight;
- the use of large exercises, such as "Winter Shield" in the FRG in February 1960, involving 65,000 men, to test the concept of limited war in Europe;
- creation of the Strategic Army Corps in 1958;
- allocation of 40 per cent of regular US Army personnel to limited war missions;
- reorganisation of the leadership of the armed forces in 1958 with one aim being an increase in capability to fight local wars;
- big increases in the amphibious forces (300 per cent in the Mediterranean) and general purpose forces of US fleets; and moves by Britain (a White Paper in 1957) and an expansion of West Germany's armed forces announced in 1960 for the purposes of fighting limited wars.²

In the next two sections of the book, Efremov sketched the strategic significance to the USSR of small wars. In particular, he noted that local [mestnye]

¹ *ibid* pp27-29
² *ibid* pp32-36
conflicts, "in other words, small wars", had been preludes to both world wars this century. He cited Japan's efforts in the Soviet Far East before World War II as one of a whole series of small wars in Europe, Africa and Asia.\(^1\) Over one third of the book was devoted to the history of several small wars, including Indo-China, Korea, Algeria and the 1956 Middle East War,\(^2\) although this analysis was largely from a political perspective.

Neither Efremov nor Dolgopolov specified a requirement for the Soviet armed forces to develop doctrines for small wars, but this was the implication of their works. Readers of Efremov's book would probably have seen such an implication in his reference to a statement in May 1959 by the US Navy Secretary Gates, who subsequently became Secretary for Defense, that his commanders considered preparation for "small" wars as their most important task.\(^3\) They would certainly have seen such an implication in his brief historical references, including Lenin's discussion of small wars in the nineteenth century.\(^4\)

These two works published in 1960 suggest a well developed interest in the generalised lessons of local wars and the military forces needed to fight them. As subsequent analysis will show, the lack of discussion of the relevance for the Soviet armed forces of problems of limited or local war was never corrected, although its importance was to be asserted in early 1962 in the first major Soviet work on military strategy for over thirty years.

It is significant that these works on local war appeared at the same time as Soviet military theorists were actively debating the proper content of Soviet

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\(^1\) ibid pp38-40
\(^2\) ibid pp46-75
\(^3\) ibid p35
\(^4\) ibid p28
military science and key questions of strategy, including the nature of victory in contemporary war. As the Defence Minister, Marshal Malinovskii, put it at the time:

At the present time, when our armed forces are at a critical stage of development, further thorough working out of military doctrine, of the theory of military art, and of other questions of a military nature has acquired special significance. We must clearly realize that without marked improvement in military theoretical work, practical errors in the building up of the armed forces are possible.

A new book on Soviet military science was published in the same year.

The Top Secret collection of articles on military art in nuclear war published by Military Thought from 1960 onwards carried occasional references to the notion of limited nuclear war. For example, General Kurasov wrote in 1960:

In the case of limited use of nuclear weapons, the estimates of the forces and weapons of a front must include appropriate adjustments for an increase in the number of motorized rifle and large tank units.

In the second issue in 1960, the Commandant of the Frunze Academy talked of

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1. This debate was conducted in the pages of the regular edition of Voennaya mysl' but a Top Secret edition was instituted in 1960 under the rubric "Special Collection of Articles of the Journal Military Thought". A similar series had been instituted in 1958 according to a reference in Maj.-Gen. S Kuznetsov and Maj.-Gen. A. Tikhomirov "Questions of the Control of Missile Units in an Offensive Operation" in Special Collection of Articles of the Journal Military Thought (translated by CIA) 1960 (1st Issue) p3
4. In the preface to the first issue, the editors called for discussion on strategy, operational art and tactics, as well as the problems of organisation and structure of the armed forces and development of military equipment. The subject of the conduct of operations under the various conditions of probable theatres of military operations was to be given particular attention. This was to include strategic, operational and tactical use of missile units. CIA translation of preface to first issue, p2. An article by the Commandant of the Frunze Academy in the next edition asserted that questions of strategy were not up for discussion as these had already been settled but that a new assessment of operation art would be timely and necessary (Gen. P Khurochin "The Nature of Modern Armed Combat and the Role and Place in It of the Various Branches of the Armed Forces" Special Collection of Articles of the Journal Military Thought (translated by CIA) 1960 (2nd issue) pp3-5).
5. Kurasov op cit p9
selective use of nuclear weapons, principally against the USA.¹ Major General Dzhordzhadze wrote in 1961:

not every war which envisages the use of nuclear and nuclear missile weapons can be called a nuclear missile war. Thus if one uses small nuclear bursts for fire support of infantry and tank operations, this will not be a nuclear/missile war.²

He suggested the boundary might be use of weapons in the half to two megaton range.

The opposite view is also contained in the collection, but its statement is at least evidence that some military commentators believed in limited nuclear war.³

In January 1961, Marshal Malinovskii reminded the country that even in peacetime before the Second World War, the Soviet armed forces had found it necessary to "give a decisive rebuff to provocative sneak attacks by enemies seeking to assess our forces". While Malinovskii went on to condemn theories of "limited nuclear war", claiming that the most likely form of outbreak of war with the USA was a sneak attack on the USSR with widespread use of nuclear weapons, he nevertheless reminded "countries with developed industries and an area of about 300-500 thousand square kilometres" (West Germany had an area of about 250,000 sq km) that a nuclear power would need only 100 nuclear weapons to turn

¹Kurochkin op cit pp7-10, 11
² Maj.-Gen. I Dzhordzhadze "Classical Military Art and Nuclear/Missile Warfare" Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" (translated by CIA) 1961 (4th issue) p10 . The writer was the head of the author's collective in the General Staff Academy which published a restricted work on local wars in 1975.
³ For example, Col.-Gen. N Pavlovskii "The Initial Period of a Future War and the Special Features of the Conduct of Military Operations during this Period" Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" (translated by CIA) 1961 (1st issue) p4 wrote that an attack by the imperialists on the USSR or a country of the socialist camp in a period of international tension "can scarcely be confined to a local war".
them into a "depopulated wasteland poisoned by radioactivity".\footnote{Speech of Deputy R Ia Malinovskii to the Supreme Soviet 14 January 1960 Pravda 15 January 1960 p7}

Malinovskii's speech was made on the same occasion that Khrushchev announced a reduction of armed forces manpower by a further 1.2 million, declaring that "missile technology" (not nuclear weapons, as some scholars have suggested) had changed the significance of the air force and navy, and that the USSR was pursuing a policy of unilateral moves to detente. In that speech, Khrushchev warned that any conflict unleashed by the West Germans would be conducted on their territory, not as in the past at the gates of Moscow and Stalingrad.\footnote{Presentation by N S Khrushchev to the Supreme Soviet 14 January 1960 Pravda 15 January 1960 pp3-4}

The military import of Khrushchev's remarks on Germany was elaborated by the Chief of General Staff, Marshal Zakharov, on the same occasion. He warned that Soviet forces would defend East Germany against West German military action as if it were an attack on the USSR itself.\footnote{Speech of Deputy M V Zakharov to the Supreme Soviet 14 January 1960 Pravda 15 January 1961 p8} Thus, whatever other messages these speeches on the 14 January were meant to convey, the prospect of war involving West German and Soviet troops was explicitly and implicitly addressed.

In May 1961, Maj-Gen Pavel Zhilin, editor of the Military History Journal wrote:

The political side of Soviet military doctrine has been defined with the greatest possible clarity in a series of party documents, but in the technical-military aspects of the doctrine ... there still remain propositions that are not clear and on which different opinions exist.\footnote{Maj.-Gen. P Zhilin Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1961 (May) p73}
The question is whether local war issues figured in this list in any way.

The July 1961 issue of Military Thought for the first time carried an article\(^1\) on the new US strategy in its main section on military science not, as consistently since 1945 in the section devoted to "Foreign Armies". The article noted the new US emphasis on general purpose forces and on limited war, mostly replaying previously published material. The possible significance of the article's placement is that US strategy for limited war had become by then an accepted issue for Soviet military doctrine to address.

In the same year, a new section on "The Character and Conduct of Limited Wars" was added to the second edition of a 1957 book on bourgeois military science, co-authored by one of the most prominent Soviet military theoreticians, Colonel M. Mil'shtein.\(^2\) Several translations of foreign works relating to small wars were published, including Che Guevara on partisan war,\(^3\) and Brodie and Taylor on new US limited war strategies.\(^4\) The Taylor translation had a foreword by Colonel Mil'shtein.

The Military History Journal carried three articles on local wars: Vietnam's war of independence, the Suez crisis of 1956, and the Chinese Civil

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\(^3\) Partizanskaja volna [Guerilla War] Foreign Literature Publishing House, Moscow, 1961, 136pp

\(^4\) B Brodi Strategija v vek raketnogo oruzhiia [Strategy in the Nuclear Age] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1961, 432pp; M Tailor Nenadizhnaia strategiia [Uncertain Trumpet] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1961, 192pp
Communist of the Armed Forces bought into the argument unambiguously in 1961 with an article on the reactionary essence of the theory of local wars. This article, appearing at a very early stage of Soviet military writers’ interest in local war, was to establish the ideological constraint on discussion of local war doctrine for the Soviet armed forces for the remainder of the Soviet period. Its primary message was that local wars were not something the USSR became involved in. The contradiction between this artificial notion of local wars and Soviet acknowledgment of participation in “just wars” was never resolved.

A New Doctrine Endorsed 1962-1963

Soviet military publications first reflected an authoritative and explicit doctrinal interest in local wars in 1962 when the first edition of Military Strategy, the seminal post-War Soviet work on the subject, was published. The book was compiled by staff of the General Staff Academy and other military theorists, under the direction of Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii, a former Chief of General Staff, who had left office in 1960 because of disagreements with Khrushchev.

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3 This distinction was made prominently by Khrushchev in a speech to the International Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow in 1960, and published in January 1961. N S Khrushchev "Za novye pobedy mirovogo kommunisticheskogo dvizheniia" Kommunist 1961 (1) 3-37
The date of its publication provides no direct evidence of the earliest possible "time of birth" of a General Staff requirement to plan for local wars, but does establish the latest possible time of birth - no later than May 1962 when the book was signed to press, and probably up to a year earlier given the time it would have taken to get such a book (and the concepts in it) agreed by the Communist Party.¹

The book stated a requirement for the USSR to develop military capabilities in readiness to fight small wars should they break out - in the most different locations of the globe.² This implied that small wars presented unique strategic problems independent of those presented by general war, and also that such wars could be contained and kept limited.³

While the book acknowledged that the USSR might become involved in small wars, it devoted most of its exposition of Soviet strategy in the modern period to general nuclear war, on the grounds that "such a war is the most complex and dangerous type". Nonetheless, almost in a plea for continuing investment in conventional forces, the book cited the need to develop conventional weapons "since they can be used widely in local wars".⁴

In fact, the book identified new aggressive wars as the main tool of the imperialist countries for achieving their goals.⁵ Chapter Two of the book was

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¹ According to an officer in the Military History Institute, the book was the subject of intensive bargaining between the authors and the Communist Party Central Committee. It is curious that a number of scholars pass over this when canvassing the emergence of interest in the General Staff of conventional conflict, a concept they link to the emergence of interest in local war.
² Sokolovskii (ed) op cit 1st ed pp124, 208
³ Kang op cit p45
⁴ ibid pp264, 281
⁵ ibid 2nd ed p75. When this point was included in the thesis at a late stage, the first edition in Russian was unavailable in Australia. See Marshal V D Sokolovsky Military Strategy - Soviet Doctrine and Concepts with an introduction by Raymond L Garthoff, Pall Mall Press, London UK, 1963, p59. This formula is omitted from the third edition.
entitled "Military Strategy of the Imperialist states and their Preparation for New Wars" - not for "future war" or "future world war". The final section of this chapter, titled "Preparation by the Imperialists for New Wars", observed that "the construction and training of the armed forces of the countries of NATO and other aggressive military blocs is aimed simultaneously at satisfying the requirements of general nuclear war and limited wars, wherever the latter may arise". At the same time, the book noted that "their main efforts are directed nevertheless at the preparation of general nuclear war".¹

Military Strategy provided an elaboration of the unique characteristics of local wars, albeit not at great length. It reiterated the political distinction between "small, imperialist wars on a local, limited scale", and "national liberation, civil, and other popular wars",² in order to differentiate between the "justness" (and therefore acceptability) of Soviet support for the latter type. The second edition tied them all together from a military perspective, by saying "Both imperialist and national liberation, civil wars are in size small, local wars".³

From a doctrinal standpoint, Military Strategy made a strong statement that the "causes and development of such wars will differ on each occasion". There was a "sharp distinction between the military-political and strategic aims of the participants, and also between the ways and means of conducting these wars". The implication of this, the book said, was the existence of a "serious problem in the development of the theory of military strategy: to study and analyse the problems of modern war not in general, but as applied to a

¹ <i>ibid</i> 2nd ed p99. For the first edition reference see Sokolovsky <i>Military Strategy - Soviet Doctrine and Concepts</i> p71
² <i>ibid</i> p209
³ Sokolovskii <i>op cit</i> 2nd ed p228
given concrete instance".¹

Military Strategy called on the Soviet armed forces to be prepared specifically for "small scale wars" because they are conducted "by methods that differ from those used in world wars", placing a premium on "quick victory" in small wars - ostensibly to prevent their escalation into world wars.² The book said later that the two types of war differ considerably, "particularly at the start", and that military strategy should take account of this, but offered no elaboration.³ However it suggested the main events of a small war were likely to develop near the front, unlike nuclear world war, where attacks deep into the rear would become a feature.⁴ A little later, this point was reiterated: in local wars, it was likely that military operations deep within enemy territory "may not be used at all or only on a limited scale".⁵ Operations on land or at sea to destroy enemy forces were the most likely forms of operations in local wars.⁶

The study of the "unleashing of local wars" was particularly important" because imperialists saw them as means of checking the "accuracy of their own plans" and the "preparedness of their armed forces".⁷ The imperialists would unleash local wars without warning, possibly in a period of reduced military tension.⁸

The book linked local wars, the western concept of limited nuclear war, and world war by arguing that local wars could be proxy wars of the USA designed to limit use of nuclear weapons to the territory or vicinity of client states.

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¹ ibid 1st ed, p209; 2nd ed, p229; 3rd ed, p222
² ibid 1st ed, p215; 2nd ed, p234; 3rd ed, p228
³ ibid 1st ed p281; 2nd ed, p319. This reference is omitted from the third edition.
⁴ ibid 1st ed p329. This reference is deleted from the third edition.
⁵ ibid 1st ed p335. This reference is not in the third edition.
⁶ ibid 2nd ed p374. This statement is deleted in the 3rd edition.
⁷ ibid 1st ed p322
⁸ ibid 1st ed pp322-323
Imperialists could also use local wars to mask preparations for world war.¹

The "most decisive" political and strategic aims existed, according to Military Strategy, in civil or revolutionary class wars. In wars between states with the same social systems, the political and strategic aims were usually limited, and compromises were possible "long before economic and military exhaustion of the belligerent states", but wars between states with different social systems had particularly decisive aims.²

The book said that strategic defence and offence could "retain their significance in the event war is waged by conventional means in certain types of local wars". The importance of this statement can be judged against one in the preceding paragraph of the book that "strategic offence and strategic defence as forms of strategic operations under conditions of modern war have lost their previous significance";³ or that "strategic defence and defensive strategy should be decisively rejected as being extremely dangerous for the country".⁴ Did this mean that the USSR would reject a defensive posture in a local war? That question was not addressed.

The first two editions of Military Strategy contained the following scenario for local war:

It is possible that West Germany, independently or together with other NATO members, might unleash a local war in Europe with a surprise attack against East Germany. At the start of such a war, nuclear weapons might not even be used. Military operations might begin, for example, with massed attacks by tactical aviation and rocket troops using conventional warheads against the entire territory of East Germany or some other nearby socialist country, and by

¹ ibid 1st ed pp324-326
² ibid 1st ed p21
³ ibid 1st ed pp17-18
⁴ ibid p333
invasion with large tank formations.\textsuperscript{1}

The implication of this statement was to pose for the USSR the mirror image of the problem the USA had sought to address with the doctrine of flexible response. The problem was not discussed further, except to assert that:

Any local military conflict in contemporary circumstances, if it is not stopped at the outset, can grow into a world war with unlimited use of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{2}

The import of this statement was that escalation was not viewed as automatic - even in the first edition - as long as efforts recognising the potential dangers of escalation were made to stop the war. Sokolovskii noted the heavy emphasis in US strategy on taking all necessary measures to prevent a limited war from becoming a global nuclear war.\textsuperscript{3}

The view that escalation was not automatic was reflected in an important change in the second edition, where the word "may" \textit{[mozhet]} replaced "the phrase "will inevitably":

In the event of a war launched by the imperialist bloc against the USSR or any other socialist state, such a war \textit{may} take on the character of a world war, with most countries of the world participating.\textsuperscript{4}

The statement in the first edition that local wars will "inevitably" grow into world war was contradicted in several places, as the references above suggest, and was almost certainly not the accepted General Staff view. It was probably a hang-over from the ideological orthodoxy of the 1950s that missed the editors.

The second edition provided the following new discussion of local war:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} \textit{ibid} 1st ed p325, 2nd ed p362
\item \textsuperscript{2} \textit{ibid}
\item \textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid} 1st ed p77
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{ibid} 1st ed p237, 2nd ed p258
\end{itemize}
In local wars, several of the types of strategic operation may or may not be used on a limited scale. In the first instance, this can lead to military operations against targets deep in the rear. Operations on land, and even at sea, take on a decisive significance in such wars.

... The targets of operations are the armed forces, although attempts to strike targets in the rear with aircraft cannot be excluded. On land, both offensive and defensive operations involving troops and aircraft can be involved. Combat operations will take on a manoeuvre character, more mobile than in the last war, because both the ground troops and aviation have changed radically since then. It is possible that both sides in the course of a local war will use nuclear weapons of an operational-tactical designation, without immediate recourse to strategic nuclear weapons. However the war could hardly be conducted for long with the use of only these operational-tactical nuclear weapons. Once nuclear weapons had been used, then the sides would be compelled to bring into play the totality of their nuclear might. The local war will turn into world war.¹

This passage did not appear either in the first or third editions. Notwithstanding the final sentence, the passage addressed the possibility that both sides might attempt to fight a local war for a short time with tactical nuclear weapons.

The importance of ground forces in local wars was given slightly more prominence over naval forces in a new passage in the second edition, with air forces assessed as unlikely to be used if air-defence weapons had the upper hand.²

The second edition deleted the observation that local wars could break out between imperialist states.³ This signified some ideological rectitude creeping in, further evidenced by deletion of the terms "small ... local, regional [mestnyi], limited scale" in the first reference to the types of small wars, where the "class" character of local wars as "imperialist wars" was given more prominence. The word "local" was added in another place in front of the term "regional"

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¹ ibid 2nd ed pp374-375
² ibid 2nd ed pp375, 406
³ ibid 1st ed p209
In 1962, Malinovskii’s *Vigilantly Stand Guard over the Peace* said that the USA was attempting to "to achieve its aggressive goals by way of waging local ‘little’ wars with the use of conventional, and, as the American generals say, tactical nuclear weapons"; and an article on the role of US Strike Command in local wars appeared in the January issue of *Military Thought*.

By August 1963, the Chair of the History of Wars and Military Art at the General Staff Academy had compiled a book, classified Secret, entitled *Local Wars of Imperialism (1950-1961)*. The book was approved for publication in December and published in 1964. Its authors, a Rear Admiral, two Ground Forces Major-Generals, one Air Forces Lieutenant-General, and one naval Captain from the General Staff Academy, brought to this book an uncharacteristically tri-service aspect. For example, no naval officer was identified in the collective of authors responsible for *Military Strategy*.

Like the Sokolovskii volume, the Lial’ko book is significant as evidence of General Staff awareness by 1963 of the unique characteristics of small wars; of efforts to generalise and learn from experience of local wars; and of the General Staff’s belief that the USSR must prepare for such wars.

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1 *ibid* 2nd ed p234. "Local" would perhaps be a better translation of [*mestnyj*] but "regional" is used to distinguish between [*mestnyj*] and [*lokal’nyj*].
2 R Ia Malinovskii *Bditel’no stoiat’ na strahe mira* [Vigilantly Stand Guard for Peace] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1962, p24
3 I Aleksandrov "Ob edinionnoe takticheskoe udarnoe komandovanie vooruzhionnykh sil SSHA" [The Unified Tactical Strike Command of the Armed Forces of the USA] *Voennaya mysl’* 1962 (1) 73-79. The article was referenced in a 1966 Soviet bibliography on local wars. I Ia Mints and I V Timoshenko *Voeno-morskie sily v lokal’nykh voinakh. Uказатель otchestvennoi i zarubezhnoi literatury za 1961-august 1966gg* [Naval Forces in Local Wars. Index of Fatherland and Foreign Literature from 1961 to August 1966] Leningrad, 1966. This was a typewritten and roneoed work.
The work noted a statement by the US Secretary of the Army in 1961 that the theory of global nuclear war had outlived its usefulness, and that local, limited wars were the ones most likely to arise. This echoed Efremov’s reference to a similar statement by US Navy Secretary Gates in 1959 which is mentioned above. The authors stated explicitly that the USSR should study local wars because of the danger of being drawn into them:

The Soviet Union and its armed forces have not yet been dragged into local wars. But the danger of the USSR’s being drawn into such wars is very real, as shown by the war in Korea on the borders of the Soviet Union, and the threat of imperialist aggression in Hungary in 1956. Thus the lessons of local wars are important even for Soviet military cadres.

One cannot but see a constant danger of the USSR and its armed forces being drawn into local wars.

The work aimed to outline the political and military character of local wars in order to draw the necessary lessons. It studied not only the military art of the imperialist countries but also that of their antagonists in local wars. The authors observed that Soviet military aid to countries involved in local wars would be ineffective unless the Soviet Armed Forces understood these wars:

In local wars, ... we will have not only enemies. The peoples ... are our allies, and we must therefore know their political and military forms of struggle, their requirements, in order to coordinate our efforts with their efforts ... and to give them the assistance of which they have need.

The book suggested five "most important" conditions on which victory "over the imperialists" in local wars would depend:

high military preparedness of the armed forces, trained for operations both with the use of nuclear weapons as well as with the use of

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1 ibid p21
2 ibid p6
3 ibid p29
4 ibid pp6, 30
conventional weapons;

the possibility of rapid deployment of the necessary troops, equipment and weapons to the region faced with the threat of a local war;

the rapid creation after the emergence of the conflict of such groupings on the decisive fronts as to allow in the shortest time possible the taking of key positions, especially aerodromes, ports and bases, and to disrupt the deployment of the enemy's reserves;

uninterrupted massing of force to ensure superiority over the aggressor on the decisive fronts right up to the point of final victory; and

the execution of decisive offensive operations from the very beginning of the armed conflict, in order to crush the armed forces of the enemy in the region before he can reinforce them by redeploying reserves from overseas or other regions...¹

The book made contradictory observations about the likelihood of a local war remaining non-nuclear. For example, in the conclusion, there is a strong statement of the inevitability of escalation if nuclear weapons are used:

opinions in the bourgeois press differ on the consequences of use of nuclear weapons in local war but our considered position on this question turns on the point that even the use of tactical nuclear weapons will produce, especially in Europe, a retaliatory strike from the other side ... And after the first limited strikes, more powerful strikes on an escalatory scale would follow, to the point where a nuclear rocket war was inevitable.

Continuing in that vein, the book made a clear distinction between local wars with nuclear weapons and those without:

A local war can be conducted only with conventional weapons. This is confirmed by the experience of local wars in Korea and Vietnam. Despite a grave military situation for the imperialists in these wars, and several threats to use atom bombs, the imperialists decided not to take this dangerous step.

But the book then appeared to allow all possibilities by claiming that imperialists'

¹ ibid p244
use of tactical nuclear weapons in local wars could not be excluded.¹ In particular, it claimed that after 1961 the USA began to consider the possibility of local war in Europe with limited use of nuclear weapons, and might conduct such wars against the socialist states.²

The tone of these passages, especially the observation about imperialists’ forsaking of nuclear weapons in Korea and Vietnam, could be interpreted as indicating that escalation in local wars was not likely. There was even a suggestion that talk of use of nuclear weapons served the purposes of nuclear deterrence.³

An important conclusion of the book was that it was possible, once a local war commenced, to move rapidly to prevent it from becoming a world war, and that this was an "especially clear conclusion" from the Cuban crisis.⁴

Citing Brodie, Osgood, Kissinger and Taylor, Lial’ko and his co-authors noted that in recent years imperialist countries had for the first time attempted to develop a special theory for fighting local wars, and that the Americans had concluded that the planning, conduct and means of fighting local wars differed from those of global war.⁵

The book recounted the same facts about changes in US strategy and force structure discussed in earlier books, but gave special emphasis to President Kennedy’s message to Congress on 25 May 1961 on the eve of the summit with Khrushchev. The importance of the message was, the book said, that it concerned the unique military aspects of local wars, such as strengthening the ground forces,

¹ ibid pp245-246
² ibid pp22, 25
³ ibid p25
⁴ ibid p29
⁵ ibid pp20-22
increasing their mobility, especially with helicopters, and other measures for conducting non-nuclear wars, quasi-military operations and irregular wars.\(^1\)

The book's main conclusions are listed on the following page to demonstrate the depth to which it analysed the subject and for purposes of easy comparison with later comment.

Lial'ko and his colleagues alluded to the lack of study of their subject in the USSR - almost certainly a reference to the situation prior to 1960, and noted that sources were limited or lacking, thus preventing them from revealing completely features of military art in the wars reviewed.\(^2\)

The book relied on a number of Secret sources, mostly General Staff studies,\(^3\) but also some intelligence reports, relating to local wars in Egypt (1953), Laos (1960-1961), Cuba (1961), and Indochina. The book marked a firming up of the use of term "local wars" as opposed to limited or small wars, with the following definition:

Local wars have been conducted and will be conducted in a limited territory and its adjacent waters, and have involved limited armed forces of the aggressors.\(^4\)

The book restated the class essence of local wars, listing the "counter-revolution" in Hungary in 1956 and the Cuban events of 1961-1962 were listed as examples of local war.

\(^1\) ibid p21
\(^2\) ibid
\(^4\) ibid pp3, 5-6. Lial'ko devotes a section to the "Aggression organised by the USA against Cuba in 1961" in the Chapter called "War in Korea, Vietnam and Cuba". While the title refers only to 1961, the work was written after the events of 1962, which appear to have influenced assessments in the book of US naval supremacy. Several later works included the Cuban events as an example of a local war.
Key Conclusions: Lial’ko et al

- each war is unique but there are commonalities
- the USA is generally involved in all of them
- means used and level of forces depends on political aims, geography, and opposing forces
- where the aim is not a total one (such as liquidation of a smaller state), several infantry battalions and airborne forces, supported by a small number of tanks, have sufficed
- the decisive role is played by the ground forces (including airborne and marine forces)
- operations are usually characterised by manoeuvre, speed and daring
- air forces can be used to wear down the will of the enemy, especially deep in the rear, or for ground support of troops
- artillery, rather than air power, is the primary means of suppression of the enemy at the front
- air transport is an integral element of operations
- the navy serves a wide variety of purposes, especially in higher intensity wars, on a scale comparable to their great significance in world wars
- air and naval support offered to victims of imperialist aggression has been too small and ineffective to match the overwhelming might of the imperialists
- special forces and independent units usually only have primary importance in wars against poorly armed enemies or in difficult terrain (desert, mountains, jungle)
- independent command arrangements for tank units and air force units can be used but only when employed on a small scale
- independent operations of tank divisions or brigades are the exception, not the rule
- engineer troops are a vital force component
- there is centralisation of command in each service of the force
- the theatre commander has a staff for planning and conduct of joint operations, which are essential
- poor levels of armament of the victim countries leads to the loss of initiative and higher costs of victory
- in anticipation of local wars, it is necessary to keep sufficiently powerful naval forces in the maritime approaches to the main theatres and rapid reaction forces in reserve
- imperialist troops have usually been poorly prepared (in training, materiel and technology) for small wars
- a lightning first strike is preferred in local wars, except in civil wars or counter-revolutionary wars where it would not be appropriate
- reliance is placed on a protracted war where they can’t use their own armed forces
- weak domestic political support, particularly sensitivity to high casualty rates, is an important consideration

Source Lial’ko et al op cit pp219-244
The authors suggested a system of classification (a typical feature of Soviet military theory) for local wars according to the type of "victim of the imperialist aggression": people's democratic governments; recently liberated countries; and peoples still struggling for independence.¹

The October 1963 issue of the Military History Journal carried a brief account of a conference on Soviet military doctrine at which at least one speaker, V. M. Kulish, stated that the USSR still had no thorough scientific study of military doctrine.² Another comment on the conference on military doctrine in the same issue noted that "the possibility of waging local and limited wars is not to be rejected".³

Consolidation of the Doctrine 1964-1968

By 1964, Soviet journals of different types had begun to treat local war as a normal, if not frequent, topic.

Colonel I. Korotkov noted that Soviet military theory had paid insufficient attention to study of limited or local wars in the post-war years, and this deficiency had begun to be corrected only recently.⁴

Military Thought carried an article on national liberation wars⁵ and one on types of war in American strategy,⁶ while Naval Digest carried an article on

¹ ibid p6
³ Colonel L Belousov "Konferentziia o sovetskoi voennoi doktrine" Voeno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1963 (10) p123
⁴ Col. I Korotkov "O razvitii sovetskoi voennoi teorii v poslevoennye gody" [The Development of Soviet Military Theory in the Post-War Years] Voeno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1964 (4) p48
⁵ N Mil'gram, "O sovremenannykh natsional'no-osvoboditel'nykh i kolonial'nykh voinakh" [On Contemporary National Liberation and Colonial Wars] Voennaia mysl' 1963 (1) 31-42
⁶ V Mochalov "Vidy voin v ponimanii Pentagona" [Types of Wars in the Understanding of the Pentagon] Voennaia mysl' 1964 (9) 70-78
amphibious operations on local wars.  

The article on types of war in US strategy reiterated the view expressed by Lial’ko and his co-authors (and alluded to by Sokolovskii) that "limitation of war is currently possible".  

As an indication that there was now a doctrinal view for public consumption, Military Knowledge, a popularising journal of the military youth volunteer service, carried two articles on limited war.  

By 1965, a collection of translated articles on the navy included several articles on limited war, and another book on limited war in general had been published.  

This book, The Big Lie about Small Wars: On the Bourgeois Theory of Limited Wars, was published in 1965 by the Military Publishing House. In spite of its apparently propagandistic title and its high propagandistic content, at least 40 of its 101 pages were devoted to a relatively objective analysis of military aspects of limited wars.  

The book traced the development of the concept of small wars, both conceptually through the ideas of Clausewitz and Corbett, and in practice through Korea, the Suez crisis, South Vietnam, Angola, Congo and Southern Arabia. The author, Colonel Mochalov, said that the imperialists first showed renewed interest

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4. Voenno-morskie sily v budushchei voine [Naval Forces in a Future War] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1964, with a foreword by Admiral A T Chabanenko. Notwithstanding the title, there were several articles on local war.
in the theory of limited wars in the beginning of the 1950s, that it developed more quickly in the late 1950s.\(^1\) He reiterated the analysis from Sokolovskii’s *Military Strategy* on the change in US strategy from massive retaliation to flexible response,\(^2\) and claimed that US military theorists had changed the definition of limited war in recent years from a war between small states or confined to their territory, to one "limited in political or military goals, in the area of conflict, in the military forces and weapons used, regardless of which countries, big or small, the wars are between".\(^3\)

Mochalov maintained Lial’ko’s distinction between local (conventional) war and limited nuclear war, proclaiming adamantly that the imperialists were not preparing for a conventional war against the USSR,\(^4\) and he sketched some US geopolitical moves that underpinned the US strategy of flexible response and limited wars, such as seeking allies and building military bases overseas.\(^5\)

On US planning for limited war, Mochalov mentioned the special importance attached to rapid deployment capability, involvement of civilian specialists, establishment of a special training centre for developing specialised tactics and equipment for limited war, and realisation after the Korean war that a country cannot just use forces prepared for global war in a limited war (especially because of geography).\(^6\)

Mochalov quoted General Maxwell Taylor on five concepts

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\(^1\) *ibid* pp5-6  
\(^2\) *ibid* pp6-7  
\(^3\) *ibid* p7  
\(^4\) *ibid* pp10-11  
\(^5\) *ibid* pp13-39  
\(^6\) *ibid* pp39-40
necessary for US success in its limited war strategy:

increased strategic mobility of forces;
modernisation of combat technology and equipment;
timely preparation of air and sea transport for troops and equipment;
contingency planning for operations in limited wars and training
troops in their execution; and
wide dissemination of information about the possibility of US
involvement in such wars.¹

Like Efremov and Lial’ko, Mochalov gave a detailed account of
changes to US force structure, planning and command and control arrangements
made as a result of the new strategy, particularly the formation in 1958 of the
Strategic Army Corps and in 1961 of a special Strike Command subordinated
directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.²

This account, little different from that first given by Efremov in
1960, can be read as evidence that the Soviet military readership were by 1965
fully aware of the concepts for fighting local wars, and the necessary related
changes to force structure.

Mochalov talked almost enviously of the new US Strike Command,
which comprised an Army corps, an Airborne corps and a tactical air command. Its
two airborne divisions could be dropped with full equipment, one at one hour’s
notice, and the forward echelon of the other within four hours, to provide a
complete combat group of several battalions anywhere in the world within 48
hours.³

The command could undertake sea and air assaults; mount
conventional operations against liberation armies independently or in cooperation
with other armies; operate in a variety of climates, localities, and weather; detach

¹ ibid p40
² ibid pp41-73
³ ibid pp49, 52
individual units for independent operations; and was always combat-ready, with its communications equipment in air transportable vehicles.¹ An important feature of it, according to Mochalov, was that it was highly selective in recruitment with the aim of creating an elite force both in physical standards and in ideological indoctrination to fight communism.²

In discussing air and naval forces, Mochalov paid special attention to strategic lift, forward basing, marine amphibious forces and aircraft carrier task groups, in respect of which he cited Kissinger from 1957 to the effect that groups of warships built around aircraft carriers were an ideal means for waging limited war. Mochalov also regarded the size, global disposition and record of use of US marines as especially significant.³

In a section on nuclear weapons, US interest in their use in limited war, details of US tactical nuclear weapons, the effects of nuclear weapons, and half a page on the dangers to humanity of such weapons, were all discussed.⁴

The book devoted a small section to espionage and diversions, recounting the recreation of US special forces in 1952, describing them as an important part of US strategy for opposing national liberation movements.⁵

Mochalov discussed methods of conducting limited war at some length, in separate sections for local (15 pages), conventional (2 pages), and limited nuclear war (5 pages).⁶ The section on local war, the only one with any analysis of

¹ *ibid* p51
² *ibid* p53
³ *ibid* pp54-66
⁴ *ibid* pp67-71
⁵ *ibid* pp71-74. Mochalov noted the large size of US special forces (16,000), their combination of regular and reserve forces (7 groups in regular forces, 4 in the National Guard, and 3 in the Reserves), and their geographical spread (three of the 7 regular units were based outside the US - Okinawa, West Germany, and Panama).
⁶ *ibid* pp75-90
military principles, is summarised on the following page. He suggested that local wars could be non-nuclear or nuclear, with the USA disposed to resort to nuclear weapons to ensure its objectives as quickly as possible. This latter observation may have been for propaganda purposes only.

With respect to limited nuclear war, Mochalov described it as more complicated to conduct than unlimited global nuclear war, with diplomacy playing a central role in the bourgeois concept of limited nuclear war in order to regulate the conflict. He replayed Kissinger's views on a limited nuclear war between the USA and the USSR over the German question. He stated, in bold print, that Soviet military science took into account the possibility of the outbreak of local wars waged by imperialists in a defined small region, limited in their scope, combat forces and weapons used, and that such wars may grow into a global nuclear war - "especially if tactical nuclear weapons are used".

A summary of the book's key points is on the following page.

Mochalov's conclusion was entirely political and propagandistic, with one sentence in bold: "Limited wars hide in themselves the possibility of transformation into world war." Notwithstanding such propagandistic flourishes, the consistent view by 1965 appeared to have been that a local war, even in Europe, need not necessarily escalate into global war.

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1 *ibid* p77. "In local wars, all modern types of weapons apart from nuclear missiles will be used".
2 *ibid* pp84-85
3 *ibid* pp92-95
4 *ibid* p12
5 *ibid* p12
6 *ibid* p100
Key Conclusions: Mochalov

- the most likely form of the start of a local war is surprise attack
- the main aims of the aggressor are to annihilate the enemy and to control the main administrative and communications centres
- industrial targets and population centres are ignored except for areas judged to be hotbeds of the revolutionary movement
- initial strikes include attacks on aerodromes and targets in the coastal area followed by an amphibious landing and a simultaneous air assault of up to a brigade or regiment
- air assault helps to neutralise the numerical superiority of the enemy
- airborne forces help reinforce troops on the ground against counter-attack
- wide use of helicopters in the amphibious assault
- sea and air assaults on a wide front
- advance bombing when the main force is still distant from the battlefield
- use of psychological pressure
- attacks in two echelons to enable a very high tempo of operations
- the favoured form of offensive is the frontal assault to enable operations across the whole front
- a more rapid transition from offence to defence in local wars than in big wars
- defence is organised in considerable depth
- pure forms of mobile or positional defence are rarely encountered
- two types of defence: mobile defence or area (zone) defence.

Source: Mochalov *Bol’shaia lozh’* pp75-76, 81-87
An account of the authority such a view held by 1965 has been offered by Garthoff.¹ In 1965, the General Staff Academy set a new requirement to perfect theory for the conduct of non-nuclear, as well as nuclear war.² The Frunze Academy was ordered in late 1964 or 1965 to prepare a secret text on tactics exclusively for non-nuclear operations, while at the same time it published an unclassified volume with a similar title devoted primarily to nuclear war, thus maintaining the propaganda line that nuclear war was the most likely form of war.³ A prominent Soviet military theorist, in an article in Communist of the Armed Forces in 1965, referred to the possibility of a non-nuclear local war in Europe and said that the use of tactical nuclear weapons should not be excluded.⁴ At the same time he emphasised that in such a case the probability of escalation into a nuclear world war would be great, and might under certain circumstances become inevitable.

A 1966 work on military theory reiterated the need to prepare to fight small wars. The authors said:

it is necessary to be ready to wage various kinds of war: world and small [lokal'naia]; swift and protracted; with the use of nuclear

¹ Raymond L Garthoff Deterrence and the Revolution in Soviet Military Doctrine Brookings, Washington DC, 1990, pp57-60. The following references from 1965 were first discovered in his book.
weapons and without them.¹

In 1966, V. A. Matsulenko - to be a prolific author on the subject of local wars in the classified military press² - published his first work on local wars, entitled *The Local Wars of Imperialism (1946-1966).*³ The book was not available to this author from the library of the Military History Institute but was cited in a General Staff Academy work of 1975. An updated and reissued version published in 1970 by the Ministry of Defence publishing house, Voenizdat was also unavailable.⁴ Matsulenko also published several open source articles on the subject.⁵

In a book review in *Military Thought* in 1966, another prominent commentator on military affairs, Colonel Rybkin, reiterated the accepted view that local wars did not threaten world war as readily as some people had once thought: historical experience has shown that only two local wars have turned into world wars. ... The author says further that "it is entirely possible" that the aggressor will use nuclear weapons in a local war. This is a correct statement, but again it is doubtful that this would "immediately" turn the war into a world war. Everything depends on the specific conditions. In any case, it is in the interests of the Soviet Union ... to put an end to the local war or to limit it and defeat the aggressor with limited forces. Solving this problem is one of the important tasks in developing military theory in its present stage.⁶

Rybkin was at that time working on a dissertation on political aspects of

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² This information was provided by an officer of the Military History Institute.
contemporary wars, one chapter of which was devoted to local war.¹

The Soviet Navy may have developed a keen interest in local wars by this time as the Central Naval Library compiled a bibliography on the subject in 1966.² It contained a total of 173 entries, 37 of which were by foreigners, mostly American, on the Vietnam war, and referenced 78 pages from Sokolovsky’s Military Strategy as referring to local wars.³ The commentary in the bibliography noted the leading role of the navy in local wars, which the book linked to the US strategy of flexible response, and also noted the emphasis of British strategists on the need to prepare both for global war and local wars.⁴ As further proof that Soviet military circles understood the Cuban crisis - at least in part as a local war problem, the bibliography included a sub-heading on "US Aggression against Cuba in 1961-1962".⁵

The third edition of Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy, published in 1968, moved away from the express statement of the first two that the main priority of study was nuclear war, by deleting the observation that "The current chapter reviews mainly the conduct of nuclear missile war on a global scale between the coalitions of capitalist and socialist states because such a war presents the greatest complexity and danger",⁶ and on the contrary, calling for a variegated response to war according to "the way it developed and its scale - whether it is a

¹ E I Rybkin Sushchnost’ sovremennykh voin i ikh vliianie na sotsial’nye protsessy [The Essence of Contemporary Wars and Their Influence on Social Processes] Doctoral Dissertation, Lenin Military Political Academy, 1967, Chapter Two. This dissertation was not available.
³ The referenced pages from the second edition of Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy were pp56-61, 72-98, 98-145
⁴ ibid pp2, 6-7
⁵ ibid p18
⁶ Sokolovskii (ed) op cit 2nd ed p319
world war or a limited, local, civil or national-liberation war, whether it began with a surprise attack or the gradual drawing in of separate countries, and whether the aggressor used nuclear weapons at the beginning of the war or during its course.\textsuperscript{1}

The next section of the third edition deleted discussion of the War of 1812 against Napoleon as a paradigm of world war in the 20th century, and the claim that the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 began without warning.\textsuperscript{2}

In the section on conduct of war in contemporary conditions, the third edition added that the imperialist countries do not plan to rely on their ground forces in a new world war, assessing the uses of conventional forces as follows:

The Ground Forces and other conventional weapons are necessary for the imperialists for the conduct of local wars in various regions, including Europe, for the maintenance of tension in the world, and in the event of a big war - for distracting nuclear missile strikes of the enemy on more important targets, especially in the USA, and also for invasion of socialist countries after nuclear strikes.\textsuperscript{3}

In an obvious attempt to blur discussion of the relative importance of general nuclear war and local war, the third edition completely recast the pages of Chapter Two which dealt with preparations for new wars. In particular, the statement that the imperialists were preparing simultaneously for general nuclear war and local wars was deleted, along with the rider that their main concern was general nuclear war.\textsuperscript{4} So was the scenario of local war launched by West Germany.

The 1968 edition also jettisoned some of the less sensible observations about local war of the earlier editions - such as, military operations deep within enemy territory may not be used at all or only on a limited scale, and

\textsuperscript{1} ibid 3rd ed p312
\textsuperscript{2} ibid 2nd ed pp320, 322
\textsuperscript{3} ibid 3rd ed p334
\textsuperscript{4} ibid 3rd ed pp96-99. While referring to the US and - by that time - NATO doctrine of flexible response, these pages avoid an explicit statement of the relative importance of the two types of war.
operations on land or at sea to destroy enemy forces would be the most likely forms of operations in local wars.\textsuperscript{1} The third edition merely stated instead that different operations would be used according to whether it was a world nuclear war, a world war arising from escalation of a local war (implying non-nuclear), or a purely local war ("with a completely different form of operations" taking place in the last category).\textsuperscript{2} The third edition acknowledged, unlike the first two, that military strategy involving deep nuclear missile strikes against the whole enemy territory "does not reflect the character and laws of war without the use of nuclear weapons".\textsuperscript{3}

**Local War Doctrine - Politically Acceptable by 1969?**

In a 1969 revision of a 1966 book, *Methodological Problems of Military Thought and Practice*, new paragraphs on the peculiarities of local wars were added.\textsuperscript{4} The revised edition saw "contemporary limited war as similar in its essence and character to small wars of the past", which were seen as having a "series of special characteristics giving them an individual character and distinguishing them from other wars". The authors reminded their readers that Clausewitz taught that small war has its own special character, as do the forces that conduct it.\textsuperscript{5} The authors viewed the peculiarities of local war as growing out of the methods and time scale of their conduct, and from their technological character.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{1} *ibid* 1st ed p335  
\textsuperscript{2} *ibid* 3rd ed p312  
\textsuperscript{3} *ibid* 3rd ed p20  
\textsuperscript{4} A S Zhioltov, T R Kondratkov, and E A Khomenko *Metodologicheskie problemy voennoi teorii i praktiki* [Methodological Problems of Military Theory and Practice] 2nd ed, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1969, p9. The principal "author", Zhioltov, was Commandant of the Lenin Political-Military Academy at the time of publication and had been head of the MPA until 1958.  
\textsuperscript{5} *ibid* pp91, 96  
\textsuperscript{6} *ibid* pp98-99
Aggressors relied on deceit, surprise attack, use of newest technology weapons, and espionage and diversionary operations in the enemy's rear.

The revised edition identified local wars of imperialism as one factor among several post-war developments that had dictated a review of many propositions of Soviet military doctrine. The authors went on to say that while Soviet military doctrine attached special significance to preparing the country and armed forces for world war, it also dealt with the possibility of "limited, local wars with conventional weapons" launched by the imperialists.¹

After making familiar propaganda points concerning the threat local wars posed to world peace through the risk of escalation, the book observed that "not every limited war waged without nuclear weapons will inevitably become a world war".²

More specifically, the authors observed that a peculiarity of local wars was the inequality between the warring sides which imposed unaccustomed limits for them. The USA was seen as conducting such wars at considerable distance from its own territory, attempting to achieve victory by itself, and often exposing itself to risk at the hands of its puppets. The victim country should mobilise all of its material resources.³

The book said that the USSR was against local wars, but:

there are wars which we have supported and we will support. These are national-liberation wars, civil wars and wars in defence of the socialist fatherlands.⁴

Soviet military doctrine took account of internationalist duty (read local wars) but

¹ *ibid* pp285, 287
² *ibid* p98
³ *ibid*
⁴ *ibid* p99
only "in response to the concrete interests and capabilities" of the USSR. In this connection, the book said Soviet military doctrine envisaged the conduct of armed struggle in defence of socialism alongside the armies of friendly and fraternal countries. It mentioned the interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia but without significant elaboration.¹

A study guide on the military aspects of small wars was published in 1969, but was not available in the libraries consulted.²

Conclusion

The Soviet military leadership had by 1962 published an authoritative view that the USSR should prepare to fight local wars. This view was reiterated in a number of officially endorsed publications, classified and unclassified, between 1962 and 1969. However, there was no elaboration in this period of how the USSR should prepare its armed forces for local war, presumably because local wars were defined as launched only by imperialist countries.

Beginning in open source literature in 1960, there was detailed theoretical analysis of the conduct of local war, that would be incorporated into an official doctrine of local war. This analysis, while no doubt reflecting greater liberalisation in Soviet society at large, and the fact that the USA was actively moving toward adopting a flexible response strategy, almost certainly reflected high level doctrinal interest.

The probability that limited nuclear war, especially in Europe, could

¹ ibid pp186, 195, 290
² The work was referenced merely as a study guide with the title Lokal'nye voiny imperializma [Local Wars of Imperialism] in I E Shavrov et al Lokal'nye voiny: Istoria i sovremennost' - Istoriko-teoreticheskoe issledovanie [Local Wars: Their History and Contemporary Significance - An Historical and Theoretical Work] Voroshilov General Staff Academy, Moscow, 1975, p14
not remain limited for long was regularly canvassed, but most works since 1960 exhibited some recognition, albeit contradictory, that it was possible. This was seen as early as 1961 in some references, not necessarily authoritative, in the Top Secret Special Collection of Military Thought.

While an orthodoxy seemed to be current up to 1965 that war in Europe between the USSR and the USA would be a general nuclear war, there was also recognition that its earlier stages might involve only conventional weapons or limited use of tactical nuclear weapons and that these could be contained or localised.

There is evidence that, by 1965 at the latest, the Soviet General Staff accepted that it should actively prepare for exclusively non-nuclear operations. It is possible to interpret parts of the 1962 edition of Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy in this light, but the writing in 1963 of the Secret work in the General Staff Academy on local war appears to confirm acceptance of the prospect of a local conventional or local nuclear war in Europe, which need not lead inevitably to general nuclear war.

By 1969, the Commandant of the Political Military Academy had admitted that local war was one among several post-War developments that had dictated a review of many propositions of Soviet military doctrine. He also stated baldly that Soviet military doctrine took account of the possibility of waging local wars, with forces different from those needed for general war, because local wars have unique characteristics.

By 1969, several less authoritative, open source monographs and several restricted monographs on the unique characteristics of local war and the forces required for local war had been published, and a few articles on local wars
had appeared in the specialist military science press. These developments occurred in the midst of an open debate about the nature and content of Soviet military doctrine - but also, as this thesis discusses in Chapter Ten, while ideological controls in Soviet society at large were being tightened after 1964.

It is impossible to establish firmly whether development of a doctrinal interest in local war within the General Staff occurred simultaneously with the development of Soviet general war doctrine between 1954 and 1960, or whether it was a later consideration. There are signs that local war doctrine may have emerged slightly later than the general war doctrine. Soviet open sources took up the discussion of local war only after the main precepts of general war doctrine had been published consistently for several years (1955-1958); the treatment of local war in the Sokolovskii volume does not sit well with its treatment of general war and appears somewhat as an after-thought; and the first identifiable General Staff Academy study devoted exclusively to the subject was not compiled until 1963. This work and a 1964 article referred to lack of study of local war by the Soviet armed forces as a defect which had been corrected only recently.

Reasons why the General Staff Academy study of local war published in 1964 was never declassified until more than twenty-five years later will be discussed later. It seems to have been one of several indicators that discussion of anything other than general nuclear war was subject to some political constraints. Uncertainty as to the best way of presenting Soviet interest in military doctrine for local war for internal consumption was further evidenced by lack of discussion of Soviet operations in local wars between 1920 and 1941, in the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War, in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in the clashes on the Sino-Soviet border.
CHAPTER SIX

LOCAL WAR DOCTRINE ELABORATED 1970-1977

Chapter Five concluded that by 1969 the Soviet General Staff accepted that local war was a unique strategic phenomenon requiring unique forces. The Chapter also concluded that the study of this subject had only really begun about ten years earlier. If these conclusions are correct, it is reasonable to postulate that after 1969, Soviet military doctrine, given its aspirations to conform fully to a scientific discipline, would have been characterised by efforts to elaborate on the unique features of local wars, and on how to prepare and use the armed forces in them.

Guerilla Warfare 1970

Questions of guerilla warfare received more attention in the doctrinal literature at the turn of the decade than questions of regular force operations in local war. According to Zhilin, writing in 1970, there were "still few scientific papers on the problems of the guerilla movement in general".¹ In the same year, a short but classified General Staff study on guerilla warfare was completed.²

The conclusions of the work did not betray any particular novelty. But one of the most important conclusions appears to be that aid from friendly

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¹ P A Zhilin "Soviet Military-Historical Literature 1965-1969" Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual vol. 1, 1978, p235. This is a verbatim translation of a presentation at the XIII International Congress of Historical Sciences, Moscow, 1970. Zhilin says a publication by L N Bychkov and Z Bogatyr is one such work. This work could not be located in Moscow.
² Col. V N Andrianov Partizanskaia bor'ba v stranakh Azii, Afriki, i Latinskoj Ameriki posle vtoroi mirovoi voiny [Guerilla Warfare in the Countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America] Chair 5, Scientific Publishing Section, General Staff, Moscow, 1970, 59pp
foreign countries usually changed a situation in favour of guerillas, who were usually at a disadvantage in guns, money, technology, especially when imperialist countries helped the reactionary governments. Lack of weapons had a big impact on the types of operations and was one of the biggest obstacles to growth of guerilla forces.¹

Andrianov recognised that physical geographical conditions (mountains, jungles, or desert) had a big effect on the methods and organisation of guerilla struggle. In the same vein, he warned that local knowledge and local acclimatisation were very important features favouring guerillas.² He considered that the success of guerilla operations depended as much on how well operations were prepared politically and militarily, as on the extent of their outside support.³

This appears to have been a plea not to waste Soviet money or effort aiding incompetent guerilla groups. He also warned that dogmatic efforts to set down absolute rules about "this form of struggle or another" would only harm the national liberation movement, because the significance of guerilla operations as a form of armed struggle would be determined by specific socio-political and historical circumstances.⁴

Andrianov made the following points about the course of guerilla struggles:

they arise in national liberation and civil wars, and even when there is no war as such but the country is in a revolutionary situation, for example, where mass repressions provoke an armed reaction from the people;

the guerillas struggle for one central political organisation and

¹ ibid pp52-53
² ibid pp53-55
³ ibid p58
⁴ ibid
usually set up a military staff to direct operations;

forces are usually volunteers;

when regular units are created, these usually operate away from the areas where the members come from;

guerillas are often supported by underground networks in the country, and they often set up liberated zones.\(^1\)

The study concluded with the observations that the USSR had always and would always give peoples achieving freedom and independence "political and economic aid", and that countries of the Socialist Commonwealth would not allow imperialist powers to interfere illegally with the national liberation movements.\(^2\) In this way, Andrianov appears to be setting down political limits to Soviet military intervention: that it would only be a defensive move.

Bolder Posture - Advancing Doctrine 1971-1974

Andrei Gromyko at the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971 made his famous boast that "There is not a single question of any importance that can be solved without the Soviet Union or against its will".\(^3\) This statement was characteristic of the Soviet leadership's conviction that the USSR was exposed to the risk of involvement in local wars, a line reflected in a propaganda or popularising work called work *The Soldier and War*, written in 1971, which said the USSR's armed forces must be prepared to counter imperialism at all levels, from local wars to an all-out nuclear exchange.\(^4\)

The view was also expressed indirectly in an article in *Military

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\(^1\) *ibid* pp49-51

\(^2\) *ibid* p58

\(^3\) Francis Fukuyama *Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the Power Projection Mission* Rand, 1987, p8

\(^4\) A S Zhioltov *Soldat i voina* [The Soldier and War] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1971, p8
Thought:

Limited wars are primarily against the national liberation movement. ... At the same time, the United States is preparing for limited wars against individual socialist countries. Under certain conditions, they plan to attempt to weaken the world socialist system. The Pentagon is continuing to elaborate theories of limited non-nuclear and limited nuclear wars in Europe.¹

Thus, there was occasional acknowledgment or recognition that the USSR faced a military requirement associated with local wars.

In 1971 a work on the military aspects of small wars, subsequently described authoritatively as one of the important specialist works on the subject, was published. This work was not available in the libraries consulted.²

Between February 1972 and February 1973, a series of 11 articles by the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, appeared in the Navy's monthly journal, Naval Digest [Morskoi sbornik]. He commended the virtue of the Navy in conventional roles, protracted general war and lower level international crises, as well as in the strategic strike role.³ Gorshkov's articles appeared to press the case for construction of a wide variety of surface forces capable of being applied flexibly in the service of Soviet "state interests" broadly defined.⁴ There was little direct association with doctrinal conclusions about the

¹ VPerfilov "Ogranichionnaia voina v vneshnei politike SSA" Voennaia mysl' 1971 (4) pp115-116
² B P Li Strategia i politika neokolonializma SSA [The Strategy and Policy of Neo-Colonialism of the USA] referenced in I E Shavrov et al Lokal'nye voiny: istorii i sovremennost' - istoriko-teoreticheskoe issledovanie Chair of History of Wars and Military History, Voroshilov General Staff Academy, Moscow, 1975, p14
⁴ Erickson "Soviet Defense Policies and Naval Interests" in MccGwire, Booth and McDonnell op cit p65
nature of local wars but the clear implication of the last two articles of the series, preceded as they were by broad historical treatment of the uses of naval power outside major war, was that the Soviet Navy should be acquire missions and capabilities appropriate to lesser contingencies than general war.

The need to study small wars was reasserted in an important book, *International Conflicts*, edited by Zhurkin and Primakov, released by the International Relations publishing house in 1972:

After the end of the Second World War, more than thirty armed conflicts spawned by the aggressive policies of imperialism and each creating the threat of war of vast scope have taken place ... The study of conflict situations, not only from their political aspect but also from their military aspect, is therefore particularly topical.¹

The book, written mostly by civilians but with some military officers, claimed to be the "first attempt in Soviet scholarly literature at a systematised study of international conflict", a claim which justifiable only in the sense that it tried to develop a typology and general characteristics for great power crises and small wars of the post-war period.² The book, a joint effort of the Institute for International Economics and International Relations and the Institute for the USA and Canada, did purport to analyse military doctrinal aspects of local wars. In most of its conclusions on military doctrinal issues, the book was not significantly different from works by military writers. The main contribution of the book was providing for the first time elaborations of the political aspect of a Soviet local war doctrine in respect of escalation control that was unambiguously asserted as possible as early as 1963 in the Lial'ko book.

It is difficult to make a firm judgement about how much of this

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¹ V V Zhurkin and E M Primakov (eds) *Mezdunarodnye konflikty* [International Conflicts] International Relations Publishing House, Moscow, 1972, pp55-56
² *ibid* p11
work followed mainstream General Staff thinking and how much of it is idiosyncratic or merely imitative of US literature on the subject. It is less difficult to conclude that the book is evidence that the General Staff’s interest in local war doctrine was by that time shared and supported by these two powerful institutes, a primary function of which was to advise the Central Committee Departments.

The doctrinal intent of the book was clear: it saw international conflict - of which small wars were one form - as completely concrete, with defined "origins, content, form, systems, structures and phases".\(^1\)

Three general types of international conflict were identified:

those directly reflecting the struggle of the two social systems and opposing military blocs, including imperialist attacks on socialist states not in the socialist commonwealth;

those arising from attempts by imperialist countries to suppress liberation revolutions, to reverse successful revolutions in countries of socialist orientation or to foster conflict between Third world states; and

those arising from disputes between imperialist countries and neutral countries.\(^2\)

Apart from these types, there was the possibility of conflicts between socialist states, especially when the leaders of one socialist country pursue nationalistic, chauvinistic, anti-Soviet themes - a reference to China. These types of events were atypical, the book said, and therefore did not lend themselves to generalised treatment.\(^3\)

Each type of international conflict was rarely manifested in its pure form, and one form of conflict can progress from being one type to being another. It must constantly be remembered that the majority of conflicts in the world today

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\(^1\) *ibid* p29  
\(^2\) *ibid* pp34-36  
\(^3\) *ibid* pp36-37
were closely related to each other, directly or indirectly. Usually, there was a regular core of participants, most often the major powers, and this could not help but influence the general character of these conflicts which might otherwise appear as hybrids of the various types.¹ This latter remark could mean that involvement by major powers tended to push these wars more toward regular military operations, rather than unconventional warfare.

The book saw its typology of conflicts as the first effort in the USSR towards classifying them according to their nature and character, political and strategic goals, scale and duration, means employed, and peculiarities of doctrines manifested in their course.² This was true only of the public literature. Zhurkin and Primakov may not have been aware of the General Staff studies.

They identified six phases of development of international conflict, observing that any phase could be leap-frogged; and that phases could merge into one. The six phases were:

- basic emergence of a relationship as conflictual and definition by each side of goals, strategies, and forms of struggle;
- drawing in of countries not directly involved in the dispute, especially the major powers;
- development of the dispute to a particularly sharp political level, to international crisis which can draw in other states;
- conscious move by one side to use of military force for demonstration purposes or on a limited scale to force the other side to compromise;
- international armed conflict beginning with limited war (limited in aim, territory seized, scale and level of military operations, and military means [weapons systems] used); and
- with the possibility under known conditions to develop into higher

¹ *ibid* pp37, 95
² *ibid* p38
levels of armed conflict using contemporary weaponry and with the potential to draw in allies on one side or the other, and major powers.¹

De-escalation was possible at any phase but if the compromise reached did not eliminate the basic contradiction, conflict could re-emerge.²

This book criticised the approaches of US theorists for trying to force into rigid categories events and processes which were too complex for their simplistic treatment.³

Contemporary armed conflict had an internally contradictory character in that the tendency of both sides to seek superiority in power maintained the danger that the conflict would develop to levels unsatisfactory for both sides, raising the risk of introduction of more powerful weapons with potentially disastrous consequences. But awareness of this gave contemporary military conflict a primarily "local" character. It also facilitated the development of situations in which the main aim of exercising military power became demonstration, threat of use of force for political pressure, or artificial prolongation of tension in a particular region for political higher political purposes. This also defined the unusually protracted nature of modern local conflicts in comparison with those of past eras.⁴

In current circumstances, it was proving more impossible - because of the risk of unstoppable escalation - to introduce overwhelming military force to achieve a political objective in a short time. US reluctance to commit its citizens in large numbers to local military conflicts also limited the dimensions of those

¹ ibid pp52-53
² ibid p53
³ ibid pp38, 51, 53
⁴ ibid pp56-57
conflicts. Imperialist military leaders did not want any more draining military experiences of the Vietnam type.\footnote{ibid pp57, 66}

There was now a hierarchy of "differentiated responsibilities" within the imperialist bloc for international conflicts from general nuclear war to small conventional wars: exclusively conventional conflict in Europe implied a sharing of responsibility between the USA and its allies; while in local wars the main tasks had to be solved by the country directly involved in the conflict.\footnote{ibid p67}

The relative weight of the political and military aspects of conflict in today's world would vary according to many factors: the antagonists' goals; the region; the conflict's place in the global competition between socialism and imperialism; and the correlation of political, social, military, national and other forces which would influence the outcome of the conflict. Yet the military element was always present in international political conflicts, and sometimes had a "high degree of relative independence" from politics. The book also mentioned elsewhere a "relatively independent logic" for the military content of local wars.\footnote{ibid pp42, 55}

Contemporary armed conflicts could be divided into two stages - preparatory and active. Many local conflicts would remain in the preparatory stage, with its various forms of threat of use of force or demonstration, because of the restraining effect of the risk that actual conflict might become uncontrollable and escalate to general nuclear war.\footnote{ibid pp65-66}

From the military point of view, these conflicts varied according to form (one-time or periodic outbreaks of fighting); duration (short, medium duration

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\begin{enumerate}
\item ibid pp57, 66
\item ibid p67
\item ibid pp42, 55
\item ibid pp65-66
\end{enumerate}
or protracted); and number and level of armed forces (from sub-units to major formations of one or more service). ¹

A wide variety of methods was available for use of military power (by the imperialists) in local military conflicts. These included: supply of weapons; strengthening regional military presence; regrouping of forces in the region; demonstration of force and threat to use it; blockade; strategic deployment and mobilisation of national forces of regional states or great powers; limited clashes involving regional states or great powers; large scale clashes - brief or protracted - involving regional states or great powers. ²

The US development of military regionalism allowed capitalist states to strengthen their military power, the better to fight socialism and national liberation movements in disparate regions. Further development of nuclear and, especially, conventional weapons was very important in supporting the imperialists’ goal of military-political hegemony in those regions where it was more probable that conventional, rather than nuclear wars would occur. ³

The general character, limits and scale of the use of military force in a conflict depended on many factors: political aims of the sides; structure of the armed forces; the general correlation of military power; and the geographical and topographical features of the region of operations. But, according to the authors, the main factors were the antagonists’ policies and military doctrines. ⁴

The implication of the preceding sentence would appear to be that if the USA had a doctrine of limited nuclear war, that could have some positive

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¹ *ibid* p67
² *ibid* p68
³ *ibid* pp63-64
⁴ *ibid* p57
influence on whether the war remained limited.

The general military doctrine of imperialism was, the book said, adjusting to the demands of contemporary conflict (including such events as the Caribbean crisis, as well as small wars and related disputes in Vietnam, the Middle east, and so on), by placing more emphasis on increases in personnel numbers, and restructuring military systems to strengthen their naval and ground forces elements.¹

The increased emphasis on maritime strategy, on nuclear aspects of military strategy, and on lowering the nuclear threshold for regional conflicts had been features of recent US development of its military strategy.²

The book noted Halperin's observation that the Cuban crisis was conducted on the US side more by political than military concepts. President Kennedy actually called for two plans - one for airborne assault, the other for blockade - putting the USA on a path towards a dangerous confrontation with the USSR. The threat may have been illusory - Kennedy acted in the tradition of imperialist diplomacy that employed secrecy, threats, and increased tension as forms of strategic pressure, but which always confined its concrete military action to "what advanced its fundamental interests". This final, sanguine observation contradicted to some extent the earlier observation in the book that the crisis had been the most dangerous up to that time.³

Another 1972 work, Military Force and International Relations, saw local wars as "periphery" wars, contrasting them with "one large scale war in Europe or Asia" launched by the USA. This book described the "one and a half wars" policy of the USA and the Soviet need to be able to respond in kind. Soviet

¹ *ibid* pp58-59
² *ibid* pp60-61
³ *ibid* pp70, 75-77, 80, 95
nuclear weapons, the book said, could not deter US use of force in limited wars "even if these wars directly affect the interests of the USSR and other countries of the socialist commonwealth".\(^1\)

The new Soviet role - of responding to United States aggression in local wars - was not, according to the book, a feature of Soviet policy in the period of the United States doctrine of massive retaliation or in the first years of the policy of flexible response.\(^2\) This suggests that formal endorsement of a Soviet local war doctrine - even inchoate - occurred in 1963 or 1964 at the earliest if flexible response is considered to have been US policy since early 1961.

The book saw local wars as serving not only broader US strategic goals but also the purpose of testing new equipment, evaluating and refining armed forces' organisation, developing methods for operations and battles, and acquiring large reserves with combat experience.\(^3\)

There were few hints of more detailed appreciation of the nature of local wars. One comment on operational aspects was that political factors often impede otherwise highly mobile forces.\(^4\)

The book also appeared to set an interventionist but defensive goal for Soviet involvement: "Actual circumstances can demand from the Soviet Union the establishment of a military presence on such a scale as is necessary to constrain the aggressive actions of imperialism".\(^5\) The defensive aspect may have been self-serving propaganda - but it did reflect the pattern of Soviet involvements.

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1 Col. V M Kulish (ed) *Voennaia sila i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* [Military Force and International Relations] Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Institute of World Economics and World Politics, Moscow, 1972, pp128, 135-136. The principal author, Kulish, was a serving officer attached to the Institute for the USA and Canada.

2 *ibid* p135

3 *ibid* p129

4 *ibid* p129

5 *ibid* p136
The work emphasised the importance for the USSR of preparing its armed forces to fight small wars on its periphery. Deterrence, the author claimed, aimed not only to preventing a world nuclear war but also to counteract all possible imperialist acts of international plunder. Marshal Grechko was quoted on the need for the USSR to study and anticipate all forms of military operations, and to develop all sorts and types of forces. It needed "mobile armed forces trained and equipped" for conflict in support of its allies - "peoples struggling for their freedom and independence", and sought to develop a military presence in distant regions to deter the enemies of its allies or "if the need arises" for further [unspecified] military support.¹

But the USSR should not consider a blanket approach of global basing:

> It is obvious that the character and form of the Soviet military presence in this or that region can on each occasion only be decided on the basis of a thorough consideration both of the concrete circumstances in a given region and of the international situation overall.²

Soviet forces "not only can - but also have begun gradually to solve the problem of the military and technological support of its military presence in relatively distant regions of the world". Of some note, the book saw fit to dismiss claims by Western authors that the USSR did not have this power projection capability.³

Colonel E. Dolgopolov wrote in a dissertation from the Political Academy in 1972 of the topicality of the small war problem. Among other reasons, he noted there had not been a single year since the Second World War when the imperialists did not conduct a local war somewhere. So-called "special" or

¹ *ibid* pp134-136  
² *ibid* p136  
³ *ibid* p137
"separate" [osobyel], or local wars were a fundamental part of global counter-revolutionary strategy, and the question of local wars was in itself a big issue in the ideological struggle against imperialists, revisionists - meaning the Chinese Communist Party - and participants in the national liberation struggle.¹

The dissertation devoted considerable space to refuting the Chinese view of the role of guerillas in modern war² - thus being one of the earliest available works by a military officer to do so. Dolgopolov noted the lack of Soviet research on questions of armed struggle in the otherwise prolific theoretical literature on the national liberation movement.³

In 1972, the Military Publishing House published a book on aircraft carriers and helicopter carriers, one chapter of which was devoted to US operations in Vietnam.⁴

On 19 September 1973, at a conference of the Scientific Research Coordination Committee at the Military History Institute, Colonel M. Alekseev reportedly criticised the military history of post-war conflicts for inadequate attention to lessons learned about making forces more combat-ready during crises resulting from imperialist probings.⁵ At the same conference, Colonel E. Rybkin observed that researchers had still not begun serious work on the history of "small, local wars and conflicts" - "one of the most important problems of the post-war

² ibid pp29-32
³ ibid p7. Dolgopolov referenced two works on the operational art and tactics of liberation armies (Matsulenko 1970 and Mirskii 1970) but these could not be found in the unclassified libraries in Moscow.
⁴ I M Korotkin and Z F Slepeznikov Aviayonostsy i vertoliotonostsy [Aircraft Carriers and Helicopter Carriers] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1972
⁵ "V Institute Voennoi Istorii" [In the Institute of Military History] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1974 (1) p99
period".

On 3 December 1973, a conference held at the Institute under the rubric "Military History and the Contemporary Era" heard several calls for more study of local wars. Major-General V. Matsulenko reportedly cited the need to develop a scientific classification of the numerous local wars, and to study their characteristics and methods of conducting them.

The report on the conference noted that all the most modern - except for nuclear - weapons are used in these wars. He may have been interested exclusively in the lessons for conventional operations. But there were calls at the conference for further study of local wars as potential sources of lessons for future war - that is, superpower war.

The complaints about lack of work on local wars may have been justified. A review in the Military History Journal in March 1974 of works to be published that year did not mention any directly relating to local wars. A readers' conference report in the same issue similarly failed to mention study of local wars, though the book review section of the issue commented on a Spanish civil war memoir - evidence of a new acceptance for public discussion of Soviet involvement in that war.

But in May 1974 the Military History Journal published its first major theoretical view of local wars, tying them and armed actions by imperialist

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1 "Voennaia istoriia i sovremennost" [Military History and the Contemporary Era] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1974 (3) p100
2 ibid
3 ibid pp100-101
6 I Ivanov "V nebe Ispanii" [In the Sky of Spain] Voenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal 1974 (3) pp114-117. The book was Gnevnoe nebo Ispanii [Spain’s Angry Sky]
countries together on grounds of their anti-liberation intent. The imperialist view of local wars was described as "armed conflicts and wars with limited political and military aims, with a limited area of military operations, and waged with limited forces and means". The article recounted Lenin's view that the most important task of communists was decisive support and aid for insurrections and wars of peoples against oppressive imperialist powers.\textsuperscript{1} Quoting Marx, Engels, and documents of the 1969 International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, the author said that Marxist-Leninist theory used the concept of scale to characterise wars that differed from world war. The 1966 \textit{Explanatory Dictionary of Military Terms} defined local wars as including wars limited in number of participants and taking place in a relatively small geographical region. The term was "used to characterise all types of wars of limited scale, sometimes unjust wars undertaken by imperialists".\textsuperscript{2}

"A more detailed analysis of local wars in the national liberation zone demands their classification", the author wrote, implying that it had not been undertaken up to that time. Invoking Leninist methodology, he said that the criteria for classification of a war were the stage of the national liberation revolution at which a country finds itself, and the nature of the socio-economic and political systems. Putting it differently, the criteria were the nature of the socio-political contradictions being resolved in the war; and the political goals of the warring parties.\textsuperscript{3}

The basic type of war in the national liberation zone was a war for

\textsuperscript{1} G Malinovskii "\textit{Lokal'nye voiny v zone natsional'no-osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia}" [Local Wars in the National Liberation Zone] \textit{Voenny-istoricheskii zhurnal} 1974 (5) pp91-92
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{ibid} p92. Malinovskii quotes as authorities the 1961 Program of the CPSU and \textit{Voenny-istoricheskii zhurnal} 1968 (9) p36
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid} pp92-93
national independence. There were three sub-types within this main type:

wars between imperialists and puppet regimes on the one hand, and colonies or the suppressed majority populations under racist regimes on the other hand; for example, Southern Africa (Portuguese colonies, South Africa, Rhodesia);

wars between imperialists and puppet regimes on the one hand and peoples of countries which have formally received their independence on the other; for example, South Vietnam 1946-1954, 1961-1973, and the Congo 1960 and 1964; and

wars between imperialists and young national states; for example, UK, France and Israel aggression against Arab countries.\(^1\)

The author tried to force these wars into the category of national liberation revolutions, although noting later that military aspects of civil war appeared in national liberation war. Even civil wars or wars between young states were the fault of imperialism even though the apparent causes were often presented as territorial disputes, ethnic differences, and the like. Malinovskii even blamed China for some of these wars, especially the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971.\(^2\)

The aim of forcing all local wars into the mould of national liberation, "just" wars would have been to bridge the ideological gap between the correctness of Soviet support for such wars and the new Soviet public position of involvement in local wars not involving a fight for independence from a colonial power.

While recognising that each local war is different, the article identified some common features - their relationship to the current stage of rivalry between the two social systems, to the shift in the world correlation of forces in favour of socialism, and to the scientific-technological revolution.\(^3\)

\(^1\) *ibid*
\(^2\) *ibid* pp94-95
\(^3\) *ibid*
One of these features was the coalition nature of local wars, either coalitions of imperialist states or coalitions of imperialist states with local elements (for example, United States policy of Vietnamisation in the Vietnam war). Coalitions could even emerge among the nations fighting the imperialists (for example, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, or the Arab countries against Israel). The close relationship between the socialist countries and countries fighting wars against imperialism was also an element of the coalition nature of local wars.¹

Many local wars were protracted, with an increasing tendency towards involvement of larger forces and more powerful weaponry by imperialists. This created an inequality in the material resources of the warring parties. There was also widespread use of bestial and inhuman methods contrary to international law, including napalm, free fire zones, defoliation, scorched earth policies, and so on.² Thus there was a greater moral obligation on the USSR to become involved.

The geographical scale of small wars had increased, as had the intensity of military operations and the involvement of other states. The last two factors increased the danger of local wars growing into world war, but the change in the world correlation of forces in favour of socialism increased the possibility of preventing this.³

The author concluded with the observations that the imperialist can no longer guarantee victory in local wars, and that the progressive forces had better chances of winning because of support from the USSR and countries of the socialist community.⁴

¹ ibid pp95-96
² ibid pp96-97
³ ibid. Malinovskii quotes the 1969 Conference of Workers’ and Communist Parties as authority.
⁴ ibid pp97-98
The themes of the article were largely propagandistic or pseudo-scientific, but it is important as an indicator that by 1974 there were serious efforts under way to bring the General Staff's doctrinal interest in local wars into the mainstream of overt political discourse.

It was in 1974 that Marshal Grechko, the Defence Minister, announced a major policy shift: that the Soviet armed forces would no longer be restricted to defending the Soviet Union and its socialist allies.\(^1\) Grechko wrote in *Problems of History of the CPSU* as follows:

At the present stage, the historic function of the Soviet armed forces is not restricted to their function in defending the motherland and the other socialist countries. In its foreign policy activity, the Soviet state purposefully opposes the export of counterrevolution and the policy of oppression, supports the national liberation struggle, and resolutely resists imperialists' aggression in whatever distant region of our planet it may appear.

Grechko's 1974 book *The Armed Forces of the Soviet State* said the USA was planning a variety of types of war, including conventional war in a limited region of a theatre of military operations and that the "combat power of the armed forces of the fraternal socialist countries restrains" the unleashing of such wars.\(^2\)

**Local War Doctrine - A Recurrent Activity by 1975**

The institutionalisation of Soviet doctrine for local wars had well and truly occurred by 1975 when the commandant of the General Staff Academy, General I. E. Shavrov, supervised the production of a 600 page work entitled *Local**

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2. A A Grechko *Vooruzhionnye sil sovetskogo gosudarstva* Voenizdat, Moscow, 1974, p322
Wars: History and Contemporary Significance - An Historical and Theoretical Study. According to an officer at the Military History Institute, there were several earlier editions of this work, all, like this one, restricted to internal use in the Academy.

The book outlined what it regarded as predecessor volumes or forerunners in an overview of Soviet study of the subject to date which identified two classes of work. The first, "not specialist", concerned the history of international relations, history of wars and military art. Included in this category were the two 1972 works - Military Force and International Relations edited by Kulish and International Conflicts edited by Zhurkin and Primakov - analysed above.

The second class of work was dedicated directly to the subject of local wars. This group included some of the key works referenced in Chapter Five, but in an order which may reflect the authors' view of their importance:

1966 Matsulenko  
1965 Mochalov  
1960 Efremov  

The list did not include the Lial’ko work published in 1964, even though it was produced by the General Staff Academy and the others were not. This was probably because the Lial’ko volume was classified Secret - that is more highly than the Shavrov book. This view is supported by the fact that there is not a single article from Military Thought referenced in the book’s bibliography.

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1 I E Shavrov et al Lokal’nye voiny: istoria i sovremennost’ - istoriko-teoreticheskoe issledovanie  
2 Interview, Moscow, January 1992  
3 *ibid* pp13-14  
4 *ibid* p14  
5 *ibid*
The Shavrov book presented itself as an attempt to systematise the analysis of local wars, and as a step towards overcoming the deficiency in Soviet military history. The work, encyclopedic in its approach, was prepared by the Chair of the History of Wars and Military History of the Academy. Its authors included Lieutenant-General I. Dzhordzhadze, Major-Generals V. Larionov, A. Maryshev, V. Kozlov, Colonels N. Antonov, I. Vyrodov, V. Klevtsov, K. Kuznetsov, I. Kravchenko, F. Shesterin, Captains (1st rank) L. Ol’shtynskii and V. Koriavko, and Lieutenant-Colonel V. N. Kirsanov.

Of these, Larionov (who wrote the introduction and the conclusion, and edited the work) was one of the principal contributors to the major works of Soviet military doctrine in the 1960s and 1970s, including the first edition of Sokolovskii’s *Military Strategy*.

A collection of 39 maps and tables was published separately. The work included an extensive bibliography of over 200 Soviet and foreign works. This bibliography, discussed in some detail in the Introduction, included only a small number of major Soviet works.

Over 100 citations from Soviet journals and newspapers included not one article from *Communist of the Armed Forces*, a situation offering some support for the view that the propagandistic *Communist of the Armed Forces* was not taken seriously, or at least as an original source, by military theorists. Single service journals apart from *Naval Digest* were also ignored.

1 *ibid* p9
3 *ibid* p609
4 *ibid* pp13-14
The Shavrov volume aspired to be a scientific study of "small, local wars", which it saw as closely connected with world wars, both as forerunners and hang-overs. It gave a definition of local wars based on Kissinger’s definition of limited war, with the elaboration that "as a rule, local war is conducted with conventional weapons", having noted earlier that in local wars, imperialists have come close to using nuclear weapons.¹

The authors listed 468 separate local wars, armed conflicts and armed uprisings after the Second World War, making no mention of Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968 but including references to 6 separate armed clashes with China in 1969. This allusion to the obvious historical significance of local wars, along with an observation that their lessons had been absorbed by imperialist armies, seem to suggest that the authors felt the Soviet armed forces had not fully absorbed the importance of the subject.²

The Introduction invoked as authorities the declaration by the 1969 International Conference of Communist and Workers’ Parties that "Imperialism, not rejecting preparations for such a [world] war, places special reliance on local wars", and decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971, which supposedly revealed local wars to be one of the most important subjects of Soviet military historical science, but with much work remaining to be done on it.³ As additional authority, the authors invoked CPSU Congresses, conferences of Communist and Workers’ Parties, and orders of the Minister of Defence and Chief of General Staff relating to military history and its use in raising the combat readiness of the Soviet

¹ Shavrov et al Lokal'nye voiny 1975, pp5, 8, 12
² ibid pp8, 571-588
³ ibid pp7, 9, 12
armed forces.\textsuperscript{1}

The book gave three explicit reasons for studying local wars:

to get some picture of the forces and potential of national liberation armies, of their method of operations, the effectiveness of weapons and military technology "presented as international aid by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries";

to find out what the imperialist armies are doing;

to enrich the forms and methods of struggle by the peace loving forces for the prevention of world and local wars; and

because study of the subject was necessary "from a methodological point of view".\textsuperscript{2}

While each war was specific, local wars exerted a notable influence on the construction of the armed forces and development of military theory. The particularities of fighting local wars gave rise to completely new types of troops. In particular, infantry had been forced to become more versatile with new capabilities to exploit all environments (land, sea and air). The expansion of these requirements gave rise to air-mobile and amphibious units and detachments, special purpose troops, and the marine infantry grew both in numbers and quality.\textsuperscript{3}

While experience of local wars resulted in changes to operations by ground and air forces, it was the navy which developed most, because it was the principal weapon of imperialist interventionist policy. As naval capabilities increased, the aggressive plans of the imperialists expanded.

Local wars influenced the structure, training and preparation of the armed forces, with the need for strategic mobility (air and sea) and the value of coalition commands two of the primary lessons.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} ibid p13
\textsuperscript{2} ibid pp8-9
\textsuperscript{3} ibid pp559-562
\textsuperscript{4} ibid
The lessons of local wars were of inestimable value in allowing forces both to prepare and prevent local wars of the future.\(^1\) (This would appear to be an admission that the sorts of changes mentioned above may well have been those made to the Soviet armed forces in the preceding fifteen years to meet local war requirements.)

The second chapter of the book is entitled "Local wars: Fellow Travellers \([sputniki]\) of World Wars". This chapter established a clear link between advantage in local wars and strategic advantage against the main adversary. As summarised in the Conclusion of the book, there were five main purposes to local wars:

- to facilitate the heightening of tension and creation of a pre-war political crisis and development of world wars;
- to facilitate the forming of groups of hostile coalitions;
- to strengthen, directly or indirectly, the military economic potential of aggressive states on the eve of a big war;
- to strengthen and seize strategic weapons dumps for the bigger attack; and
- to use the battle field of local wars as a test site for weapons and new kinds of military operations applicable to a world war.\(^2\)

This type of analysis appears to have been used to exploit the old propaganda line about the link between local war and world war in order to justify further the General Staff's interest in the subject. The authors assessed Asia, not Europe, as the most potentially explosive continent, with the Middle East the most conflict prone. But Europe was a special case since there had been fewer local wars in this region than all others since the Second World War:

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\(^1\) *ibid* p518
\(^2\) *ibid* p555
As the probability of escalation of local wars into a world war is greater here than in other regions of the world, the initiators of military adventures have demonstrated a special caution.¹

Chapter Nine of the book provided a lengthy summary of the strategic military and operational lessons of local wars: with sections on the experience of combat employment of four services (ground, naval, air and air defence); and a section on the influence of the local war experience on the development of air and defence forces. This overview was essentially a summary of the views of selected Western specialists, and therefore presents some difficulty in interpretation, notwithstanding the presence of some bald statements which might have been intended to stand as authoritative doctrinal generalisations applicable to the USSR.

The Military History Journal published excerpts of the Shavrov book in 1975 in a two-part article entitled "Local Wars and their Place in the Global Strategy of Imperialism" under Shavrov’s individual authorship.² The journal article did not mention the existence of the book or the General Staff Academy’s interest in the subject. This two-part article was another attempt in open source literature to elaborate on the Soviet classification of local wars as a phenomenon defined by scale; as war which could be either a national liberation war or a war launched by imperialist countries.³

Shavrov also reiterated the view from the second edition of Military Strategy that contemporary local wars were a two-sided process – plundering and

¹ ibid pp556-557
³ ibid (3) p61. The article defined local wars as follows:
  According to scale and means employed, a local war is a small war confined to one locality.
reactionary on one hand, and progressive, just and liberating on the other, whether in Vietnam or Sinai.\(^1\) Thus, the advocacy of Soviet military support for wars other than national liberation wars continued.

The article sought to classify local wars by their socio-political character, scale, and types of forces and weapons used.\(^2\) In the event, however, it was scale which predominated. Shavrov proposed a classification of local wars of different sizes: between states of one geographic region; between states of different geographic regions; and civil wars.\(^3\) (A 1981 book on local wars edited by Shavrov abandons this differentiation by scale. His early idea may therefore not to have gained official endorsement.)

Shavrov identified three distinct periods in the post-war era of local wars: the 1940s and 1950s; the 1960s; and the 1970s - the periodisation being closely linked to the evolution of views in imperialist countries on the role of force in international relations. It was only at the end of the 1950s that the imperialists more actively began to develop various theories of limited and local wars. In the 1950s especially, the imperialists had been successful in their local wars against national liberation or national independence movements but this was - the article implied - tied to the United States policy of massive retaliation and relatively weak Soviet power. When these two factors changed towards the end of the 1950s, United States military actions were planned against the background of "flexible response", with the use of force commensurate with the scale of the conflict.\(^4\) US policy in the 1970s was based on "realistic deterrence" and the Guam doctrine. The

\(^{1}\) ibid (3) pp60-61
\(^{2}\) ibid pp60-62
\(^{3}\) ibid p63
\(^{4}\) ibid (4) pp90-91
USA was progressively less successful in its strategy of local war as time wore on.¹

Shavrov drew a number of operational-strategic lessons from the experience of post-1945 local wars. The most important was consideration of how they began. Most wars were started suddenly, without a formal declaration of war by imperialist countries or their clients; but there was considerable variation in how other wars started, according to circumstances in a given region, and the degree to which the imperialists needed to mask their real aims.²

Shavrov said there were several general types of circumstances in which local wars began:

- direct, open attack by imperialist states on new sovereign states;

- direct intervention in an existing war on the side of reactionary regimes or reactionary emigres;

- without the overt intervention of powerful imperialist states but as the direct result of their colonial legacy (territorial, nationalist, or religious disputes; or border clashes).

The last type of war usually arose gradually; and all of the types often combined.³

To achieve a decisive result immediately, it was especially important to choose the most effective tactical method of launching the first attack (such as surprise air attacks, amphibious landings, naval and airborne operations).⁴ The forms of conducting military operations were varied but with a number of common features. The inequality of the warring sides forced on the aggressor a sense of limits to the scale of operations. For the victims, such as Indochina, the wars were a question of survival, and limits would have been unnatural for them.⁵

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¹ ibid pp92-93
² ibid p95
³ ibid
⁴ ibid
⁵ ibid pp95-96
Local wars were usually protracted for several reasons. The resources of powerful imperialist countries allowed them to sustain operations over a long period, as in Korea. On the other hand, the imperialists needed to achieve decisive results before the small countries which secured a chance to mobilise significant domestic and international sources of opposition.\textsuperscript{1}

Shavrov made the case for balanced forces. Local wars were characterised by different types of operations in one theatre - air, anti-air, naval, ground, airborne - unlike the so-called *kul’turye* theatres of military operations in the Second World War. He added that the conduct of local wars was influenced by the physical geography of the theatre - some forms of operation could not be used in certain areas, or it was simply advantageous to select particular types of operations (air and anti-air; or naval and amphibious; or land operations).\textsuperscript{2}

The articles also repeated the formula that local wars carried the risk of escalation into nuclear war.\textsuperscript{3}

The 1975 book and the \textit{Military History Journal} articles under Shavrov’s name are strong evidence of the General Staff's sustained interest in formulating and disseminating doctrine for local war. Several other works on local wars were published in 1975 under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence,\textsuperscript{4} or the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{ibid} p96
\item \textit{ibid} pp96-97
\item \textit{ibid}
\end{itemize}
Military Publishing House.¹

An article by the Chief of General Staff, Marshal V. Kulikov, in December 1976 criticised military history to date for failing to create a number of categories of study, of which one was the guerilla movement and national liberation wars. He also said that one of the deficiencies in military history was the experience of local wars - a subject of great interest in study of post-War military art.²

In the October 1976 issue of Military History Journal, the principal author of the 1975 General Staff study on local wars, General Dzhordzhadze, criticised "an otherwise good book" on military history for its neglect of local wars:

Military history today, including local wars, is the most influential instrument in defining the direction of military-political and strategic decisions.³

Major General V. A. Matsulenko made another contribution to generalisation of the lessons of local wars in an article in Military Thought in July 1977.⁴ He drew the following conclusions from the Six Day War:

- troops must be in constant readiness for prompt action;
- troops must have high levels of combat training;
- troops must have high level of political awareness;
- intelligence must be tightly organised;
- troops must be rapidly mobilised and deployed; and

¹ Nekotorye vyvody iz opyta boevikh deistvii sukhoputnykh voisk na Blizhnem Vostoke [Several Conclusions from the Experience of Combat Operations of Ground Forces in the Near East] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1975; V A Matsulenko Lokal'nye voiny [Local Wars] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1975. These works were not available. The source for the references was the bibliography in Narulin op cit.
reserves must be rapidly mobilised and introduced into battle in a timely manner.¹

**Guerilla Warfare 1976-77**

One of the main themes in the military journals 1976 and 1977 was the need to do much more work on the conduct of guerilla warfare - a question of "immense importance" because of its use in the majority of anti-colonial wars since World War II:

> the questions of the conduct of partisan warfare worked out by V. I. Lenin had not, unfortunately, yet found sufficient reflection in the works of Soviet historians.²

Most commentary in these two years on this subject appeared to highlight the importance of seeing guerilla warfare as only an adjunct to regular or conventional operations, and political activities, not as an end in itself. At the same time, outlining the military features of guerilla operations was regarded as very important.³ One author, V. Andrianov, outlined several principles from Lenin's writings on guerilla warfare, but most of these ideas had appeared earlier.⁴ He did however emphasis that all guerilla actions must be conducted under the control of the Party, to ensure the Proletariat does not over-extend itself.⁵

In 1977, Dolgopolov re-entered the public arena with a new work,

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¹ *ibid* p78
² V Andrianov "V.I. Lenin o partizanskikh deistviakh" [V. I. Lenin on Guerilla Operations] *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 1976 (10) pp10, 18
³ See also D Muriev and M Dolgii "V. I. Lenin i partizanskoe dvizhenie" [V. I. Lenin and the Guerilla Movement] *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 1976 (11) p106. These authors took the view that guerilla warfare was military action, armed conflict. It was wrong to assert that all of the tasks involved in preparation of armed uprising and education of the masses could be solved with the help of partisan warfare. In Russia's case, at the critical stage of the maturing of the socialist revolution, guerilla warfare had no part in the tactical line followed by the Bolshevik Party.
⁴ For example, "Takticheskaia platforma k Ob'edinitel'nому S'ezdu RSDRP" [The Tactical Platform for the Organisational Congress of the RSDRP]; "K sobytiiam dnia" [About the Events of the Day]
⁵ Andrianov *op cit* p12
National Liberation Wars in the Contemporary Era, which described them as necessary if the colonialists were to be driven out. The book linked the success of national liberation wars to the military security of the USSR through lengthy discussion of the imperialists’ involvement with the armies of young states and the despatch of military units in order to gain strategic advantage.¹

The author saw little merit in distinguishing between national liberation wars on the one hand and, on the other, civil wars or wars against imperialist intervention, as national liberation wars rarely appeared in their pure form. Lenin was an authority for the silliness of attempting to distinguish between them.² In noting that the national liberation revolution continued even after the liberation war has been won,³ Dolgopolov was reminding his readers that Soviet military assistance (or involvement of troops) might be necessary on a continuing basis.

He quoted Lenin’s assertion that Marxists and revolutionaries were "obliged to support each revolt against its principal enemy, the bourgeoisie of the great powers", and went on to imply strategic advantage for the USSR in supporting national bourgeois groups against local reaction or external aggression. At the same time, he warned of the possibility (and risks) of overrating the value to the USSR of involvement with such groups because of their "tendency to compromise with foreign monopoly capital" - that is the US and its major allies. It was difficult to characterise the armed activities of particular national groups as exclusively defensive (just) or exclusively aggressive (unjust).⁴

¹ E I Dolgopolov Natsional’no-osvoboditel’nye voiny na sovremennom etape [National Liberation Wars in the Contemporary Era] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1977, pp5, 19, 31, 128-129
² ibid pp32-33, 149-150
³ ibid p24
⁴ ibid pp55-56
While Dolgopolov spent some time presenting the ideological and political perspectives of national liberation wars, he also offered a detailed assessment of their military characteristics. They had a tendency to be protracted, with the potential to involve "millions of troops". It was necessary to mass force "in a decisive place at a decisive moment and to move into a decisive offensive", a view supported by Marx and Engels who took the view that the principal shortcomings of national liberation insurrections of their time were defensive tactics and lack of vigour.¹

Dolgopolov described a new tendency, where oppressed peoples did not begin national liberation wars until there was some redressing of the military advantage held by the enemy. Guerilla warfare was "one of the effective forms of opposition to a better armed and organised opponent", but had a limited potential to achieve military and political victory.² Armed insurrections could be particularly important in contemporary circumstances in countries with proportionally high urban populations but the timing of such action had to be appropriate to the political circumstances.³

The same principle of timing applied to guerilla movements. Mass vigorous offensive action was an essential hallmark of a successful revolution, but required good political leadership (organisation and agitation) and a well-prepared revolutionary army capable of and intent upon acting forcefully.⁴

Dolgopolov specifically mentioned the importance of the study of guerilla wars for the education of Soviet armed forces. This would foster their

¹ *ibid* pp62, 85-90
² *ibid* pp61, 63
³ *ibid* pp70-71. The emphasis is Dolgopolov's.
⁴ *ibid* pp78-79
spirit of proletarian internationalism (that is, their willingness to participate in such wars). The imperialist countries used forces especially structured and trained for combat in different regions of the world against a variety of specific enemies. Military technology and weapons were adapted or modified to the conditions of various localities, climate, and types of military operations.  

Conclusion

According to Shavrov’s 1975 General Staff Academy study, the General Staff - following CPSU guidance at least as late as 1971 - had ordered greater study of the military lessons of local wars. The Shavrov book, and other evidence (Kulikov, Grechko, Kulish) make it plain that the purpose of studying local wars was to prepare for possible Soviet involvement in them, and because they gave rise to completely new types of forces.

Kulish said explicitly that this need was accepted several years after the USA adopted the strategy of flexible response. It is not at all clear whether he had in mind the date it first gained currency or when it became official US doctrine.

Soviet military analysis of local war doctrine between 1970 and 1978 reiterated many themes and ideas from earlier studies (Lial’ko, Efremov, Mochalov, Dolgopolov) without significant, identifiable variation on issues affecting force structure or military planning.

The analysis in the 1970s was notable for its elaboration of the 1960s work on local war in Europe and the importance of the initial period of war,

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1 ibid p153  
2 ibid p90
and for more elaborate efforts to classify and generalise the local war experience in the forms of scientific discipline. One important point which occurred consistently was the Soviet view on escalation of local conflict, that with the change in the world correlation of forces in favour of socialism it had become more likely that local wars could be prevented from escalating. This was, however, merely a new formulation of a point made explicitly in the 1963 Lial'ko book and implied in the 1962 Sokolovskii book.

Shavrov's 1975 book was notable for asserting that "as a rule" local wars were exclusively conventional wars. Kulish noted the inability of Soviet nuclear weapons to deter US operations in local wars, and implied that this was true also for local war in Europe.

The most important point from the elaborations in the 1970s, one which differentiated Soviet views of local war from Western views of limited war, was that for the Soviets, the primary limitation appeared to be geographical, the concept of "limited aims" not attracting much support. As the civilian specialists, Zhurkin and Primakov, noted, contemporary military conflict had a primarily "local" character. It also facilitated development of situations in which the main aim in exercise of military power became demonstration, threat of use of force for political pressure, and artificial prolongation of tension in a particular region for higher political purposes.

Thus, for Zhurkin and Primakov, tight control of the "localisation" through negotiation of the compromise for which the military action was undertaken was an essential element of local war strategy. De-escalation in their view appeared to have less to do with military withdrawal or military restraint than with negotiation.
The doctrinal work on local wars in the 1970s continued to emphasise varied circumstances in which local wars must be fought (Shavrov et al, Matsuleenko, Dolgopolov). As Shavrov noted, some forms of operation could not be used in certain areas, and others were simply more advantageous in different circumstances.

The 1970s work reiterated points made in the 1960s about preparation of forces for local wars. For example, Matsuleenko observed the importance of: constant readiness of troops for prompt action; high levels of combat training; high level of political awareness; tight organisation of intelligence; good preparation for rapid mobilisation and deployment of troops; and timely introduction of reserves into battle.

While much of the above looks little more than platitudes to Western observers, the important conclusion is that by the mid-1970s, the Soviet General Staff was taking considerable pains to review and publicise the military characteristics of local wars, including a new emphasis on wars involving guerilla operations.

But in all the sources reviewed, there was no specific link between the generalised conclusions and changes to Soviet military posture or force structure. Moreover, there still appeared to be important constraints on public discussions about the General Staff’s interest in local wars.
CHAPTER SEVEN


This Chapter outlines the ineffective efforts by the central military authorities after 1978 to put the doctrinal study on local war of the previous two decades onto a formal basis in the highly systematised structure of official military doctrine. The proper use of doctrinal analysis of local war would have been to disseminate it widely through publications acknowledged as authoritative; to include relevant courses in appropriate military academies; and to introduce new concepts into field regulations. The chapter concludes with a comparison of the treatment accorded local war doctrine with that accorded general war doctrine.

Local War Doctrine - A Routine Question 1978-1988

The open source publication in 1981 of an abridged, revised and unclassified version of the 1975 book by Shavrov¹ is further strong evidence of General Staff interest in formalising local war doctrine.

Yet the six year delay publishing it seems unusual, given the complete conformity of the 1975 version with endorsed Soviet ideological precepts. The fact that it contained no reference to the 1975 version, or to the General Staff Academy’s interest in the subject, or to previous study of the subject as the 1975 study did, would also suggest political sensitivity about the subject itself. The book, compiled by February 1979, was not signed to press until 16 months later, which suggests a protracted approval process.

¹ I E Shavrov (ed) Lokal’nye vovny: istoriya i sovremennost’. Voenizdat, Moscow, 1981, 304 pp
The first four chapters (129 pages) of the 1975 version were condensed into 83 pages in the 1981 version. The only change of emphasis in these cuts appears to have involved the system of classifying local wars outlined in the 1975 journal article which appeared under Shavrov's name. Both versions of the book carried four chapters on local wars in different regions (Asia, Middle East, Africa and Latin America), but heavily condensed from 300 pages to 133.

Chapter Nine ("Experience of Local Wars and its Influence on Military Art") was condensed from 94 to 54 pages despite addition in the later version of a new section devoted to "Several Questions on the Command of Troops", and a 30 page chapter on the "Military Crisis of Capitalism" was dropped altogether.

The 1981 book reiterated the view that the study of small wars was "one of the most important tasks of Soviet military historical science identified from the decisions of the 24th and 25th Congresses of the CPSU" (1971 and 1976) but, like its predecessor, avoided saying that the Soviet armed forces needed to study local wars in case they were drawn into them. The importance of studying small wars was two-fold, the book said: "not only to understand the military policies and strategy of world imperialism, but also to elucidate the potentialities and methods of the warring sides, in particular national liberation armies". The book relied heavily on the stock Soviet phrase, "in the opinion of foreign military specialists".

The main conclusions of the 1981 version were little different in substance from those of its predecessor, except that the generalised views on guerilla warfare seemed to have been incorporated. The contradiction posed by

1 *ibid* p6
inclusion of USSR/PRC border clashes in 1969, and for the first time, the 1956 counter-revolutionary intervention in Hungary, in an appendix listing local wars,\textsuperscript{1} and the lack of mention of a specific Soviet requirement to fight such wars, was not resolved in the book.

It stated that the character of military operations in local wars differed in each case, but was heavily influenced by the unique features of the theatre and strategic circumstances at the beginning of the war. Though each local war was different, several general forms existed, including direct conventional attack, and irregular operations; with belligerents including a variety of states (capitalist, socialist, small countries, superpowers) or social forces (guerilla movements).

In guerilla warfare, the physical environment of the theatre had a dominant influence on operations. Unlike local wars in which regular forces participated on both sides and there was a clearly delineated front of operations, guerilla wars were characterised by small formations, a broad offensive in many locations simultaneously, high manoeuvre of forces, and changing combinations of types of units used.

The role of any given branch of the armed forces in local wars was determined by the concrete strategic circumstances of the war, but all forms of operations have been used, from strategic bombardment, to blockade to ground force and air defence operations.\textsuperscript{2}

The 1981 book repeated earlier formulas about the importance of mobility, the role of special forces, and high levels of individual training of troops.

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{ibid} pp298, 302
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{ibid} pp234-236
Unsurprisingly, it asserted that experience of local war had reaffirmed the offensive as the "basic form of military operation".\textsuperscript{1}

According to Shavrov, Marx and Engels identified small wars as a class of war on their own. Engels reportedly observed in 1887 that Russia was trying to provoke localised wars to avoid a European war, but that localised war in Europe embraced the danger of transformation into general war.\textsuperscript{2} (There is a contradiction in Engels' reported observation: why would Russia hope to avoid a European war by resort to small wars, if the small wars ran the risk of escalation?) The book appears on the one hand to have repeated the propaganda about escalation while admitting the sincere belief that small wars were an important and unique phenomenon central to inter-state strategic competition.

A low level of concern for escalation was reflected in the remark in the Shavrov book that nuclear weapons were not directly used in local wars, but at the same time, the book replayed official propaganda about possible use of nuclear weapons and the risk of escalation.\textsuperscript{3} The book omitted the 1975 conclusion that in Europe the special risk of escalation had led to special caution compared with other regions.

The book defined local war in the same terms as Kissinger defined limited war in 1957, but with the added observation that limited political aims define a specific strategy and tactics.\textsuperscript{4} Local war was placed in a hierarchy of concepts (world war, local war, military clashes),\textsuperscript{5} reflecting the pretensions of the 1975 book to be appropriately scientific.

\textsuperscript{1} ibid pp240-241, 243, 246
\textsuperscript{2} ibid
\textsuperscript{3} ibid p6
\textsuperscript{4} ibid pp8-9
\textsuperscript{5} ibid p9
The decision to publish the 1981 version of the General Staff Academy’s work, despite its slightly more politicised tone (only the imperialists have studied local war from a doctrinal perspective), seems to have been the signal for a generally more permissive attitude to treatment of the subject in other military books and in courses in academies.

By 1982, one-twelfth of the syllabus of the Master’s Degree examination in Military History at the Institute of Military History dealt with local wars, albeit under the rubric of Capitalist Countries After World War II. The wars mentioned included the first Vietnam War, Korea, Egypt, Arab-Israel Wars (1967 and 1973), Algeria, Angola, US/Cuba, Dominican Republic and the Falklands War.

The syllabus included three main elements: summary and general comments on local wars; imperialist forces in local wars; and the armed forces of liberated countries and guerilla warfare. The first section covered the essence, causes and peculiarities of local wars; the classification and system of local wars and military clashes; and a review of wars in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The section on imperialist forces reviewed the military art of imperialist armed forces in local wars; the characteristic features of offensive and defensive actions; use of single services and different types of forces; and new methods of armed struggle and their influence on combat methods.

The section on forces of liberated counties and guerilla warfare reviewed the growth of the armed forces in these countries; the military art of national liberation armies; the preparation and conduct of offensive operations and

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1 *Tematicheskii plan* [Thematic Plan], 1982 Master’s Exam in Military History, prepared by Lt.-Gen. M Kir’ian, Deputy Director of the Military History Institute, pp16-17. This plan was provided by the Military History Institute as a result of a request for information on when the study of local war began to be part of courses at military academies. Whether 1982 was the first year could not be confirmed.
battles; and the development of forms of guerilla operations.

The syllabus included a final review section on the influence of the experience of local wars on the development of military art.

By way of comparison, the USSR in the Great Patriotic War received about forty per cent of the same syllabus, the Russian Civil War and inter-war years having about eight per cent each.¹

Local wars received a separate chapter in a book on foreign military art for the first time in 1983.² The annual index to the periodical, Military History Journal, included "Local War" as a separate subject heading for the first time in 1983 and there were seven articles listed for the year on that subject.³

One year later, local wars had become - for the first time - an expressly approved topic in a book on the history of Soviet military art.⁴ The book, which repeated many of the general observations contained in the 1981 Shavrov book, made the following comments on the conduct of operations in local wars:

- a strong initial offensive is the basic means of strategic operations, but strategic defence cannot be ruled out;
- troop control is centralised;

¹ Uchebnaia programma kursa istorii voennogo iskusstva [Study Program for the Course in the History of Military Art] Faculty 6, Lenin Military Political Academy, Moscow, 1987; Tematicheski plan [Thematic Plan] Faculties 1, 2 and 6, Lenin Military Political Academy, Moscow, 1989; Plany seminarov, individual'nogo sosledovaniia, kontrol'nykh rabot, prakticheskikh i gruppovykh zaniatii [Plan of Seminars, Individual Research, Supervised Work, Practical and Group Studies] Faculty 5, Lenin Military Political Academy, Moscow, 1989. Oral advice obtained on behalf of this author by the staff of the Military History Institute in Moscow about the attention paid in the syllabus of the Frunze Academy to local wars in 1991 suggested a higher level of study of local wars in military history - about 16 per cent (16 hours out of 112). Similar advice about higher military schools reported 10 per cent (6 hours out of 60). In stark contrast, similar syllabi for the Lenin Political Military Academy from 1987 and 1989 - the only ones available - devoted the overwhelming majority of their courses (about 85 per cent) to the Great Patriotic War, and as little as three per cent to local wars.
³ Voennoo-istoricheskii zhurnal 1983 (12)
ground forces carry the basic burden, using either single echelon, single primary axis thrust (with one or two auxiliary thrusts), or sweep-punitive anti-guerilla formations; and

in most cases, mobile defensive operations are the norm, and in other cases, a system of defensive strong points, using artillery and anti-air assets is used.\(^1\)

Of particular note is that even though the book was on the development of Soviet military art, there was no explicit statement in it about how Soviet force structure had been adapted to suit local war requirements. It is also curious that this book was followed by another in 1986, published as part of the "Officer’s Library" series, which contained no significant mention of doctrinal views about the military aspects of local wars.\(^2\)

In 1985, a Deputy Chief of General Staff, in an apparently controversial book, observed that much study remained to be done in order to provide a basis for Soviet military planning. He also foreshadowed major modifications to the way local wars were conducted:

The constant threat to the socialist countries deriving from the aggressive essence of imperialism, the great dynamism of world processes, and the possibility of abrupt changes in the military political situation make all the more difficult a scientific definition of the nature of local wars, as well as the strategic nature of a world war, and the conditions of its outbreak and conduct ... ...military science could and should provide sound forecasts for the outbreak and development of possible conflict situations, the probable variations of a start of a war, as well as the forms and methods of waging it.

... We can now speak about a period of fundamental change in the development of military science and military art as a whole new quantitative shift is maturing in the development of military affairs related both to the further improvement in nuclear weapons as well as particularly to the appearance of new types of conventional weapons. In line with this, the need arises to rethink the fundamental military political and operational-strategic problems of defending the

\(^1\) ibid pp534-535
\(^2\) P A Zhilin (ed) *Iстория военного искусства* [History of Military Art] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1986
socialist fatherland.¹

This book took issue with Marshal Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy and argued for a multi-variant strategy because the 1930s concept of "Fight on Enemy Territory", which was evident in Sokolovskii, would be impossible to achieve and might be inappropriate anyway:

there will be a greater opportunity for conducting a comparatively long war employing conventional weapons and primarily new types of high precision weapons. The possibility of the initiating of a nuclear war is not excluded.

...the present system of strategic deployment cannot be oriented solely on one of the most advantageous variations for us, but should be more flexible and provide the organized deployment of the troops (forces) under any conditions when the imperialist aggressors initiate a war.

...one of the important tasks of military science is to seek out ways for further increasing the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and their ability to conduct decisive actions to defeat the aggressor under any conditions of the start of a war.²

The author emphasised his interest in a more flexible multi-variant approach by calling for a "thorough study of the experience of previous wars, the local wars of our times, and the history of the development of military-theoretical thought and the practices of operational and combat training".³

In describing contemporary US military policies as contributing to the most serious international situation since the Second World War, Gareev noted an intensified danger of outbreak of "wars and armed conflicts which at any moment can take on the most unexpected turn, in closely involving the state

² ibid pp184-185
³ ibid p188
interests of the USSR and the other socialist countries".¹

In 1985, the Grechko Naval Academy in Leningrad published a 45-page "text book" on the Falklands War,² which appeared by its title to be one of a series on naval operations in local wars. It concluded that the war demonstrated several lessons:

- the need to include electronic warfare aircraft in a carrier borne force;
- the need for automated air defence command systems to defeat massed air attacks;
- poor survivability of modern ships, even those with fire fighting equipment;
- important use by the British of electronic warfare against enemy missiles;
- military significance of the merchant fleet;
- importance of air-to-air refuelling; and
- continuing importance of the morale factor despite high levels of military technology.³

A landmark article which appeared in 1986 criticised Soviet military studies for having failed unjustifiably to come to grips with "not only general theses concerning the laws of war but also a more concrete demonstration of their action in today’s wars and the very process of their reflection in military doctrine, military policy, and in the course of military development".⁴

The Chair of the History of Wars and Military Art of the General Staff Academy issued a text in 1986 which devoted its lion’s share to the Second

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¹ ibid p339
² B D Dotsenko Opyt ispol’zovanie sil flota v lokal’nym vojny posle vtoroi mirovoi voiny (anglo-argentsinskii konflikt 1982g) [Experience of the Use of Naval Forces in Local Wars After the Second World War - The Anglo-Argentine Conflict 1982] Grechko Naval Academy, Leningrad, 1985
³ ibid pp37-39
⁴ Yuri Yakovlevich Kirshin and Vladislav Markovich Popov "From the 26th to the 27th CPSU Congresses. The Elaboration of Urgent Sociophilosofical Problems: Results and Prospects" Voprosy filosofii [Questions of Philosophy] 1986 (2) 16-19 translated by JPRS 14 July 1986 p14
World War, and only its last section to local wars.¹

The periodisation of Soviet military art in this work was the same as has been seen elsewhere: two periods, 1946-1953 and 1953 to the present; with the latter period divided into two stages, 1954-1959, and 1960 to the present. A notable feature of the periodisation is that it allocates the period 1954-1959 as that of arming Soviet forces with nuclear weapons. The book said specifically that at the end of 1953, the USSR decided to re-equip its forces with nuclear weapons.² One implication that can be drawn from this is that from 1960 onwards, the major preoccupation was something different from the nuclear re-equipment, even though that gathered momentum after 1959. (It is the contention of this thesis that shortly after 1960, the primary new determinant of Soviet strategy, alongside the general nuclear war strategy, became local war doctrine - albeit inchoate.)

The veteran publicist on military issues, S. A. Tiushkevich, published a work on war in 1986, with a chapter on the lessons of local wars ("just and unjust wars").³ A history of military art issued by the Academy of Communications in 1987 included as its last chapter ten pages on local wars.⁴ The other 13 chapters dealt with the Second World war.

By 1988, the publishing world had advanced from books offering the general lessons of local wars to books specifically on tactical issues for the single

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¹ *Voennoe iskusstvo vo vtoroi mirovoi voine i v poslevoennyi period (strategiya i operativnoe iskusstvo)* [Military Art in the Second World War and in the Post-War period - Strategy and operational Art] Textbook for Auditors of the General Staff Military Academy, Moscow, 1986, 532pp

² *Ibid* p463

³ S A Tiushkevich *Voina i sovremennost* [War and the Contemporary Era] Nauka, Moscow, 1986, Chapter 3: "Practice and Lessons of Just and Unjust Wars"

services, such as A. K. Babich’s work on the air force in local wars. Like many earlier studies of local war, it purported to be based on "foreign, open-source material." Babich’s book was comprehensive, offering separate chapters for fighter-bomber, ground-attack, fighter, and bomber tactics; and concluding with a summary of innovations in tactics as a result of local wars. He made a special plea for the recognition that local wars offer a different operational environment from "other circumstances":

The specific circumstances of local wars, the unequal balance of forces, the different level of technological provision of the warring sides impose their mark on the conduct and outcomes of combat operations. For this reason, foreign military specialists look at the lessons of these wars with a well-known critical eye, and do not recommend the application of these lessons in other circumstances without appropriate corrections.

In mid-1989, Gorbachev began to repudiate the Brezhnev doctrine, by telling the Council of Europe that any attempt to limit the sovereignty of another state would be inadmissible. That year saw a full monograph - the first known to this author - devoted to the 1929 conflict with China over the Manchurian railway.

Afghanistan - Too Hot To Handle

This relatively slow pace of dissemination of doctrinal views on the military requirements of local wars occurred while Soviet forces were fighting in Afghanistan.

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1 A K Babich Aviatsiya v lokal'nykh voinakh [Aviation in Local Wars] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988, 207pp
2 ibid p2
3 ibid p4
4 Hyland op cit (1991) p191
There is considerable evidence that Soviet command authorities at some levels and unit commanders in Afghanistan fairly quickly adapted their operations there to suit the circumstances.\(^1\) However, the question of military doctrine for the Afghanistan war was never seriously broached directly in Soviet open sources before 1988, although there were of course numerous articles describing the operations, and some implying the need for changes to Soviet tactical doctrine, particularly for mountain warfare.\(^2\)

Official public recognition of the need to satisfy the formal doctrinal requirement was acknowledged after the war was over. According to a 1991 article, the Ministry of Defence leadership decided in 1989 to study the experience of the 40th Army in Afghanistan.\(^3\) A group was created for this purpose, headed by the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces and a Deputy Chief of General Staff, General Varennikov, and including Col. E. G. Nikitenko, an author on local war matters. The 1991 article foreshadowed a work on this subject, as materials were being prepared, but as of December 1991 it had not appeared.

Varennikov, who had been the "leader of the Ministry of Defence Command Group" in Afghanistan from 1985 to 1988, nonetheless expressed a fairly general doctrinal view of the experience in Afghanistan in an interview in the Soviet magazine, *Ogoniok*. This magazine was at the time in the forefront of exposing the shortcomings of the Soviet system and was not popular with a number of senior military officers. Varennikov's comments were very direct - perhaps self-

\(^1\) This is discussed in Chapter Eight


\(^3\) "Kak prinimalos' reshenie" [How the Decision was Taken] *Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 1991 (7) p40
serving - but devoid of ideological cant. Perhaps this is why similar commentary had not been published in the military journal by 1991.

Varennikov repeated what was well known by then, that the Chief and First Deputy Chief of General Staff, Marshal Ogarkov and General Akhromeev, had opposed the invasion. Yet Varennikov implied that he supported the decision at the time:

The foreign policy and diplomacy of the two superpowers were dominated by distrust and suspicion. By the end of the seventies the confrontation had become dangerous and actively influenced the political decisionmaking process both in Washington and Moscow. This must not be forgotten today.¹

The General Staff had proposed a "garrison only" policy (protection of towns and lines of communication) as an alternative to the political leadership's plan for Soviet forces to seek out and destroy the Afghan rebels. This was associated with advice not to increase rapidly the numbers of troops in the country - beyond presumably 50,000, the level reached by the end of January 1980.² Varennikov suggested that the garrison plan could have worked if it had been accompanied by good civil affairs work of the kind conducted later in the war, and if Soviet forces had not allowed themselves to be "drawn into a prolonged war".

Varennikov offered an implied criticism of some of the political advisers, possibly KGB officers, whose task was to advise the Afghan leadership on dangerous political trends, for being too dogmatic and lacking knowledge of oriental affairs. The Afghan Government’s determination to push ahead with radical

² Scott R McMichael Stumbling Bear - Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan Brasseys's (Macmillan), London UK, 1991, p8 gives a figure of 50,000 as the result of the initial deployment. The force was increased to 80,000 later that year and to 112,000 by mid-1982 (p13)
reforms undermined any hope that the garrison option would work.\textsuperscript{1}

The principal shortcomings, though, were the disposition of military commanders in Afghanistan to pursue a military solution, the lack of necessary support from Moscow (presumably money and economic aid) for a political solution, and lack of recognition of the Afghan tribal groups’ resolve to protect their own territory from intrusions by the central government (no matter what its political complexion). The situation was not helped by the filing of misleading reports to Moscow, including military reports. The military oriented strategy changed in 1985, after the peak in combat operations in late 1984 and early 1985.\textsuperscript{2}

By the end of 1989 a conference of scholars and participants in the war in Afghanistan had been held under the auspices of the Institute of Military History, though the proceedings were not published until the next year.\textsuperscript{3}

The conference analysed the causes of the conflict, and the source of successes and failures of the April Revolution and Soviet policy in Afghanistan, as well as the role of "imperialist reaction".\textsuperscript{4} The preface notes that some views were diametrically opposed. There were ten presenters, some of whom offered two papers. Most of the contributions were not particularly relevant to formulation of Soviet doctrine for small wars, in that they looked at different issues. One was a fairly predictable, old style Soviet propaganda piece,\textsuperscript{5} while others looked at policies of the Afghan Government,\textsuperscript{6} the Afghan Opposition,\textsuperscript{7} or the USA.\textsuperscript{8} Two

\textsuperscript{1} Varennikov Interview loc cit p2
\textsuperscript{2} ibid p4
\textsuperscript{3} Opby primeneniia sovetskikh voisk v Respublike Afganistan [Experience of the Adaptation of Soviet Troops in the Republic of Afghanistan] Institute of Military History, Moscow, 1990
\textsuperscript{4} ibid p2
\textsuperscript{5} I F Iurkovets "Oni zashchishchali revoliutsiu" [They Defended the Revolution] pp185-220
articles looked at the politics of the Soviet decision to intervene.\(^1\)

Two articles made important comments which, while already evident to Western observers early in the war, were important admissions for the USSR from a doctrinal point of view. First, the way Soviet troops fought in Afghanistan differed in several respects from the requirements set down in Soviet orders and field regulations.\(^2\) The author, Nikitenko, concluded that therefore questions of the preparation and conduct of combat actions in Afghanistan by Soviet troops needed detailed and complex study.

Second, and harking back to Calwell’s observations about the effect of unusual terrain and climate on great power operations in small wars, another author, Shvedov, noted the following:

the physical and geographical circumstances of Afghanistan and its climate created a number of serious and unforeseen difficulties for the effectiveness of the technology and heavy weapons, and even deprived Soviet troops of their superiority in numbers and quality of military equipment over the bandit formations.\(^3\)

The most pertinent contribution in this collection, from a doctrinal point of view, was made by Nikitenko, who was a member of the Ministry of

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\(^2\) L. Tegin "Organizatsitia i vedenie ‘konfikty nizkoi intensivnosti’ SSHA na primere vojny v Afganistane" [The Organisation and Conduct of ‘Low Intensity Conflict’ by the USA: The Example of the War in Afghanistan] pp44-81. Colonel Tegin had served in Afghanistan in an intelligence post and was a specialist in Middle East studies

\(^3\) N. Pikov "O nekotorykh itogakh i urokakh vovoda OSV v Afganistan" [Several Lessons and Conclusions from the Introduction of the Limited Contingent of Soviet Troops in Afghanistan] pp5-33; V. P. Zimoni "Byl li opravdan vovoda sovetskikh voisk v Afganistan?" [Was the Introduction of Soviet Troops into Afghanistan Justified?] pp34-43

\(^4\) E. G. Nikitenko "Sovershenstvovanie sistemy upravleniya i sposobov vedeniya boevykh deistvi chastei i soedinenii OSV" [Improvements in the System of Command and Combat Methods in the Formations and Units of the Limited Contingent of Soviet Troops] p150

\(^5\) N. Shvedov "Fiziko-geograficheskie i prirodno-klimaticheskie usloviia i ikh vliianie na boesposobnost’ voisk" pp131-135
Defence Working Group on the lessons of Afghanistan. He saw the main peculiarities of combat in Afghanistan as far the USSR was concerned as:

the need to conduct combat operations on many unconnected fronts, the absence of a front line, and the conduct of decisive operations in all regions of the country in order to retain the initiative; and

the conduct of combat operations jointly with Afghan Government forces, and with units of the Ministries of the Interior and State Security, with attached units of Defence of the Revolution.

While one of the main aims of the Soviet troops was to strengthen state power in areas held by the rebels, the question of control of territory was not always clear cut.

Nikitenko provided a good account of rebel tactics. The armed bands, trained in special centres by foreign experts, became a serious and organised military force, used tactics based on the Basmachi of Central Asia comprising operations by small groups (10-50 men) conducting surprise attacks on small garrison forces, command points, communications centres, vehicle convoys, independent groups of military personnel, and poorly defended administrative and economic targets. For the more complex missions, groups of between 500 and 900 men were formed and in these cases their tactics approached those of regular forces.

The rebels’ military operations were characterised by:

trying for surprise (especially at night);

careful calculation of the balance of forces and weaponry and the particular circumstances of each situation;

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1 The article’s key sub-headings were: the exploitation of intelligence; support for independent operations by Afghan forces; organisation and conduct of sieges; road convoys with supplies; and protection of communications and key points.
2 Nikitenko loc cit pp137-138
3 ibid p137
4 ibid p136
comprehensive preparation for combat operations;
wide use of obstacles to good advantage for the terrain;
exploitation of various sources of information (population and even elements of Government security forces); and
conduct of diversionary-terrorist actions, especially on roads to interrupt supply.¹

In 1987, the rebels organised so-called fronts under the command of small cells (25-30 men) controlled by a local Islamic Committee.² These groups relied on very rudimentary communications (fires, smoke, mirrors, horses) as well as normal radio.³ This 1990 volume - despite the promise of its title and like all previous Soviet work on doctrinal aspects of local wars - did not describe in significant detail how Soviet forces adapted to the new conditions.

The Military History Journal in May 1990 carried an article on Afghanistan which did not contribute anything new, but appeared under a new section heading in the journal, "Afghanistan: Results and Conclusions".⁴ Its July 1991 issue carried an unsigned "expose" article outlining how the decision to send troops to Afghanistan was made. The commentary represented preliminary conclusions by the Ministry of Defence Working Group set up in 1989 to study the lessons of Afghanistan.⁵ The account claimed that no written orders or documents could be found in the Ministry of Defence prior to one dated 19 February 1980, and that was only a directive on financial matters.⁶

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet in December

¹ ibid pp136-137
² ibid p137
³ ibid
⁴ "Kak eto bylo" [How it Was] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1990 (5) pp66-71
⁵ "Kak prinimalos' reshenie" [How the Decision Was Taken] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1991 (7) p40. The article appeared in the section (now renamed) "Afghanistan: Lessons and Conclusions"
⁶ ibid p42
1989 had identified those responsible for the decision to send combat forces into Afghanistan as Brezhnev, Ustinov, Andropov and Gromyko, and the armed forces had no part in the "taking of the decision on the introduction of troops". This carefully worded statement overlooked any reflection of Ogarkov's opposition to the intervention.

From 10 December 1979, Ustinov began to instruct the General Staff to create groups of forces while Brezhnev as Supreme Commander took the decision formally on December 12. On 13 December, an Operational Group, headed by First Deputy Chief of General Staff, General S. F. Akhromeev, was set up in the Ministry of Defence. Later, at an unspecified time, this Group was taken over by the First Deputy Minister of Defence, Marshal S. L. Sokolov.

The most important observation in the article, from an operational point of view, was that a specific coordinator to harmonise the various Soviet entities in Afghanistan was not appointed. To go part of the way toward this coordination, the Ministry of Defence maintained its Operational Group almost constantly.¹

An article in the August 1991 issue of Military Thought on the air war in Afghanistan concluded that the "non-standard combat circumstances" of the conflict imposed severe limitations on the Air Forces' normal operating procedures. There was a pressing need for all elements of the Soviet armed forces to study the lessons (both successes and failures) of the Afghan war, for wide discussion in the Soviet military press, and for application of the lessons in combat training.²

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¹ ibid
A New Assault on Local War Doctrine - 1991

By 1991, the Soviet military press launched a new assault on the problem of small wars. The Military History Institute, by then the most prolific source of innovative thought in the military press, issued a new study of the lessons of local wars, and several important articles were published. These are described below. It should be noted that by this time, the question of a new Soviet military doctrine was firmly on the open political agenda.

In 1991, the first Soviet book which graced itself with the title of "Military Art in Local Wars" was published. Its main aim was to outline the close interdependence between local wars or armed conflicts and the basic stages of building the armed forces and developing military art. Previous study of this subject in the USSR, the book said, was marked by prejudiced evaluation of Cold War stereotypes. The book concluded:

If in the sphere of strategy, oriented towards the conduct of general nuclear war, the experience of local wars did not have a substantial influence, in the fields of tactics and operational art, the experience was in fact definitive.¹

According to the Introduction, the most conspicuous characteristic of local wars was their limited scale, which defined all other parameters, from political goals to the means of armed combat.²

The most important issue in local wars had been the problem of readiness of expeditionary forces. This involved questions of their strategic and tactical mobility, organisational structure, command and control of operations in

¹ A G Khor’kov et al Voennoe iskusstvo v lokal’nykh voinakh (1945-1990) [Military Art in Local Wars: 1945-1990] Institute of Military History, 1991, 389pp, pp7, p38. Only 20 copies were made because of the new, much higher cost of printing, even though the book had been approved in the Institute’s publication program for the year
² ibid p3
variable and time-specific conditions in a number of different theatres, and their technical and logistic support under the same variety of circumstances. The book addressed the first two of these points in separate chapters devoted to each of the types of forces (ground, air and naval), with subsequent chapters on each of the final two points.

The chapter on command and control, a subject introduced into the Shavrov work for its 1981 publication, concluded that by the end of the 1980s the level of development of command came to have an unprecedented influence on outcomes of combat operations and war itself. This influence depended on comprehensive development of intelligence means and communications. For these reasons, command and control systems became one of the main targets for suppression or destruction.2

In what may well have been a lament about the Soviet situation, the book noted that the existence of command elements in peace-time facilitated their use in or on the eve of a crisis, and allowed for surprise attacks and a more effective first strike. This point was developed at length, using as examples the US unified commands set up in 1946, and US practice in Korea and Vietnam.3

Experience showed that it was eminently preferable for command structures to be organised, their basic responsibilities defined, their basic materiel requirements provided and tested, and for them to be deployed or established in the likely theatre of operations in peacetime.4 To support command and control process in local wars, especially in remote areas, communications must meet two basic

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1 *ibid* p5
2 *ibid* p263
3 *ibid* pp226-229
4 *ibid* pp239-240
requirements: allow firm command of all forces and weapons systems, and
guarantee communications between the joint command and its general staff (the
working organ of the national supreme command).1 The book gave a
comprehensive overview, similar to those in earlier works, of development of
Western forces for small wars, particularly naval forces (including carrier-borne air
forces), special forces and strategically mobile forces.2

In the journals in 1991 Tiushkevich again joined the debate, in the
June issue of Military Thought. In an article on the development of Soviet military
theory ("Marxist-Leninist teachings"), he observed that many mistaken precepts
prevented elaboration and exploitation of the experience of military operations at
Lake Khasan, Khalkin Gol, the Soviet-Finnish war, and the initial period of the
Second World war (1938-1941).3

Tiushkevich warned that the current absence of a direct threat of war
could not mean that military dangers did not exist, and pointed especially to the
Middle East and Near East.4

The next issue of Military Thought carried two "confessions" of the
extent to which Soviet military theory had ignored the question of scale of conflict.
The first says that "Military art would lose the right to be called art if it did not
demand a creative approach to preparation and conduct of military operations of
any scale".5

1 ibid p247
2 ibid pp383-389
3 Maj.-Gen. S A Tiushkevich "Marksistsko-Leninsko uchenie o voine i armii: istorii razvitija i
sovremennye otznki" [Marxist-Leninist Teaching on War and the Army: History of its Development
and a Contemporary Evaluation] Voennaia mysl' 1991 (6) p49
4 ibid p52
5 Lt.-Gen. (retired) A P Molotkov "Ob odnom printsipe voennogo iskusstva" [On One Principle of
Military Art] Voennaia mysl' 1991 (7) p17. The article is about failure of various Soviet operations
in the Second World War
The second "confession" noted that "With the acquisition of nuclear weapons, development of the theory of military science took on an unassailable one-sided trend, which made a fetish of use of such weapons". The author, Liutov, mentioned a failed project of the Institute of Military History on "Forms and Methods of the Formation of a High Level of Military Art among Military Cadre, based on the Experience of the Great Patriotic War and Local Wars", but gave no further details of this project.¹

The August 1991 issue of Military Thought carried the most radical call for nearly sixty five years for reform of the armed forces, advocating: abolition of military political education institutions, technical military specialisations for all aspiring political officers, strengthening of the principle of single command, and a fundamental restructuring of the system of military educational institutions.²

An article in the same issue took the view that in the new political circumstances, "one of the main tasks of Soviet military doctrine was development of theoretical positions defining the ways for using and the methods of operation of independent [otdel'nye] groups of Soviet forces in regional conflicts and local wars".³

Painting NATO as the potential enemy, the author noted its 1990 declaration which envisaged creation of new interventionary capability for any part of the world. The author, Korotchenko, observed that the war in the Persian Gulf that year had shown that delivery of a sudden, high volume and massive strike of

¹ Lt.-Gen. I S Liutov "Voennaia nauka i na stremlenie ili v tikhol' zavod" [Military Science on the Move or in a Quiet Pass] Voennaia mysl' 1991 (7) pp30, 32. Liutov was a member of the Centre of International and Military Political Research of the Russian American University
missiles, aerospace, and radio-electronic weapons from naval forces could
determine the outcome of a war without invasion by ground forces.\(^1\) This meant
that military art faced the new problem of finding ways to respond to such strikes.
Questions of defeating the special forces of the enemy took on special
significance.\(^2\) The author predicted that new forms and methods for the conduct of
operations were likely to emerge. He noted that a gap existed and was increasing
between the professional competence of the USSR’s conscript army and the
professional forces of NATO. The Persian Gulf War showed that large numbers of
old tanks and aircraft were no match for high technology weapons.\(^3\)

The August issue of the journal USA carried the most
comprehensive review of the lessons of the Persian Gulf War yet to appear in the
Soviet press. Rogov, a civilian analyst, and section head at the Institute for the
USA and Canada, directed his conclusions to the question of political regulation of
regional conflicts, but in the first four pages provided an analysis of the war’s
implications for Soviet military doctrine.\(^4\)

He claimed that the war confirmed that at the current level of
technology, the means of offence were superior to the means of defence, for both
nuclear and conventional weapons, and added:

In our view, the ideas of defensive doctrine, well founded and
sensible in their assumptions, demand refinement in that part which
concerns the conduct of counter-offensive operations. The experience
of the war in the Persian Gulf shows that the inability of the
defending side to organise a counter-offensive dooms it to defeat.
Only in that case where the defending side is in a condition to
deliver retaliatory strikes on the attacking enemy is it able to repel

\(^1\) ibid pp20-21
\(^2\) ibid p22
\(^3\) ibid p23
\(^4\) S M Rogov "Voina v persidskom zalive: nekotorye predvarenie" itogi i uroki" [The War in the
or destroy the troops invading its territory.¹

Rogov argued that the war allowed several preliminary conclusions concerning the newest trends in the development of military affairs.² It showed the great effectiveness of high-speed stand-off weapons, and confirmed the trend towards blurring the boundary between tactical nuclear weapons and conventional weapons with massive firepower.

It also demonstrated a change in the relationship between the role of strike forces (tanks, artillery, aircraft, rockets) and systems of command and intelligence. He noted increased significance of the human factor. This was the first time a professional army took part in a war on this scale in the 20th century. The high standards of US personnel enabled them to realise the technological superiority of their weapons.

The war showed a strengthening of the role of tactical surprise, as the USA could not use strategic surprise. The decisive significance of air superiority was demonstrated, with operations in the war approaching for the first time in history the classical scheme of the air power theorist, Douhet. Most importantly for local war doctrine, Rogov noted the growth in the role of strategic mobility of conventional forces and armaments.

The use of passive defence on the First World War model was shown to be untenable, and American use of active defence, including the Patriot anti-missile system, to be superior. At the same time, Iraqi forces demonstrated the relative effectiveness of such elements of passive defence as manoeuvre (mobile SCUDs), deception (in the first air strike, the allies used most of their ordnance in

¹ ibid p15
² ibid p14
strikes on false targets), and hardening (the allies did not succeed in destroying the super-hardened underground command points of the political leadership and most of the Iraqi air force).¹

The October issue of Military Thought carried an article making a strong plea for a new military doctrine to address the problem of non-nuclear, non-European wars. It noted that doctrine must be able to address a range of threats from low intensity conflict to nuclear war. The authors criticised the draft outline of the new military doctrine for paying only passing attention to local wars and avoiding mention of other types of conflicts (such as low intensity conflicts).²

Since threats to the USSR could come from the east or the south, if no longer from the west, Charles de Gaulle’s idea of defence in all directions was a good one. The threat to the southern borders of the USSR had increased and this implied the need to create a mobile strategic reserve from the Eastern USSR to the Urals.³

As one Soviet officer described in 1991 the slow reaction of the Soviet military leadership to the problem of local wars, "it was poor and non-correspondent, that was why they produced 70,000 tanks after 1973".⁴

In an unpublished article, the same officer described the Soviet record as follows. The USSR participated in a number of limited wars and armed conflicts after the Second World War but the armed forces were used on a significantly smaller scale than those of other developed countries, such as the US,

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¹ ibid pp14-15
³ ibid p16
⁴ Interview with Colonel Boris Gavrilovich Putilin, December 1991.
UK and France. The definitive factors for use of Soviet armed forces in limited wars were ideological. In the post-war period, it was possible to identify two types of direct use of Soviet armed forces: as a means of pressure on leading Western countries; and as a means of defending friendly regimes.

In the first category, the author included the Berlin blockades in 1948 and 1961; demonstrative military manoeuvres in Transcaucusus during the aggression against Egypt in 1956; and the placing of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962.


Perhaps the last word on local war before the collapse of the USSR in December 1991 went to General Lobov, then Chief of the General Staff. He said in Red Star at the end of November:

Since today a simultaneous surprise attack on our country from several directions is unlikely, the basis of a conception [of defence in all directions] must become mobile defence and the creation of mobile forces for its conduct. This is necessary because the reduction in the size of the armed forces along the full extent of our state borders requires a rapid concentration of force on the threatening front. It follows that the deployed group of forces must be able to prevent the emergence of a local conflict, and in the event of its having started, to prevent escalation and to regroup as necessary; and the moving up of strategic reserves must be able to guarantee repelling of aggression on any scale.

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1 B G Putilin "SSSR i ogranichionnye voiny i voruzechionnye konflikty v poslevoennyi period" [The USSR and Limited Wars and Armed Conflicts in the Post-War Period] unpublished, Moscow, 1990, p1
2 *ibid*
3 *ibid* pp1-2
Formulating and Disseminating Doctrine: General War and Local War

In the study of Soviet military doctrine for general war, scholars have been able to identify a well articulated canon of beliefs or dogmas as the principles of Soviet military art. This was set forth as the product of a highly structured system for developing and disseminating military doctrine.

Widespread dissemination of the basic tenets of military doctrine was established Soviet policy. The need for wide publication of the tenets of Soviet military doctrine was in itself one of the key dogmas of Soviet military doctrine, frequently reasserted by senior military figures.¹

The military purpose of disseminating doctrine was to ensure that all military personnel and key political workers understood the nature of the revolution in military affairs and the resulting demands on military training and education.

The primary audience for military doctrine - as opposed to political doctrine about the armed forces - was the members of the Soviet armed forces.

A number of vehicles were used for disseminating Soviet military doctrine: the press (newspapers and journals), books and pamphlets, encyclopedias, Officer’s Library editions of key works on doctrine; work conferences; and radio and television.²

The military academies were think-tanks, that is sources of formulating military doctrine,³ but as teaching institutions they were also purveyors of doctrine, in fact the primary source of dissemination of strategic doctrine in a controlled learning environment. Except for the Voroshilov, the Frunze, and the

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² ibid pp230-249
³ ibid pp218-220
Lenin Academies, none of the military academies had any role in formulating strategic doctrine, though the single service academies and other specialist academies had, of course, a role in formulating operational and tactical level doctrine.

When one turns to the vehicles for disseminating doctrine, the Officer's Library series provides what can be assumed to be a fairly reliable guide. It has appeared in five forms since 1917.¹ Military doctrine for general war received less attention in individual works, and in each series, compared with questions such as political control over the armed forces, military history of the Great Patriotic War, military psychology, military pedagogy, descriptions of foreign armies and the Soviet armed forces, and Lenin's views on military art.

This is an important observation if one is to answer the question at what stage of dissemination would a doctrine on local war become recognisable as authoritative in the same way as general war doctrine? Would the amount of coverage in Soviet open media be a guide? Or the rank of officers associated with publication of the doctrine? Or statements by the CPSU and General Staff of the importance attached to local war doctrine?

As the preceding evidence adduced in Chapters Five to Seven indicates, application of these conditions would suggest that by the 1980s, the Soviet General Staff had determined that local war doctrine, as formulated in the revised 1981 version of the General Staff Academy study of 1975, could be

¹ *ibid* p239. The title of the two pre-World War II series was Library of the Commander. The first set of 18 published in the 1920s included works on single service matters and tactics. The second set, which was to include 47 works, began to be published in 1936 and spread its coverage to include the direct translation of foreign works on military strategy, such as those by Clausewitz, Moltke and Mering. The selection of titles for later series (Grey, Blue and Red) demonstrated a far greater degree of ideological rectitude than the 1936 set.
considered as authoritative. This conclusion is borne out by inclusion of the material in higher education courses for military officers.

Of course, the local war doctrine was incomplete, especially in the absence of direct linkages between any conclusions on the nature of local war and changes to Soviet force structure, like those so evident in the US armed forces. A number of sources say explicitly that the Soviet armed forces developed in response to the experience of local wars, but few describe force structure changes due explicitly to unique characteristics of local wars.

The formulation of strategic level doctrine only rarely became a fully formalised process in the USSR. One example of this occurred on the occasion of the first publication of Marshal Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy in 1962. This process involved preparation of a text in the General Staff, its subsequent approval of that text by the Collegium of the Ministry of Defence, then, as final arbiter, by the Central Committee of the CPSU.1

The Central Committee approval would almost certainly have included the Main Political Directorate, the International Department, Party Secretaries, and possibly also the Chairman of the Presidium of the Party (later called the General-Secretary of the Politburo). It is possible that the Defence Council may also have been involved with at least a formal decision to approve the publication - as official doctrine - of such a major work.

The frequency with which this formal process was followed, and for what issues, are questions on which direct evidence is lacking. For example, there is no evidence whether it was followed in 1975 when a revised version of Military

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1 According to an interview conducted in Moscow, December 1991
Strategy was published at restricted level. But the fact that closed door publication of major studies by the General Staff Academy of local wars (Lial'ko 1963, Shavrov 1975) coincided with publication of major studies on general war which acknowledged the importance of local war (the 1962 and 1975 editions of Sokolovskii's Military Strategy) is clear proof that general war was not after 1962 the General Staff's exclusive preoccupation to the neglect of local war, and if the question of time lag between event and evidence is taken into account, high level consideration of local war doctrine and problems was firmly established earlier than 1963.2

The nature of the formal processes for approving of key works on military doctrine, especially the involvement of political bodies and propagandists, supports Gallagher's statement of the obvious that formulation of doctrine follows rather than precedes decisions by the military leaderships. This perspective puts open source Soviet military doctrine in a more realistic light as overly elaborate or even pseudo-scientific: "a highly formularized set of theses".3

The commitment to publish a work on Soviet military doctrine in the

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1 Scott and Scott Soviet Military Doctrine p36 refer to the publication of the 1975 edition. This volume was not made available to me in Moscow despite my request to see it. The possible existence of several classified versions of key works, published earlier than their public versions, is rarely discussed in the scholarly literature

2 As mentioned in Chapter Four, the principle that publication of Soviet military doctrine might have followed decisions based on it is one that most of the scholarly literature has not considered in depth. Scott and Scott, the pioneers of the study of Soviet military doctrine, acknowledge the time lag and the correct sequence between decision and published doctrine, and also note the contradictory nature of published statements. Yet Scott and Scott, and their disciples - who represented the dominant school in the USA for study of Soviet military strategy - consistently avoided appropriate allowances for these considerations. It is a key conclusion of this thesis that there was an important time lag between the emergence of new ideas in the political and military leadership and their promulgation in some sort of published, authoritative form. The scholarly literature is replete with attempts to align the timing of a change in Soviet leadership ideas or General Staff ideas to the first appearance in print of the new idea

1960s as part of the "approved" Officer's Library series was never fulfilled.\textsuperscript{1} This failure is just one piece of evidence for believing that the General Staff's private views of military doctrine were like pieces of honest merchandise sitting in the store window, around which the propagandists draped the "window dressing" of elaborate, official doctrine in order to create impressions that the unadorned goods could not.

In any case, the doctrinal statements on general war were highly generalised and ambiguous, many propositions seeming to be balanced by contradictory ones. Soviet military doctrine on general war was a "permissive" set of principles, allowing choice in implementation rather than defining choice.\textsuperscript{2}

The permissiveness of official doctrine arose from its status as a set of beliefs reflecting a political contract between the Party and the military leadership: "a charter attesting the military's right to participate in policy formulation and general authorization for a broad and comprehensive development of the armed forces".\textsuperscript{3}

These considerations are discussed further in Chapter Ten.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The publication in 1981 of an unclassified version of the General Staff Academy's 1975 study on local wars marked the first stage of the process where the Soviet military and political establishment felt it should disseminate the benefit of two decades of study of local war, a subject endorsed publicly in 1981 as

\textsuperscript{1} Scott and Scott \textit{Soviet Military Doctrine} p276. The authors do not canvas the reasons for the failure to publish the only planned volume on this topic. The announced list for the series did include a title "Military Strategy" in addition to the proposed title "Military Doctrine"
\textsuperscript{2} Gallagher \textit{op cit} p56
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid}
"one of the most important tasks of Soviet military historical science identified from the decisions of the 24th and 25th Congresses of the CPSU".

The importance of studying small wars was two-fold, the book said: to understand the military strategy of world imperialism and to elucidate the methods of the warring sides. In this way, the book was not presented as so directly relevant to the construction of the Soviet armed forces as its earlier, classified version or statements by Kulikov, Grechko, and Kulish in the previous decade.

The 1980s saw the formal incorporation of doctrinal issues relating to local war in academy syllabuses and text books on military art.

The introduction in 1983 by the Military History Journal of the category "Local Wars" in its contents pages also probably represented a greater official tolerance of public acknowledgment of the study of local wars.

The 1980s saw greater interest by single services, such as the air force and navy, of operational aspects of local war.

But the question of Afghanistan was simply too difficult politically for the Soviet doctrinal establishment to handle. The General Staff did not authorise formal academic study of the lessons of the war until it was over and the Military History Institute became the focus of work on Afghanistan.

By contrast, a special issue of Military Thought, the journal of the Military Science Directorate of the General Staff, was criticised for ignoring the question of local war in a special issue devoted to the new military doctrine.

The work of the Military History Institute in 1990 and 1991 on doctrinal issues of local war did not add significantly to the work already done, except that it undertook the first serious study to see the light of day of the USSR’s
experience in Afghanistan.

Senior officers, like Gareev, continued to condemn neglect of local war by Soviet military science as one of its serious deficiencies.

By 1991, the Chief of General Staff came to see local wars as one of the most important planning determinants for the armed forces of the future.

Too much can be made of the fact that Soviet local war doctrine differed significantly from Soviet general war doctrine in the way it was presented publicly. The local war doctrine was incomplete, especially in the absence of direct linkages between any conclusions on the nature of local war and changes to Soviet force structure. Yet the presumption that general war doctrine as promulgated was as comprehensive and definitive a guide to Soviet military thinking as was often assumed is difficult to sustain, because the doctrine was rarely published in a comprehensive and unambiguous manner, and it was never published without direct intervention and rewriting by the Communist Party.
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GENERAL STAFF’S MULTI-VARIANT STRATEGY

Chapters Five to Seven presented considerable evidence of a view in the Soviet General Staff between 1960 and 1991 that military operations in local wars required a separate military doctrine and different military posture (types of forces, size of forces, training, deployment or readiness) compared with general war.

Chapter Eight reviews information about Soviet force structure, deployments and activity for evidence how and when the doctrinal views on local war in the General Staff may have been implemented. The first section addresses the effects on planning for contingencies short of general war of the changes to Soviet force structure in the period before 1964 (when according to the Armageddon school the one-war strategy came to dominate). The second section analyses Soviet military posture for local war in particular theatres; and the third reviews elements in the Soviet armed forces especially appropriate to local wars.

In the absence of conclusive documentary evidence on General Staff decisions on force posture, the chapter is based on the premise that Soviet military posture in and of itself offers considerable guidance as to the intentions of the country’s military leadership.¹

The chapter does not need to address whether the General Staff

¹ As Albert Seaton and Joan Seaton The Soviet Army - 1918 to the Present Bodley Head, London UK, 1986, p171 observed:
   Equipment and field organizations are ... very firm indicators of trends, and an experienced military observer should be able to foretell intentions, even a whole military philosophy, by analysing the general pattern of equipment and organization.
made decisions in relation to an explicit concept of rungs of escalation or a need for escalation control. The US experience analysed in Chapter Two suggested that a military leadership could fully accept the need for distinct local war capabilities and plans, and actively develop these, without relying on a fully elaborated and workable doctrine.¹

**Decisions on Force Posture 1945-1964**

This section assesses whether changes made to Soviet force posture between 1945 and 1964 to accommodate the integration of nuclear weapons, forced the General Staff to abandon the pre-existing, incipient doctrine, capabilities, force structure and posture for a multi-variant strategy (local war and general war) that had existed since 1945. If there was no such wholesale repudiation of lesser contingencies, then the (often implicit) presumption in the literature that at some time in the 1960s, the General Staff had to modify an all-or-nothing general nuclear war doctrine and strategy developed in the late 1950s in order to accommodate local wars or conventional operations would appear to be flawed.²

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¹ Most US Government debates on force structure or force levels took place within the broad limits of a non-extreme position which assumed that a high level of military security was desirable but, given the constraints of economic resources and competing non-military interests, resulted in "compromise short of worst-case preparedness" (Richard K Betts *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* Harvard University Press, Cambridge MASS, 1977, p100). The US experience offered two other signposts about Soviet decision-making. First, the Soviet General Staff may have had a multi-variant strategy well before 1961 when the USA formally adopted such a concept because the US strategy was elaborated partly out of awareness of (or at least was justified by reference to) Soviet military posture. Second, as Maxwell Taylor and the Admirals-in-revolt did in the US case, the Soviet General Staff may have had a natural disposition to argue against over-reliance on a one-dimensional strategy and in favour of more attention to various levels of readiness appropriate to a multi-variant strategy.

² As Chapter Four shows, the "Armageddon" scholars suggest that under Khrushchev the Soviet General Staff moved to an all-or-nothing nuclear war posture and that there was little disposition in favour of graduated military responses. The presumption was that the USSR (and by implication, the General Staff) had shifted to a nearly exclusive general war posture by the early 1960s and that some time after had to make a readjustment back to include conventional capabilities for local war or the conventional phase of a general war.
As a Soviet work published in 1964 noted:

In regional, local wars, changes in the methods and forms of armed combat ... proceed more slowly compared with changes in world wars, where such changes have occurred more quickly, have been more diverse, and have been substantial.¹

If the Soviet General Staff already thought it had an adequate force structure for a wide range of conventional wars and even counter-guerilla war before the nuclear revolution in its military doctrine (between 1954 and 1961),² then it is appropriate to look for evidence from those years, and to make a judgement about whether the modifications made to take account of general nuclear war undermined presumptions about lesser contingencies, such as local war.

There was no need for the Soviet political leadership to sit down one day after the Second World War, and decide that henceforth the USSR would need to be ready for local wars. Such wars had been part of the currency of international affairs for centuries for Russia, and also in the Soviet period before and immediately after the Second World War. The Russian Empire had expanded and then protected its gains, in much the same way as its British and French counterparts - through a succession of small wars, interrupted from time to time by

² It was the period from 1954 to 1961 which Soviet sources identified as involved the most fundamental changes to Soviet military strategy, while the period after 1961 is characterised as a period of consolidation. See for example, the periodisation for discrete chapters (1945-1953, 1954-1961, 1962-1977) in S A Tiushkevich et al Sovetskie voyennoye sily: istoriia sroitels’stva [Soviet Armed Forces: History of their Construction] Voennisdat, Moscow, 1978, translated by USAF, The Soviet Armed Forces: A History of their Organisational Development USGPO, Washington DC, 1978. If anything, the period after 1961 is characterised more for the achievement of parity in strategic nuclear capability, than for any change relating to the roles and missions of general purpose forces. See for example, the periodisation for chapters in A A Babakov Voyennoye sily SSSR posle voiny (1945-1986) [Armed Forces of the USSR after the War 1945-1986] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1987:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945-1953</td>
<td>first post-War years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-1961</td>
<td>fundamental restructuring in the military technological revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-1972</td>
<td>in the conditions of achieving strategic parity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-1986</td>
<td>in circumstances of maintaining strategic parity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
major wars.¹

After the First World War and Bolshevik revolution, Soviet leaders had a well developed appreciation of the roles that war and armed revolution played in international relations. They were the decisive events in the birth and consolidation of the Soviet state, and questions of war and revolution occupied a central place in Communist ideology.² Notwithstanding Soviet regime pretensions to be peace-loving from its earliest days, local wars remained a strategic reality for the USSR (see Table 8-1).

In the 1930s, Stalin pursued a diplomacy based on the hope that the USSR could avoid being drawn into any clash between Germany and the Entente powers. It is less clear whether he felt the same concern about Japan but by 1939, when Soviet forces had decisively defeated Japanese border probes against Mongolia, he probably felt more comfortable about Soviet security in the East. An essential part of his diplomatic plan was the use of local wars to avoid the big war, and if the big war came, to better position the USSR against its adversaries.³

¹ Tsarist Russia did have a sad history of invasion and major war, but spent more time invading other territories and engaging in small wars than defending itself. The Great Northern War (1700-1721) against Sweden was Russia’s one major war of the 18th century, and set the scene for expansion by force for the remainder of the century into Eastern Poland, the Baltic states, Ukraine and the Caucasus. The defeat of Napoleon in the first Great Patriotic War in 1812 freed Russia to exercise hegemonial influence and wage war against its smaller neighbours (Persia 1826, Turkey 1828-1929, Poland 1830-1831, suppression of Hungarian revolt in Transylvania in 1849). The Crimean War (1853-1856) was a setback at the hands of medium-sized English and French forces, which did not stop Russia from achieving successes against their Turkish ally, or from declaring war on Turkey in 1877. Russia continued to wage local wars on its periphery for the remainder of the nineteenth century to acquire a large slice of Central Asia. Russia’s military power was also used to good effect to obtain slices of territory from China. Russia’s military occupation of Manchuria in 1900 at the time of the Boxer Rebellion set the scene for the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.
² The main theoretical journal of the Red Army in the early years was called Voina i revolutsiya (War and Revolution).
³ Only a few works on Soviet military policy address the small wars in which the USSR was involved before 1941 in any detail as a strategic phenomenon. Malcolm Mackintosh Juggernaut- A History of the Soviet Armed Forces Macmillan, New York NY, 1967, has a chapter on the lessons of the war with Finland, and mentions some of the other conflicts. Raymond L Garthoff Soviet Military Policy - Historical Analysis Faber & Faber, London UK, 1966, has a chapter on the Soviet use of force before 1941. David J Dallin The New Soviet Empire Hollis & Carter, London UK, 1951 also has a brief treatment of the pre-1941 wars of the USSR.
**TABLE 8-1**

SOVIET LOCAL WARS AND MILITARY CLASHES 1918-1945*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia-Poland War</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asian Wars</td>
<td>1918-1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian Civil War</td>
<td>1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karelian Border War</td>
<td>1921-1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchurian Incident (China)</td>
<td>1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Civil War</td>
<td>1936-1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Volunteers in China</td>
<td>1937-1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchurian Incident (Japan)</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian Incident (Japan)</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet/Finnish War</td>
<td>1939-1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasion of Poland, Baltic States</td>
<td>1939-1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Far Eastern Campaign (Japan)</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In all of the events listed in this table Soviet combat units or command elements directly participated

**LOCAL WARS OR MILITARY CRISES OF SOVIET INTEREST 1918-1945**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armed Uprising in Korea against Japanese</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil War and Entente Intervention in Hungary</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Afghan War</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Independence War</td>
<td>1919-1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Uprising in Iran</td>
<td>1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Uprising in Bulgaria</td>
<td>1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Chinese Civil War</td>
<td>1924-1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Intervention in Manchuria</td>
<td>1931-1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German invasion of Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish intervention in Silesia</td>
<td>1938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important lesson the General Staff could have learned from its pre-war experience of local wars was the link between success in them and the strategic credibility of the armed forces for defence against serious attack. The Red Army succeeded in the Far East, and the Japanese generals ceased their probes; the poor Soviet performance in the Winter War against Finland encouraged potential enemies and potential allies alike in the belief that the USSR was militarily vulnerable.

Between 1923 and 1937, the Soviet armed forces had not exceeded 600,000, backed by a territorial force of about 250,000. By the time of the German invasion in June 1941 they had been built up to 4.2 million. Total Soviet military manpower at the end of the War amounted to just over 11 million, including for the final assault on Germany at the beginning of 1945, 446 rifle divisions, 23 tank corps, 13 mechanised corps, and 10 airborne divisions fighting as infantry, totalling almost 5 million men.\(^1\) The Soviet air forces - then seen as an adjunct to the Ground Forces and called Aviation of the Red Army - comprised about 20,000 aircraft, but were seriously deficient in transport aircraft, and could provide the airborne divisions only with gliders and short range aircraft.\(^2\)

The war time role of the Navy had been constrained by lack of forces, and was limited largely to coastal defence and support of ground operations. As Admiral Gorshkov pointed out subsequently, the USSR relied to a great degree

\(^{1}\) Mackintosh Juggernaut p245; Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p18; Matthew A Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" International Security 1982-83 (Winter) vol. 7, no. 3, p115. This figure, given by Khrushchev in a speech in 1960, was lower than some Western estimates. For example, Thomas W Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore MD, 1970, p38n talked of 12 to 15 million. According to Evangelista, the Khrushchev figure is now regarded as accurate. Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" loc cit p115. US Army strength at the end of the war was 12 million.

on Allied naval forces in the war.\(^1\)

Soviet industrial capacity was insufficient to compete with US capacity to the point where general war could be seen as a desirable Soviet objective. For example, production of aircraft in the last two years of the war had been between 35,000 and 40,000 per year, less than half the US level.\(^2\)

In 1945, the Soviet General Staff set about implementing massive demobilisation. By 1947, the end of war Soviet military strength of 11 million had been slashed to less than 3 million - a cut of more than 70 per cent.\(^3\) By the end of 1947, the number of divisions had been reduced from 500 to an estimated 175, ranging from nearly full strength to cadre units.\(^4\) The US Government estimated in 1948 that the Soviet Air Forces had 11,500 combat aircraft (5,400 fighters, 3,300

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\(^1\) Adm. S G Gorshkov *Morskaia moch' gosudarstva* [Sea Power of the State] 2nd ed, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1979, 217. Gorshkov noted the relative war-time production of naval vessels of Britain and the USA on the one hand and the USSR on other was heavily in the favour of the Americans and British. For example, 133 convoy aircraft carriers to nil, 1500 destroyers/frigates/corvettes to 19, and 1000 minehunters to 38. As M A Garelov "Otkuda ugroza" *Voenno-istoricheski zhurnal* 1989 (2) p24 observed, the naval balance in those years was heavily against the USSR: 170 air capable ships to nil, 405 submarines to 173, 36 large cruisers to 4, 135 cruisers to 10, and 1,114 landing craft compared with a negligible amount on the Soviet side.

\(^2\) Kilmarx *op cit* p201. CIA *Soviet Military and Civil Aviation Policies* 23 April 1948 p16

\(^3\) Raymond L Garthoff "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine" in Bruce Parrott (ed) *The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy* Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 1990, p144. Khrushchev claimed in 1960 that the 1948 total armed forces strength was 2.874 million, a claim which most later Western scholars came to accept (Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" *loc cit* p115). Lincoln P Bloomfield, Walter C Clemens Jr, and Franklyn Griffiths *Khrushchev and the Arms Race - Soviet Interests in Arms Control and Disarmament 1954-1964* MIT Press, Cambridge MASS, 1966, p100 put the figure for total strength of the armed forces in 1948 at 2.874 million. Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army" p114 reports that a US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) estimate of 1948 put the ground force strength at 2.5 million (based on 175 line divisions plus supporting forces) out of a total armed forces of 4 million. The JCS estimate for the total armed forces was therefore 25 per cent higher than the figure accepted now as having been correct. According to Gibson *op cit* p289, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had decided in 1944 to use a planning figure of 4 million for the size of the post-war Soviet armed forces. A 1947 CIA estimate reported less than 3.8 million, including security troops (May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p81).

\(^4\) Garthoff "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine" *loc cit* p144; Mackintosh *Juggernaut* p271 cites the 175 figure. May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p81 note that most of the 175 divisions were "shells", with the figure of 175 having been based on the presumption that wartime divisions were still in existence unless the US intelligence agencies had three pieces of evidence to the contrary. It is not known whether the British intelligence agencies used a similar approach, but May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe insist that the manpower estimates were so low that most of the 175 divisions must have been shells.
ground attack, and 2,800 light bombers) and Naval Aviation 3,100 combat\(^1\) - a cut to just over half the wartime levels.\(^2\)

The cuts in troop deployments in Soviet occupied Europe and Asia were substantial. By 1948, Soviet forces in occupied Europe totalled 30 divisions, down from the estimated 446 in 1945 and 66 in 1946.\(^3\) In the Far East, Ground Forces were reduced to about 20 divisions by 1948.\(^4\) This contrasts with the 40 divisions maintained there throughout the war to guard against any Japanese incursion, and the 80 divisions assembled for the Manchurian campaign in 1945.\(^5\)

This demobilisation is very strong evidence that from the end of 1945 until 1948 the General Staff did not consider a major invasion of Western Europe (and general war) as either a strategic opportunity or a likely necessity provoked by a US attack. The Soviet armed forces were involved in occupation or reconstruction duties, including in potentially restive territories recently annexed to

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\(^2\) The Air Forces were reduced from 20,000 aircraft in 1945 to about 14,000 or 15,000 in 1946 (Kilmars *op cit* p226) with an estimated 50 per cent reduction in manpower (May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p95).

\(^3\) Christann Lea Gibson *Patterns of Demobilisation: the US and USSR after World War II* Ph D thesis, University of Denver, 1983, p209 quoting US Joint Chiefs of Staff estimates. Gibson estimated that in 1946, there were only 25-30 Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe. The USSR reduced its army in Eastern European countries to less than one fourteenth the number of divisions, and less than one tenth of total manpower used in the Soviet offensive against Germany. In that campaign, the initial superiority of forces has been estimated by Soviet sources as 5.5:1 in infantry, 7.8:1 in artillery, 5.7:1 in tanks, and 17.6:1 in aircraft (Richard Ned Lebow *"The Soviet Offensive in Europe: The Schlieffen Plan Revisited"* in Sean M Lynn-Jones, Stephen E Miller and Stephen Van Evera (eds) *Soviet Military Policy* MIT Press, Cambridge MASS, 1989, p319).

\(^4\) J Malcolm Mackintosh *"The Soviet Generals' View of China"* in Raymond L Garthoff (ed) *Sino-Soviet Military Relations* Praeger, New York NY, 1966, p184 gives the figure of 20 for the post-1949 period; Lilita Dzirkals *Soviet Policy Statements and Military Deployments in North East Asia* Rand, Santa Monica CA, 1978, p24 gives the figure of 15 divisions immediately after the war and during the period of friendly relations with China. The 1948 US estimate seems to have been of the order of 20 divisions east of Lake Baikal. See Cave Brown (ed) *Dropshot* p97

\(^5\) Raymond L Garthoff *"Soviet Intervention in Manchuria 1945-46"* in Garthoff (ed) *Sino-Soviet Military Relations* p62
the USSR, and were not training to invade Western Europe.¹

Having suspended an aggressive policy of strategic gain based on annexation of territory and continuation of local wars in the immediate aftermath of the war, and after a humiliating withdrawal from northern Iran in 1946, Stalin showed little interest in local wars to advance Soviet aims. Nevertheless, he would have expected his General Staff to have effective strategies (appropriate organisation, planning and training) to back up his strategic gambits with force.

In this period, perhaps the most important local war requirement Stalin imposed on the General Staff was that of defence against a local attack by the USA and its allies, especially in Germany.² Evidence of this exists in the General Staff's 1946 "Plan for the Active Defence of the Territory of the Soviet Union", which included an advance into the Allied occupation zones of West Germany if the Allies attacked Soviet forces.³

While any clash between US and Soviet troops risked an outbreak of general war, the scale of the operation outlined in the plan, and the rapid demobilisation of Soviet forces that had occurred, suggest a belief that the conflict could or should be confined to German territory.

Unless the USSR ordered a significant mobilisation, the aims of a Soviet counter-offensive in Germany at that time would have included the classic goal of limited war - forcing the opponent to cease hostilities, negotiate, or accept a

¹ Matthew Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" loc cit pp119, 125, 130-131. As he points out, the air defence troops may have adopted higher readiness levels than other forces against the possibility of some sudden air attack, but there were no signs of activity in other Soviet units suggesting active anticipation of imminent conflict.
² Since US forces had also demobilised, the prospect of a major assault by the USA or its allies as a prelude to general war was highly unlikely.
³ Garelov op cit pp24-29. The plan, presumably part of a series, was titled "Plan for the Active Defence of the Territory of the Soviet Union". It was issued as a Top Secret document in 1946 and reissued (reauthorised) at the same level of classification in August 1948.
new status quo, as opposed to the classic goal of general war - the total defeat and surrender of the enemy state.

Throughout 1947 and 1948, Soviet political intentions to convert most of occupied territory in Europe into a security zone or empire controlled by local communist governments imposed an additional requirement on the Soviet General Staff to maintain garrisons amongst a hostile or potentially hostile population. The local war requirements this imposed were demonstrated in Soviet operations up until 1948 to suppress an insurrection in Western Ukraine against an estimated maximum of 600,000 armed rebels.¹ These operations were typical counter-insurgency actions, in which the forces needed to be more flexible and mobile than those for regular operations, and to be capable of good coordination with the local political and legal authorities.

The Soviet forces’ role as occupation forces facing only civil disturbances or uprisings assumed a new dimension in March 1948, when the USSR began harassing the rail routes to West Berlin, and by June had effectively blockaded it by closing all rail, road and inland water routes. While there were signs that Stalin had set clear limits (he did not withdraw Soviet air controllers from the Berlin Air Safety Centre), the General Staff still faced the prospect of military action. The USSR had unmistakable local superiority - 22 divisions in East Germany facing a few thousand US, British and French troops in West Berlin.² The 1946 plan for the counter-offensive into West Germany was reauthorised in August 1948,³ during the Berlin crisis, suggesting strongly that the Soviet General Staff

¹ Gibson op cit p179; Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p136
³ Garelov op cit p25
envisaged the prospect of local war. In the event, Stalin did not escalate the crisis, and in the face of the airlift and Western determination, ended the blockade in May 1949.¹

Between 1946 and 1948, the General Staff undertook a large scale reorganisation of the armed forces with three goals in mind: reduction in size;² technological modernisation of a wide range of general purpose forces; and raising combat readiness over the longer term.³

A study commissioned by the US Government concluded in 1981 that Soviet military posture in the period 1945-1948 was directed primarily at localised military conflicts, arising from external or domestic "counter-revolutionary" threats in the USSR or occupied Europe. The study noted that the force structure Stalin aimed for in this period, relying on smaller, more mobile ground force units with high firepower, was ideally suited to this mission.⁴

**Mobilisation 1949** According to a Soviet historical account, the General Staff began as early as 1949 to increase the numerical strength and combat

¹ Hyland op cit p53

² A reduction in size is not the same as demobilisation since the latter term implies more a reduction in readiness levels of forces and the preparedness of the country for war. A reduction in the size of the forces may be part of demobilisation, but may equally be part of preparations to fight a different type of war.

³ Tiushkevich et al op cit p393; Gibson op cit p215. Gibson observes that the Soviet post-war force was planned with a deliberate emphasis on the development of technology and the modernisation of forces in order to offset US preponderance in long range power projection and lift capability. The war-time Supreme High Command and its political arm, the State Defence Committee were disbanded. The Ministry of the Armed Forces was created with Stalin as Minister.

⁴ Ernest R May, John D Steinbrunner and Thomas W Wolfe History of the Strategic Arms Competition 1945-1972 Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, March 1981, pp96-97. In this period, the Soviet General Staff, with Marshal Sokolovskii (the editor in chief of the later work Military Strategy, in command of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, undertook the blockade of Berlin beginning in May 1948 (Mackintosh Juggernaut p270). The USSR also stepped up military support to the Communist forces in the Chinese Civil War, especially through support for the establishment of the Communist base areas in Manchuria, and in 1945-46 attempted to detach parts of northern Iran where communist Governments had been set up (J M Mackintosh Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p58).
readiness of the armed forces.¹ In the same year, the Ministry of the Armed Forces was split into new Ministries of War and of the Navy,² and an increase of 10 billion rubles in the official defence budget - more than one third - was announced.³ Another sign of the mobilisation was an increase in the term of service for conscripts from two to three years sometime in or before 1950.⁴

The new buildup probably brought Soviet forces to more than 5.5 million by 1952,⁵ almost double their 1948 level, with the biggest growth in the ground forces, and the Navy and Air Forces only increasing by 10 to 20 per cent.⁶ There is little evidence of change in Ground Forces order of battle, suggesting that the extra manpower was used to expand existing units.

According to Wolfe, no substantial qualitative improvements or

¹ Tiushkevich et al *op cit* pp374-375. The classified information available to May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p251 was not conclusive on the date the buildup began. They mention "calculations [several words deleted] in the late 1950s traced sharp rises beginning at least by the winter of 1948-49, continuing through 1950 and 1951". They also say "other calculations [several words deleted] put the increase at less than 1 million, nearly all of it coming in calendar 1950". Few Western scholars give any account or explanation of this important post-war mobilisation, the only one of its kind in the Soviet period. Wolfe *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970* p39n discusses in a footnote the 1960 "claim" by Khrushchev that Soviet forces increased by about 2.9 million men between 1948 and 1955.
² Mackintosh *Juggernaut* p279 says the administrative change occurred in 1949, while Garthoff *Soviet Military Policy* p44 gives the date of the change as February 1950. The Minister of the Armed Forces, Marshal Bulganin (a former political commissar), had been replaced a few months earlier (in March 1949) and the new Minister was a career military officer, Marshal Vasilevskii (Mackintosh *Juggernaut* p279).
³ May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p247. The authors suggest that outlays on the nuclear program probably increased by about one third.
⁴ Mackintosh *Juggernaut* p280. Geoffrey Jukes "Changes in Soviet Conscription Law" *Australian Outlook* 1968 (August) vol. 22, no. 2, p2 notes an admission by Grechko in 1967 that in 1950 an amendment was made to the Military Service Law to provide for an extension of service for army and internal security force privates by one year. The change to the law could well have been made after the decision was taken the previous year.
⁵ The upper limit of this mobilisation is difficult to assess. According to May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p291, a reduction in manpower levels, especially in the Ground Forces, had begun well before Stalin's death. They do not cite a source but if they are correct, and if the figure of 5.763 million given by Khrushchev in 1960 for total strength of the armed forces in 1955 was correct, then manpower levels under Stalin must have peaked higher than 5.5 million. There is no evidence of an increase between 1952 and 1955 and in the light of other evidence of military cutbacks in 1952 and 1953 given by May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe, it is unlikely that there was any substantial increase in manpower between 1953 and 1955. May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe put the numerical strength of the armed forces at the time of Stalin's death at "about 6 million".
⁶ May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p252
numerical increases in Soviet ground forces in Eastern Europe were detected at this time, suggesting that any increase occurred elsewhere.¹ The order of battle of the Air Forces was increased from an estimated 14,000 to 18,000 or 19,000 aircraft,² largely by bringing aircraft out of reserve, but aircraft production surged in 1950 and 1951.³

Little is known about how the buildup was implemented in detail, or which theatres received priority, but it is likely that the moves were related to Soviet concerns about possible escalation of conflict in East Asia, as a result either of the proposed North Korean attack on South Korea or of the victory of the Chinese Communists in the Civil War.

According to Khrushchev's account, Stalin and the General Staff had probably discussed North Korea's war plans in 1949, because after private talks, at which he was not present, there was considerable talk that the proposed attack was the right thing to do. Khrushchev said that he doubted Stalin had given North Korea all of the military backing sought.⁴ According to another Soviet source, the USSR was prepared to send five divisions into Korea at the end of 1950 if the situation worsened, in addition to the several air divisions which had already been sent there to cover Korea's North-East provinces, near the Soviet border.⁵ One

¹ Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 p39n. US intelligence probably would not have readily detected the retention in units in Eastern Europe of conscripts due to leave. Thus, there could have been a 25 per cent increase in the manpower of Soviet units every six months that might have gone unobserved for a year or two.
² Kilmann op cit p227. A CIA estimate of 1950 credited the USSR with 30,000 aircraft in Soviet Air Forces, with 20,000 in reserve stores (CIA Soviet Capabilities and Intentions NIE-3 15 November 1950 p5), while in 1951 the CIA estimated a total of 20,000 aircraft, including Soviet Naval Aviation (CIA The Strength and Capabilities of Soviet Bloc Forces to Conduct Operations against NATO 12 October 1951 p16).
³ May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit pp258-265
⁵ Babakov op cit p33
source cited March 1949 as the time of a secret Soviet decision to set up a bureau to oversee the East European satellite armies,¹ a measure which may have been related to the mobilisation.

In February 1950, the USSR concluded a mutual defence treaty with China, committing itself to all possible assistance, including military assistance, and to act jointly to defeat aggression by Japan or countries allied to it.² The USSR’s military position in the Far East after 1949 was not strong - about 20 Ground Forces divisions, less than half of them combat-ready.³ Stalin withdrew Soviet military advisers from Korea at the outset of the war,⁴ but the Soviet air force was committed en masse at the same time as the Chinese ground forces, even though its role was subject to limitations.⁵ Between November 1950 and April 1952, according to Kilmarx, the Soviet air forces flew an average of more than 2,000 sorties per day in Korea, with a peak in December 1951 of nearly 4,000.⁶

US intelligence estimates for the number of Soviet aircraft in the Far East in 1955 suggest that aircraft may have been transferred from Europe during 1949-1952. In 1955, CIA estimated 3,370 Soviet combat aircraft in the Far East,⁷ an increase of almost 50 per cent over its April 1948 estimate of 2,300; and 2,070 in Eastern Europe reduced from 5,100 in 1948. If these estimates were accurate, it

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² Peter Jones and Sian Kevill China and the Soviet Union, 1949-84 Longman, London UK, 1984, p1
³ Mackintosh "The Soviet Generals' View of China in the 1960s" loc cit p184; Dzirkals Soviet Policy Statements and Military Deployments in North East Asia p24 gives the figure of 15 divisions for immediately after the war and during the period of friendly relations with China.
⁵ Kilmarx op cit p238
⁶ ibid pp238-239. Citing a 1952 issue of Aviation Week, Kilmarx suggested that by late 1952, the USSR had 2,100 aircraft in what he described as the Chicom/Korean theatre.
⁷ CIA Soviet Capabilities and Probable Soviet Courses of Action through 1960 NIE 11-3-55 17 May 1955, Table 4; CIA Soviet Military and Civil Aviation Policies 23 April 1948, p11
would be reasonable to conclude, given the importance of the European theatre to
the USSR, that its leaders had a very relaxed view about the risk of general war.

A later US Government-sponsored study with access to subsequent
Western intelligence reporting concluded that the most likely explanation of Soviet
mobilisation in this period was "preparation in the short run for possible war in or
over Yugoslavia or Korea and in the long run for the full range of dire
contingencies military men could portray".¹

The Soviet partial mobilisation, beginning in 1949 and peaking in
1952, is consistent with the view that by 1951 Stalin and the General Staff had
made a decisive shift in their thinking on the desirability or likelihood of general
war. Stalin made an important change to declared Soviet doctrine by saying in an
interview with Pravda in February 1951 that a world war was not necessarily
inevitable.²

According to the 1981 study by May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe, the
limited mobilisation undertaken from 1949 to 1951 began to be reversed sometime
in 1952. Without revealing much supporting information, they claim a downturn in
defence outlays and the beginning of reductions in armed forces manpower in that

¹ May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit p270. The authors concluded that this seemed the more likely
explanation "by a slight edge" over two scenarios more closely approaching general war (a Soviet
offensive to conquer Europe or other areas, and a Soviet defensive to guard against a threatened
imperialist onslaught).
² Hyland op cit pp59, 64
year.\footnote{May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe \textit{op cit} p272. The first paragraph in the section on the cutbacks of 1952-53, which might have elaborated on the timing of the decision, was excised from the classified version of the study. Many scholars have commented on the start of reductions in the numbers of personnel in the armed forces in 1955 but few provide any discussion of what the force levels or activity rates of the armed forces between 1952 and 1955 might have said about the degree of mobilisation of the forces. In 1955 and 1956, the USSR announced force reductions totalling 1.84 million (~\textit{Pravda} 13 August 1955 and 15 May 1956 cited in Raymond L Garthoff \textit{Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age} Atlantic Books, Stevens & Sons Ltd, London UK, 1958, p150). The size of the actual reductions between 1955 and 1958 amounted to 2.14 million, according to a Soviet source (Tiushkevich et al \textit{op cit} p411. In January 1960, Khrushchev announced a further reduction of 1.2 million, which he said would bring the armed forces to 2.423 million, and said that the January 1960 strength was two thirds of what it was in 1955 (~\textit{Pravda} 14 January 1960 p3). The size of the Soviet forces in 1955 was 5.763 million. There is room to believe that the reductions announced in 1955 may have already begun in 1952.}

By mid-1952, there were other hints of change in Soviet diplomacy suggestive of a relaxation of Stalin’s more aggressive stance of the immediately preceding years.\footnote{US Congress \textit{Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1981 Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Trade, Finance, and Security Economics of the Joint Economic Committee, 97th Congress, USGPO, Washington DC, 1982, Part 7, p281}

This interpretation seems logical given the success of moves by the Soviet representative at the United Nations to open talks on Korea with the USA, which began in July 1951.\footnote{Mackintosh \textit{Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy} pp30n, 57. Mackintosh \textit{Juggernaut} p284 wrote that Stalin became convinced in 1952 that his tactics of aggression in foreign policy should give way to more subtle moves and that this heralded more realistic utilisation of military resources. Bloomfield, Clemens and Griffith \textit{op cit} p42 assessed a decrease in Soviet threat perceptions in 1953 after a high point in 1952, and suggest that this led to a significant reallocation of resources within a stable defence budget from conventional forces to nuclear missile development.}

By mid-1952, there were other hints of change in Soviet diplomacy suggestive of a relaxation of Stalin’s more aggressive stance of the immediately preceding years.\footnote{US Congress \textit{Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1980 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government, 96th Congress, USGPO, Washington DC, 1982, Part 6, p43}

There is some evidence for a turn in Soviet military policy in 1952. The announced defence budget for that year was the highest between 1946 and 1961 inclusive.\footnote{US Congress \textit{Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1980 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government, 96th Congress, USGPO, Washington DC, 1982, Part 6, p43} for 1951, 1952, and 1953, actual expenditures were, according to contemporary Soviet statements, about 4 per cent lower than budgeted. Since
published Soviet defence budgets until 1989 reflected mostly manpower costs and military construction, the shortfall may reflect some pruning of projected manning levels in late 1951 or 1952.¹

This demobilisation, like the one between 1945 and 1948, and the partial mobilisation to 5.5 million in between, provide clear evidence of the Soviet General Staff’s capacity for modulation with respect to the likely scale of conflict it was prepared to cope with at short notice. The Soviet General Staff’s mobilisation plans in subsequent periods should similarly be one of the most reliable indicators of Soviet expectations of the likely scale of short-notice conflict.²

In particular, if the General Staff believed in a "bolt from the blue" or "standing start" scenario for general war, it would have been reasonable to expect large forces to be maintained at high levels of readiness (with the necessary infrastructure for sustainability) in easy reach of potential concentrations of forces of its potential adversaries.

¹ The announced defence budgets show two large jumps in the period: one for 1949 (19.5 per cent more than 1948) and one in 1951 (21.4 per cent more than 1949):

| Year | Defence Budget
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>73.6 bn rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>79.4 (82.9 achieved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>96.4 (93.0 achieved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>113.8 (109.0 achieved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>110.0 (105.0 achieved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>100.0 (100.0 achieved)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1980 p43). CIA ruble estimates for defence spending reflect the downward move (maximum 9 per cent) from 1952 to 1953, with 1951 and 1952 being at roughly the same levels (albeit within a very broad range between lower and upper estimates). Since the CIA ruble estimates reflect changes in all categories of defence expenditure, including procurement, they may support the proposition of some cut back in procurement after 1952 (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1981 p281).

² Mobilisation plans provide a timetable of readiness status targets for bringing forces into action either for operations against forces of the probable enemy, or for other important military objectives (seizure of territorial objectives, attacks on non-military targets or for intimidation). As noted in Chapter Two, readiness levels of forces, including planning for reserves, can be indicators of whether their posture is related to local war or general war. The mobilisation system available, both for personnel, equipment and consumables, and the logistic system might also say something about the balance in a peace-time posture between local war and general war considerations.
There is ample evidence that this may have been the case (for example, 20 Ground Forces divisions in Eastern Europe all at the highest of three Soviet readiness levels)\(^1\) but Soviet military planning documents confirming Western interpretations of the intention behind this readiness level are not available. These divisions were clearly more combat-ready than many in the USSR but for what sort of operations were they prepared - low intensity in support of civil authorities or high intensity in general war?

Open source Soviet doctrinal statements reiterated the importance of keeping the armed forces at high levels of readiness against the contingency of general nuclear war,\(^2\) but there was not conclusive evidence that the Soviet General Staff regarded this as the almost exclusive rationale for its peacetime military posture.

By contrast with readiness for general war, the capability and plans for partial mobilisation, such as that undertaken between 1949 and 1952, would be

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\(^1\) Between 1955 and 1961, CIA assessed all Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe as "combat ready" and in 1961 assessed 65 out of 92 in the Western USSR as combat ready. See CIA Soviet Capabilities and Probable Soviet Courses of Action through 1960 p29; CIA Current Status of Soviet and Satellite Military forces and Indicators of Military Intentions 6 September 1961 Annex 2. Assuming this combat readiness assessment was based on known manning levels only, then it is likely that these divisions were at Category 1 (an administrative measure in Soviet terms of personnel and equipment levels, not a statement of preparedness for a particular form of combat operations).

\(^2\) See for example, V D Sokolovskii *Voennaia strategia* 2n ed Voenizdat, Moscow, 1963, p410, which like the first volume, observed:

> Taking into account the threat of an enemy surprise attack with powerful modern weapons and the resulting difficulties in mobilization, it would seem advisable to maintain in peacetime the armed forces that would be required to achieve the main aims of the initial phase of the war without additional mobilization.

The book went on to say that to keep the armed forces in such a state was impossible even for the strongest country and that the best that could be hoped for was "seizing the strategic initiative in the first hours of the war". Strategic systems (missiles and air defence) needed to be ready in the same numbers as needed to achieve the war aims but only a "known proportion" of the other armed forces (ground forces, navy, air forces, and civil defence) was needed to be ready for war. Some of these units needed for the initial war aims were deployed in border regions or, in the case of submarines, at sea. Of all the services, the ground forces were subject to the greatest changes during a mobilisation (p414).
important elements of a local war doctrine.\textsuperscript{1} This mobilisation provides clear evidence that the concept of partial mobilisation in only one theatre in response to a local war crisis was part of the Soviet General Staff's repertoire. Other examples are mentioned later in this Chapter.

**Nuclear Weapons and other Dimensions** At the start of the nuclear revolution in Soviet military affairs in 1954, the General Staff was not expecting general war but still sought to provide a military force which could serve as an expansion and mobilization base in the unlikely event that war occurred.\textsuperscript{2} Over the next seven years, by contrast, the General Staff was not only anticipating lesser conflicts but was actively engaging in them.

Soviet troops had been obliged in 1953 to put down a popular revolt in East Germany within four months of Stalin's death.\textsuperscript{3} In July 1956, in response to unrest in Poland and Hungary, the Soviet leadership asserted that the unity of the

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\textsuperscript{1} See John Yurchenko "Soviet Reinforcement and Mobilization Issues" in Jeffrey Simon (ed) NATO-Warsaw Pact Force Mobilization National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 1988, pp71-72. A general mobilisation brings all of the armed forces, civil defence, the national economy and Government to a war-time posture. A partial mobilisation involves putting only a portion of the armed forces, the economy and government institutions on a war-time footing. (Voenno-entsiklopedicheskii slovar' [Military Encyclopedic Dictionary] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1986, p451). A similar definition can be found in a 1964 Soviet military dictionary:

As a rule, partial mobilisation is carried out when there is a local war (or the threat of one) ...

... used in those cases when it will suffice to mobilize one or several military districts (or fleets, flotillas), or even individual major field forces. (Dictionary of Basic Military Terms (1964) published under the auspices of the USAF, p126, cited in Yurchenko op cit p73). Sokolovskii op cit 2nd ed pp411-412 recognised that a mobilisation could be general [obshchii] or partial [chastnyi], with the latter referring to a contingency that "in the past included simultaneously or consecutively only the territories of several military districts in the immediate vicinity of the probable theatre of military operations".

\textsuperscript{2} Adam Ulam Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973 Praeger, New York NY, 1974, p610 summarises the Soviet strategic view in the period 1953 to 1962 as follows:

America's possession of nuclear weapons was not a source of urgent concern to the Russian leaders ... The Russians seem to have assumed between 1953 and 1962 that, short of a catastrophic miscalculation or cataclysmic accident, an American nuclear attack was out of the question.

A similar assessment was made by Arnold Horelick and Myron Rush Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p30.

\textsuperscript{3} Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p26
Warsaw Pact must be maintained. In Warsaw, Bulganin warned on July 21 that
while "every country should go its own way to socialism, ... we cannot permit this
to be used to break up the solidarity of the camp of peace".\(^1\)

This statement of a political doctrine limiting the sovereignty of
members of the socialist camp put the General Staff on formal (doctrinal) notice
that the missions of the armed forces included defence of the communist camp
against possible defection by satellites.

In October 1956, during an attempt by Polish communists to dump
pro-Soviet elements, Khrushchev flew to Warsaw with some of his colleagues and
threatened to use force.\(^2\) His threats were accompanied and followed up by Soviet
troop movements in and around Poland.\(^3\)

While Khrushchev was in Warsaw, other Soviet leaders, Suslov and
Mikoyan, were in Budapest, on the first of two visits.\(^4\) Their second, on October 31
and November 1, was followed by a Soviet invasion "invited" by Janos Kadar,
nominated by the USSR to take over the Hungarian communist party.\(^5\)

Some corroboration of the view that the Soviet leadership was less
inclined to see general war as a serious risk after 1954 came with its decision to
supply Egypt with military equipment, its first such commitment to an independent
state outside the communist sphere since 1945. This supply was handled covertly
during 1954, suggesting some reservations about risk, but completely overtly in

\(^1\) As quoted on Radio Moscow on July 21 1956, cited in Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p162
\(^2\) *ibid* p157. Khrushchev reportedly made the following threat to the Polish communists in Warsaw
on the night of October 19:

I'm going to show you what the road to socialism looks like! If you don't obey us,
we will crush you. We are going to use force to kill all sorts of uprisings in this
country.

\(^3\) *ibid* pp157-158

\(^4\) *ibid* p164

\(^5\) *ibid* p167
1955, as part of a declared move into closer political relations with Third World countries, including provision of economic and military aid. In March 1954, Premier Malenkov said that a future general war would mean the destruction of civilisation.\(^1\) In February 1956, Khrushchev declared, as had Stalin in 1951 and Malenkov in 1954, that nuclear war between the superpowers was not fatally inevitable.\(^2\) The propaganda images of entrenched hostility between the socialist camp, led by the USSR and including China, and the imperialist camp, led by the United States and Great Britain, appeared to weaken.

There was other evidence of Soviet confidence by the mid-1950s, including probable acceptance of the division of Germany,\(^3\) formation of the Warsaw Pact, and reasonable progress toward deployment of theatre nuclear weapons.\(^4\)

In late 1957 or early 1958, the USSR suggested to the PRC establishment of joint military institutions, including Soviet controlled nuclear missile or aircraft bases in China, a joint naval command in the Far East, and more closely integrated air defences.\(^5\) While China refused, the Soviet request is evidence

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\(^1\) Herbert S Dinerstein *War and the Soviet Union: Nuclear Weapons and the Revolution in Soviet Military and Political Thinking* Praeger, New York NY, 1959, pp71-72. The fact that Malenkov was forced to recant this view is some indication of the political sensitivity associated with competing doctrinal views.

\(^2\) William T Lee and Richard F Staar *Soviet Military Policy since World War II* Hoover Institute, Stanford CA, 1986, p24

\(^3\) Hyland *op cit* p86

\(^4\) May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* p303. Matthew Evangelista *Innovation and the Arms Race - How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1988, p190 suggests that tactical nuclear capable systems (SS1b with 150 km range and FROG missile with 30 km range) intended for support of the Ground Forces first appeared in 1957 and 1958. (Evangelista may not have had the same access to US intelligence information.) Sea launched cruise missiles also appeared at this time. A successful test launch of the tactical ground missiles took place as early as 1953. The first purpose built tactical nuclear bomber (ground attack), which did not enter service until 1959, had probably been commissioned as early as 1953.

of willingness to draw a new and extended defence perimeter in the East, as it had done in the West with the Warsaw Pact, and to imply (if not guarantee) a commitment for a new, expanded range of possible local conflicts in the Far East.¹

Khrushchev was certainly willing to engage in extravagant rhetoric in respect of China:

An attack on the People’s Republic of China, which is a great friend, ally and neighbour of our country would be an attack on the Soviet Union.²

Notwithstanding a strong propaganda element in statements like these,³ it is more than likely that the Soviet General Staff would have seen itself as required, regardless of whether it was explicitly stated by the leadership, to assess

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¹ There is a strong likelihood that the USSR went cold on this idea not long after it had been raised when it realised the extent of China’s military ambitions and the turn that Chinese politics was taking towards radicalism. Soviet rejection of China’s requests for Soviet nuclear weapons, made sometime between October 1957 and June 1959, suggest that any new commitments the USSR was willing to take on in the Far East on behalf of China did not extend to nuclear operations. The USSR’s reluctance to back China’s pressure on Taiwan in the Quemoy crisis of 1958 also demonstrates the limits to which the USSR was prepared to go at that time (Garthoff Soviet Military Policy pp181-183). According to Garthoff, it was only when the USSR was sure that China would enter negotiations and not press the confrontation that Khrushchev gave a public pledge of Soviet support, and then only in respect of an attack on China.

² N S Khrushchev Pravda 9 September 1958 cited in A E Efremov Za shirnoi ograničhonnoy khvoin [Behind the Veil of Limited Wars] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1960, pp75-76. These bold words were spoken after the peak of the crisis had passed.

³ Mohammed Heikal, a close friend of the Egyptian President, Nasser, who accompanied him to Moscow in 1958 after the US intervened with armed forces in Lebanon, recorded later that Khrushchev had said to Nasser:

... to be frank, the Soviet Union is not ready for a clash with the West, the result of which would be uncertain.

Soviet capability to intervene if necessary.¹

Yet the General Staff had clear limits at that time on what Soviet armed forces could do. Khrushchev reported that in contrast to his decidedly robust attitude to demonstrative naval actions in distant localities such as the Middle East, the General Staff opposed him, arguing that such Soviet naval opposition to US shows of strength would be "ineffective and far too expensive".²

In November 1960, Khrushchev made a speech to the International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow on new trends in world socialism. The speech, published two months later, signalled a new Soviet position on military strategy for local wars. It said:

In present day conditions, it is necessary to distinguish the following kinds of war: world war; local wars; and wars of liberation. This is necessary in order to work out the correct tactics with regard to these wars.³

The problems associated with liberation wars were new - and, by implication, different from those associated with local, inter-imperialist wars. The speech said little about the USSR's attitude toward its own involvement in "local" as opposed

¹ Mackintosh Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy pp227-230 related that in 1957, Zhukov reportedly said in respect of the Syrian Turkish crisis "if war is declared [on Syria], the Soviet Union will not remain with its arms folded. We are all ready to strike at any military adventure organised by the USA near our southern borders". The USSR was reacting to a buildup of US and Turkish forces on the Syrian border. A Soviet naval squadron called at the Syrian port of Latakia from 19 September to 2 October, the first phase of the crisis. After 7 October, the crisis seemed to worsen and Khrushchev threatened Soviet involvement on two separate occasions; and Foreign Minister Gromyko asserted that the USSR was ready to "crush aggression with its military forces". Combined exercises of Soviet Ground Forces units and naval forces in the Transcaucasus region were announced on 24 October, with a bellicose statement being made by the Black sea Fleet Commander. Mackintosh concluded, "there can be no doubt ... the Soviet Government deliberately set out to create the impression that Russia was ready to go to war over the Middle East". The USSR repeated the same sorts of measures in 1958 in reaction to a rapid buildup of US forces in Lebanon and British forces in Jordan. Military manoeuvres were announced for the Transcaucasus and Turkestan Military Districts, with the participation of Soviet Air Forces and Airborne Troops (Mackintosh Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy p234)


³ N S Khrushchev "Za novye pobydy mirovogo kommunisticheskogo dvizheniia" [For New Victories of the World Communist Movement] Kommunist 1961 (1) p17
to "national liberation wars"; but did appear to hint at greater willingness to become involved in the latter. Yet this was immediately followed by a lengthy passage on the threat of nuclear world war and the need for peaceful coexistence.¹

By implication, Khrushchev was conceding that conflict of a sort was necessary, but any Soviet involvement would be purely defensive: "against the export of revolution", but "decisively struggling against the imperialists’ export of counter-revolution".²

In late 1960, the USSR made a limited direct military commitment to a conflict beyond its periphery for the first time since the Spanish Civil War,³ albeit only 10 transport aircraft, about 100 trucks, and about 200 technicians. In December 1960 and early 1961, Soviet military transport aircraft flew 184 missions to provide weapons, petrol, and other supplies to Soviet allies (communist and non-communist) in Laos, transiting through China. This helped its allies get the better of the fighting.

Rubinstein’s characterisation of this Soviet decision as "low risk" is accurate,⁴ and there was little prospect of the participation of Soviet units in combat.

By June 1961, there was strong evidence of new determination of the leadership, backed by the General Staff, to grasp the nettle of military confrontation with the USA without fear of escalation. This could be seen in the renewed crisis over Berlin in June, and decisions to send weapons to Cuba, to sign

¹ ibid pp20, 22-23
² ibid p31
³ Mackintosh Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy p271; Porter op cit p241
⁴ Alvin Z Rubinstein Moscow’s Third World Strategy Princeton University, Princeton NJ, 1988, pp136-137. Rubinstein’s assertion that the support of Vietnam and China for a national liberation struggle in Laos was high risk would appear to be an over-statement.
a security treaty with North Korea in July, and to suspend troop cuts (announced 8 July), all without mobilisation measures indicative of a feared US military reaction.

The mutual security treaty with North Korea, signed against the background of growing political tension with China, committed the USSR to immediate military assistance in the event of an attack "by any state".¹ (Garthoff reported evidence of Chinese preparations to defend its border with the USSR as early as 1961.² This may have reflected China’s assessment of the USSR’s new posture, and China’s own intentions to apply pressure on the border.)

The suspension of the troop reductions after they were half completed was linked by the USSR to the new crisis in Berlin.³ The actual causes might have been Kennedy’s decisions to expand US strategic nuclear and conventional forces and adopt an across the board modernisation to implement a policy of flexible response, as well as mounting tension over Berlin.⁴ But the main cause might equally have been Soviet estimation that the USSR was no longer constrained from a local war strategy by the threat of mutual annihilation, a

¹ Zafar Imam "Soivet Treaties with Third World Countries" Soviet Studies 1983 (1) p65. By June 1959, the Soviet relationship with China began to deteriorate sharply, culminating in an open Chinese ideological attack on the Soviet Party on 16 April 1960 and the USSR’s withdrawal of 1,300 economic and military advisers in July 1960 (Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p184). The April 1960 attack was printed in Red Flag, the Chinese Communist Party’s theoretical cum propaganda journal, under the title "Long Live Leninism". The article rejected the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence and the "end of civilisation" thesis. On the question of local wars, it rejected the Soviet line:

The fact is that since the Second World War there has been continuous and unbroken warfare. Do not the imperialist wars to suppress national liberation movements and the imperialist wars of armed intervention against revolutions in various countries count as wars? Even though these wars have not developed into world wars, still do not these local wars count as wars?

Quoted in David Floyd Mao against Khrushchev - A Short History of the Sino-Soviet Conflict Praeger, New York NY, 1963, p267

² Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p188. The report about the Soviet exercise scenario was made by Victor Zorza in The Guardian on October 9 1964


⁴ Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 p94
principal theme of Khrushchev’s speech in 1960 when he announced the cuts. The decision to suspend troop cuts was accompanied by a new military build-up, notable for its coinciding not only with a high point in Soviet belligerence and risk taking, but also after a seven year spurt of military modernisation and high investment in nuclear missile and conventional arms technology.

The decision on Cuba, on which new information has only come to light in recent years, was the clearest manifestation of the Khrushchev leadership’s willingness to extend risk in local war with the backing of the General Staff. This is not to say there was an unambiguous expectation that they would fight for long before a political compromise would be reached. But they were clearly prepared to risk local conflict.

It has long been known that after the US-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba failed in April 1961, the USSR began to supply weapons to Castro.1 The decision to put nuclear missiles in Cuba, equally well studied, was taken in the next year - first discussed by the Politburo in April 1962 and finalised in June, according to Hyland.2 The more recent information suggests strongly that the Soviet leadership resolved unanimously to put a large expeditionary force into Cuba as a trip-wire to deter invasion.3 To this end, it sent about 40,000 troops, supported by equipment previously assumed to be for Cuban military use (24 batteries of surface to air missile, more than 100 modern aircraft, including 42 Mig-21, and missile equipped patrol boats).4 Equally importantly, the decision to

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1 Rubinstein op cit p137
2 Hyland op cit 1991 p126
4 Garthoff Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis p22; Rubinstein op cit p138
deploy the missiles also covered deployment of conventional forces to deter a US invasion.¹

This commitment obliged the General Staff to prepare for conflict. Rubinstein says that "as long as only conventional forces were used, the intervention was low risk", and the purpose was to "protect the internationally recognised government of Fidel Castro from possible invasion". He says Moscow "committed itself to the defense" of Castro’s government.²

Garthoff reports that the Soviet force of 42,000 had an extensive command structure, including an Army (four-star) General as commander and several Air Defence Forces’ generals.³ He says that notwithstanding prominent announcements at the height of the crisis of alerts for some Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces, only measures such as cancellation of leave were implemented. There were no major changes to deployments or heightened readiness in any forces in other theatres.⁴ Inclusion of coastal defence forces and MIG-21 interceptors in the force in Cuba suggested Soviet preparation for a US invasion.

It would appear that at the outset the USSR was at least contemplating direct support of Cuban combat forces in war with the USA in

¹ Garthoff Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis p18. The information was conveyed to Garthoff by Dmitrii Volkogonov, Director of the Military History Institute, in 1989 based on the latter’s research in archival sources.
² Rubinstein op cit p138
³ Garthoff Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis pp18-19, 22
⁴ Bruce Blair The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War Brookings, Washington DC, 1993, p24 writes that a Soviet SRF officer reports that the USSR did place its strategic nuclear forces on alert in response to the US declaration of a nuclear alert. The alert level was "increased" [vysshayi], which was claimed to bring the forces ready to launch within two to four hours. It included marrying warheads to missiles and standing down the strategic aviation forces.
Cuba. The leadership’s unanimity over the plan to deploy Soviet forces to Cuba arose from brash confidence that there was no risk of a more serious crisis. Such a turn had not even been contemplated: not "foreseen, weighed [or] rejected" by the Soviet leaders, according to a Soviet diplomat.

Many scholars have consistently seen the Cuban crisis as a "missile crisis", a confrontation in which the only prospects of military conflict were of all-out nuclear war, and dismissed out of hand any notion that the USSR was interested in deterring a US conventional invasion or defending Cuba against one. Hyland described as laughable the view that Khrushchev deployed these forces to defend Castro’s regime but concludes that most Soviet officials did not think the risks of the deployment were great or that the American reaction would be severe.

Even May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe note the lack of consideration of the other element in the Soviet military posture in Cuba - the conventional forces:

It is little remarked that - in addition to instructors, technicians, and operational personnel - Soviet ground combat troops also accompanied the missile force ... It is not clear whether the primary mission of these troops was to defend the missile sites against a possible US attack or to ensure that they remained under Soviet rather than Cuban control.

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1 Garthoff *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* p81 suggests that Khrushchev sent a letter to Kennedy on 26 October offering terms because a Soviet intelligence assessment judged a US attack on Cuba to be imminent. He also says (p93) that a report from a reliable source was received six months after the crisis to the effect that by 27 October, the leadership had decided not to go to war over Cuba even if the USA invaded, with the decision being formalised in a Top Secret Central Committee directive.

2 Garthoff *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* p15n quotes a 1988 statement by the Soviet Ambassador to Cuba at the time of the crisis. A 1991 analysis of Khrushchev’s ouster in 1964, based on newly available personal accounts, suggest that although adventurism in the Cuban crisis was mentioned in the list of charges.levelled against him by his Presidium colleagues, the international and military issues did not figure prominently because, as Khrushchev was able to note in his own defence, the decisions had been reached collectively (William J Thompson "The Fall of Nikita Khrushchev" *Soviet Studies* vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp1109-1110).

3 For example, Adam Ulam described such a suggestion as "laughable"; Arnold Horelick described the claim as mistaking "skilful salvage of a shipwreck for brilliant navigation"; and Michel Tatu declared that it was "safe to ignore" the claim (cited in Blight and Welch *op cit* p294).

4 Hyland *op cit* pp128, 131

5 May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe *op cit* pp479-480
Between 1954 and 1961, as the General Staff quickened the pace of nuclear weapons development, it increased resource constraints on the tactical Air Forces and the Navy.\(^1\) In the same period, the Air Defence Forces and the Strategic Rocket Forces were elevated in status to independent services.\(^2\)

There were indisputable indications that actual and prospective Soviet force posture altered significantly and that there were significant innovations in military doctrine for general nuclear war,\(^3\) based on the technological breakthrough associated with the prospective delivery of thermonuclear warheads by missile.\(^4\) By May 1955, the General Staff had endorsed a new military doctrine in which the need to blunt the effects of a surprise attack in a period of tension (not a bolt from the blue) was paramount. It defined the primary threat as strategic nuclear attack on the homeland. The paramount requirement was damage limitation, which implied preventing enemy weapons from being launched if possible, and limiting the effects of those that were launched. The threat required new, high levels of readiness in Soviet forces, which implied a new emphasis on forces in being rather than reserves, ability to escape destruction, and to fight offensively or

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\(^1\) ibid p293

\(^2\) The Air Defence Forces had existed as a "more or less" autonomous branch of the armed services since 1946 when Stalin renamed the Red Army and created separate headquarters organisations for the navy, ground forces and air forces. But in addition to these, the Ministry of Defence had autonomous directorates for artillery, armour and air defence. The Rocket Forces, formally under the Artillery, had been separated from it in their developmental stages in 1948 and placed under a special Deputy Minister of Defence, who from 1952 was General Nedelin, formally designated as Commander in Chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF) when its existence as a separate service was declared to the world in early 1960 having been established at the end of the previous year. While the SRF was under development, Long Range Aviation had operational control of the first medium range ballistic missiles. See May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit pp95, 295, 324

\(^3\) ibid

\(^4\) Honoré M Catudal Soviet Nuclear Strategy from Stalin to Gorbachev Berlin Verlag Arno Spitz, Berlin, 1988, p37
defensively in a nuclear environment.¹

In sharp contrast to the USA in the 1950s, which had nuclear forces deployed around the Soviet periphery, the USSR was confined until at least 1962 to a war strategy centred on US allies - Europe and possibly Japan. Most Soviet nuclear forces deployed in the late 1950s were based in the Western USSR. By the end of the Khrushchev period, there were about 750 launchers for medium range (700 miles) and intermediate range (1,100 miles) missiles.²

Thus any general war fought by the USSR at short notice from 1954 to 1962 would have been fought almost exclusively in and around Europe. The USSR could do relatively little damage to US territory, yet by 1957 had enough weapons to devastate much of Europe.³

In a non-nuclear war, the USSR would have been able to bring its

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¹ May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit pp312, 315 citing in particular a 1955 article by Marshal P A Rotmistrov in Voennaya mysl' in which he said "surprise, successfully accomplished, not only influences the course of battles and operations but in certain circumstances can influence to a significant extent the course and even the outcome of the whole war". He specified surprise attack by atomic and hydrogen bombs. He concluded: "The duty of the Soviet armed forces is not to permit an enemy surprise attack on our country and, in the event of an attempt to accomplish one, not only to repel the attack successfully but also to deal the enemy counterblows, or even preemptive surprise blows of terrible destructive force". Rotmistrov was not making a case for the contemporary Western view that nuclear weapons alone could be decisive. See Garthoff Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age pp76-81 citing several senior military officers, including Marshal Zhukov, to this effect.

² Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 p184. The USSR may well have had plans in 1957 or 1958 to deploy up to 225 SS-7 ICBMs, but by 1961 US intelligence still had not detected an operational SS-7 (John Prados The Soviet Estimate: US Intelligence and Russian Military Strength Dial Press, New York NY, 1982, pp117-118). The USSR did not deploy a nuclear artillery weapon with the Ground Forces until the 1970s, although its developed one in the mid-1950s (Evangelista Innovation and the Arms Race pp203, 205).

³ In April 1961, the USA had over 3,000 weapons for aircraft delivery, 24 ICBMs and 16 SLBMs allocated to the Strategic Integrated Operational Plan. As Prados op cit pp120-121 summarised the balance:

> It was estimated that the Soviets would have been able to put 100-200 [bombers] over the United States in an attack. The total was a substantial force, capable of devastating American cities, but it could not have disarmed US forces. Calculations done for McNamara indicated that programmed US forces could have absorbed a full-scale Soviet attack and still would have been powerful enough ... to kill over 100 million people and destroy eighty percent of Soviet industry.

The relative imbalance in strategic nuclear forces (quantitative measures of strategic force) remained heavily in the favour of the USA until the late 1960s. See US Dept of Defense United States Military Posture for FY 1981 pp9-12
massive conventional force superiority into play. Given Soviet incapacity for devastating retaliation against continental USA, the General Staff would have had a strong interest in limiting conflict in Europe to conventional forces, if possible. There is some evidence - not necessarily conclusive - based on the lack of change to Soviet conventional force posture in Eastern Europe that this was how the General Staff viewed the problem.

There were important changes to the conventional components of the Soviet armed forces between 1953 and 1962 but it is far from certain that the acquisition of nuclear weapons or a new nuclear strategy were the sole determining factors. In 1957, even with plans to use tactical nuclear weapons and guided missiles in support of Ground Force operations, there had been no "basic alteration in the field force structure". The changes made to accommodate nuclear weapons had been, in the US view at the time, evolutionary only.\(^1\) Reinstatement of the position of Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces in 1955 was some evidence of standardisation of higher organisational structures.\(^2\)

In 1958, according to Mackintosh, the USSR began reducing its 175

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\(^1\) CIA Main Trends in Soviet Capabilities and Policies 1957-1962 NIE 11-4-57 12 December 1957 p29

\(^2\) Until the name of the forces was changed in 1946 from the Red Army to the Soviet Armed Forces, the General Staff was the command staff of the entire organisation, including the army. When the Ground Forces were constituted as a separate service in 1946, they were given their own staff and commander in chief. Two changes of this situation in the following two decades may have indicated nothing more than a reversion. Since the General Staff was dominated by officers from the Ground Forces, they might have felt a separate staff for the Ground Forces unnecessary, particularly as the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces did not have operational command.
divisions to a target strength of about 140.¹ About 20 of these were to remain at cadre or training strength (about 30 per cent wartime manning). The old "rifle division" began to be replaced with a "mechanised rifle division" and the tank army, with 3 or 4 tank divisions, began to replace the larger and less mobile "mechanised army".²

The most important innovation for the Air Forces between 1953 and 1961 was the establishment of the Air Defence forces as a clearly separate branch (though staffed by Ground Forces and Air Forces personnel) in 1955, and the increasing importance attached to them throughout the decade. In 1960 alone the number of combat aircraft in the tactical air forces was cut by half, and in naval aviation by two-thirds,³ largely because of reallocation of aircraft to the Air Defence Forces. At the same time, the Long Range Aviation was directed away from the unrealistic mission of intercontinental operations back to the realistic mission of strategic operations on the Soviet periphery.⁴

¹ Mackintosh Juggernaut pp295, 297. According to two former Defense Department officials, US intelligence sources still held Soviet divisional strength at 175 in the early 1960s, but by 1961 reached the view that at least half of these were cadre units, with perhaps 10 per cent of their manpower and far from 100 per cent of their equipment. See Alain C Enthoven and K Wayne Smith How Much is Enough - Shaping the Defense Program, 1061-1969 Harper & Row, New York NY, 1971, p136. One source says that in 1961 when the newly created Defence Intelligence Agency reviewed the US assessment of Soviet divisional strength, the number was actually 121, with some 50 of those in various stages of incompleteness. See Robert Amory, former Deputy Director CIA, quoted from his oral history at the JFK Library by Honoré M Catudal Nuclear Deterrence: Does It Deter Mansell Publishing Company, London UK, 1985, pp115-116. Garthoff "Estimating Soviet Military Force Levels: Some Light from the Past" loc cit p102 mentions the figure of 140 divisions for early 1961, with at least half of these at reduced strength.

² Mackintosh Juggernaut pp292, 297 recounts that after the cuts in the manpower of the armed forces in 1955 and 1956 of 1.8 million, Marshal Zhukov abolished the corps as an intermediate headquarters between army and division and drew up a modernisation plan which led eventually to the reclassification of all infantry divisions from rifle divisions to motorised rifle divisions. He wanted to reduce the manpower of each division, make them more mobile and create new armies (tank armies of three or four tank divisions or combined arms armies of three to five mechanised rifle divisions or tank divisions).

³ Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p129

⁴ May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit pp295, 317. After completing a 1,300 strong force of Tu-4 medium bombers, the LRA began to replace these with the Tu-16, which although faster had no greater range.
By 1957, the naval development program had been substantially changed: construction of surface ships, small and medium diesel submarines was reduced, and priority was given to missile launching and nuclear powered submarines.¹

Some scholars have argued that these changes resulted from a conclusion that fewer conventional forces were needed for general nuclear war, a posture assumed to be single minded.² They usually cite Khrushchev’s speech from 14 January 1960:

Our country has available [raspologaet] a powerful missile technology. Military aviation and the navy in contemporary circumstances have lost their former significance. These types of weapons systems are not being reduced, they are being replaced. Military aviation is being almost completely replaced by missile technology. We have already sharply cut and, it seems, will eventually eliminate completely and even prohibit the production of bomber aircraft and other types of obsolete technology. In the Navy, the submarine fleet takes on a great significance, and surface ships already cannot play the same role they played in the past.³

The main source for the exclusively nuclear reorientation of Soviet doctrine is the speech by Malinovskii to the twenty-second Communist Party Congress in 1961, in which he said that nuclear rocket weapons would be the primary means of attack, and any armed conflict would inevitably escalate into a general nuclear war once

¹ ibid pp295-296. At the time of Stalin’s death, the Navy was undergoing an expansion and modernisation largely along traditional lines, emphasising defensive missions but also suitable for showing the flag in foreign countries. The development targets by the end of the decade were ambitious: 24 new cruisers, almost 200 new destroyers and escorts, and more than 450 new submarines. The traditional orientation of the projected naval force was indicated by the intention for only six of the submarines to be equipped with missile launchers.
² For example, Michael MccGwire Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy Brookings, Washington DC, 1987, pp23-24 says that the cut announced by Khrushchev was part of a doctrinal reassessment and that the decision to create the SRF compensated for the cut of 1.2 million because the doctrine held that the future war would inevitably be nuclear, and ground forces would not have the same role as envisaged before 1959. Thomas N Nichols The Sacred Cause - Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security, 1917-1922 Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1993, p64 writes: "In line with a conceptual shift from a European land war to a thermonuclear war, Khrushchev’s January 1960 announcement included a plan to cut Soviet standing forces by 1,200,000 men".
the superpowers were drawn in.\textsuperscript{1} Both Khrushchev and Malinovskii espoused a policy of massive retaliation in the event of an attack on the USSR.

It is hard to fault the obvious - the creation of the SRF was indeed the result of new doctrinal support for the primary role of nuclear missile weapons. Changes to the naval construction program and cuts to ground forces were made possible and necessary, in Khrushchev's view, by the increased firepower of nuclear missile weapons. But this is only part of the picture. Any war involving the USSR and the USA in those years, as before 1960, would have been confined largely to Europe. Thus the question of massive retaliation and nuclear missile war was at the extreme end of Soviet political and military interests.\textsuperscript{2}

Other interpretations of the changes to force structure between 1959 and 1961 might lead one to conclude that actual Soviet military doctrine up to 1961 differed significantly from that alluded to in propagandistic speeches of the time about "future war". Other powerful influences, such as economic and

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{XXII S'ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza - stenograficheskii otchet} [Twenty Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - Stenographic Record] Politizdat, Moscow, 1962, vol. 2, pp111-112

\textsuperscript{2} These statements were made by Khrushchev and Malinovskii during a program of military pressure on Berlin which lasted three years, and in which Soviet conventional forces in and around Berlin played a far more important than nuclear weapons.
demographic pressures, might have accounted for the changes.¹

Even if one confines oneself to the question of force structure changes, the record is not clear. For example, if the decision to reduce the divisional structure of the ground forces from 175 to 140 had been taken by 1958 as suggested by Mackintosh, then the significance of the cut of 1.2 million announced by Khrushchev in 1960 might not lie totally in a supposedly new doctrine agreed only in 1959 and announced in 1960.

But more importantly, from the political leaders' point of view, the size of the armed forces at the beginning of the partial mobilisation in 1949 (about 2.8 million) would not have been an unreasonable target to aim for once the immediate danger which prompted the mobilisation had long passed, especially in the light of the technological and economic pressures on defence spending. After all, the bulk of Khrushchev's speech to the Supreme Soviet was about technological change, economic pressures and relaxation of tension.

The earlier period of reorganisation of the Soviet forces (1946-1953) certainly suggests this interpretation. The changes then had two main motivations:

¹ For example, Harriet Fast Scott and William F Scott Soviet Military Doctrine - Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1988, p63n suggest demographic pressure on the availability of conscripts. Garthoff Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age p151 accounted for the 1955 and 1956 cuts with reference to economic and demographic pressures. The propagandistic purposes of Khrushchev's statements, appropriately parroted by Malinovskii and certain publications must not be overlooked. It was certainly the expressed view of senior military officers at the time that a wide range of conventional forces, possibly in larger numbers than before, would be needed for nuclear war. All three editions of Sokolovskii (ed) op cit said as much (Chapter Five). See for example the second edition p300. Garthoff Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age pp76-81 cited several senior military officers from the immediately preceding years to this effect. Lt.-Gen. Krasil'nikov observed in 1956 that nuclear war "calls not for the reduction of the numbers of combatants, but for their logical further increase, since the threat of wiping out divisions grows, and for their replacement larger reserves will be needed. The growth of the number of divisions is inevitable also as a consequence of the increasing extent of strategic fronts ... Weapons of mass destruction not only require mass armed forces, but require their inevitable increase" (Marksism-Leninizm o voine i armii [Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1956 pp148, 150-151).
to raise the readiness of the forces and their technological level, requiring considerable diversion of funds away from defence manpower or from other parts of the economy. Given Khrushchev’s economic and welfare growth targets in non-military sectors, and given the negligible cost of manpower compared with that of military research, development, and production, the Government could only free resources for improvements to the armed forces by a massive 50 per cent cut in military manpower. By the mid-1950s, the cost burden would have been even greater, following the doubling in size of the forces after 1949, and given the USSR’s continued relative technological backwardness, and its generally poor economic position. By the late 1950s, these technological, economic, and political factors had intensified considerably.

A Soviet history of the armed forces cited the following eight reasons for the major changes to Soviet military posture in the period 1954-1961:

US development in 1953 of strategic nuclear bombing and the concept of massive retaliation;

US development of limited war policy and the establishment in 1958 of the strategic army corps;

massive US buildup of strategic weapons by 1961;

continued [technical] development of conventional weapons;

changes in force posture of NATO countries, including production of nuclear weapons by UK in 1954 and France in 1960;

US violations of Soviet airspace;

a new round of the Cold War (creation of SEATO in 1954, signing of Baghdad Pact 1955); and

West Germany’s admission to NATO and US revival of Japanese militarism.

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1 Tiushkevich et al *op cit* p393
2 *ibid* p404
This Soviet source can be viewed as self serving, especially where it cites events of 1960 and 1961 as causes for change in Soviet force posture between 1954 and 1961. But it is nonetheless evidence to be considered. Of some note are the mention of the USA’s limited war posture, and that five of the eight items listed relate to non-nuclear forces.

The book defined the main task of the period (1954-1961) as rapid and substantive arming of Soviet forces with nuclear weapons and attendant changes in all spheres. But it also mentioned important changes in conventional capabilities, including motorisation of rifle divisions; a new emphasis on naval infantry; great strides in capabilities of airborne forces; new attention to logistics organisation; and strengthening of KGB border forces. Thus, the contraction of the Ground Forces was accompanied by major qualitative improvements, the introduction of tactical nuclear missiles, and a new emphasis on mobility.

The authors of this history, who included S. A. Tiushkevich, one of the most prominent uniformed commentators on strategic affairs, explained that the troop reductions announced in 1960 were halted in July 1961 for the following reasons:

new NATO [conventional] units were formed;

West Germany and Japan got an army and a military command and control system;

NATO began arming with tactical nuclear weapons;

US consideration of giving tactical nuclear weapons to West Germany; and

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1 *ibid* pp409, 416-423
2 He was involved in two editions (1968 and 1972) of the book *Marxism-Leninsim on War and the Army.*
an increase in US reconnaissance flights over Soviet territory.\textsuperscript{1}

His linking of the halt in troop reductions to deployments of nuclear weapons in NATO seems to undercut the argument that the General Staff saw a cut in Ground Forces manpower as desirable for nuclear war.

The interpretation offered by the Soviet history had some support from Western scholars. For example, Garthoff suggested the new emphasis in published Soviet doctrine after the mid-1950s on general nuclear war may have been largely the desire to avoid central war and develop a deterrent posture. There were a variety of lesser contingencies which Soviet strategy took account of, and while offensive strategic weapons took a larger role than they had previously, defensive strategic weapons and ground forces continued to receive "the greatest share of resources".\textsuperscript{2} McConnell believed the Soviet leadership had decided by the mid-1950s that it needed a wide variety of conventional forces to promote Soviet interests beyond the immediate periphery of the USSR.\textsuperscript{3}

The head of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Gorshkov, provided some support for the view that Soviet doctrine after 1955 always envisaged powerful forces across the full spectrum of capabilities, to support new offensive war missions and a global political program. He said the decision to build a powerful oceanic nuclear missile fleet was taken by the Central Committee in the mid-1950s, and prior to that the operational-strategic plan of the fleet remained "defensive".\textsuperscript{4}

By December 1961, the Defence Minister had expressed his priorities

\textsuperscript{1} Tiushkevich et al \textit{op cit} p412
\textsuperscript{2} Garthoff \textit{Soviet Military Policy} pp128-130. Unlike most later commentators, Garthoff did not regard the large cuts in Soviet conventional forces under Khrushchev as evidence of exclusive reliance after 1960 on a strategy of general nuclear war.
\textsuperscript{3} James M McConnell "Doctrine and Capabilities" in Bradford Dismukes and James McConnell (eds) \textit{Soviet Naval Diplomacy} Pergamon Press, New York, 1979, p6
\textsuperscript{4} Gorshkov \textit{op cit} pp258-259
for further development of the Ground Forces in terms of organisational stability and continued modernisation. In the second Top Secret collection of articles published by Military Thought, Malinovskii wrote in 1962:

We consider that the existing organisation of the Ground Troops meets modern requirements and that it corresponds to the nature and methods of conducting combat operations in the ground theatres in the initial period of a future nuclear-missile war. In the near future, a fundamental change in the organization of the ground troops will not be necessary.

Malinovskii observed that divisions and armies had already been substantially reorganised, and that the number of personnel in divisions and rear service units had been reduced, but that still more needed to be done to increase mobility. He emphasised the need to develop different types of divisional make-up for various theatres (plains, mountains, forests, deserts, the Arctic) and to develop the airborne forces - both requirements of an active local war doctrine.

Khrushchev's ouster in 1964 was not followed by a significant increase in Ground Forces manpower or numbers of units, as would be the case if the Brezhnev regime sponsored a return to doctrinal views favouring the army that had been suppressed by Khrushchev. Nor were there substantial increases in Ground Forces in Eastern Europe after 1964. The bulk of increases in manpower in

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1 According to a footnote in the first issue of the series published in 1960 (Maj.-Gen. S Kuznetsov and Maj.-Gen. A Tikhomirov "Questions of the Control of Missile Units in an Offensive Operation" Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" (translated by CIA) 1960 (1st issue) p3, an earlier series had been published in 1958. It is presumably this series that set the main parameters of Soviet strategic doctrine. The second series beginning in 1960 was intended, according to the Commandant of the Frunze Academy, to provide a "new assessment of a number of questions of operational art" and not for a "fundamental reassessment of Soviet military doctrine" which had been settled before Khrushchev's 1960 speech after "a long and complicated process" (Gen. P Kurochkin "The Nature of Modern Armed Combat and the Role and Place in It of Various Branches of the Armed Forces" Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" (translated by CIA) 1960 (2nd issue) pp3-4).

2 Marshal R Malinovskii "Some Thoughts on the Development of the Soviet Army Tank Troops" Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" (translated by CIA) 1962 (1st issue) p36

3 ibid p39
the Soviet armed forces went to the Far East,¹ except for five divisions deployed permanently in Czechoslovakia after 1968.² Between 1969 and 1978, the USSR increased its military personnel in Eastern Europe by 70,000, a pro rata share of the total increase in armed forces manpower in that period.³ This reflected in part personnel increases in the motorised rifle divisions from 10,500 to 13,500, and in tank divisions from 9,000 to 11,000. Another source suggested a modest increase from 60 to 66 divisions in Western USSR between 1964 and 1976, but agreed that there had been no change in Eastern Europe except in Czechoslovakia.⁴

**Theatre Postures to 1988**

This section considers whether the force posture in the main theatres was designed largely or exclusively for general war, or whether local war considerations might have accounted for important elements of it. It does not present unambiguous evidence, but raises some important considerations.

**Eastern Europe** It is difficult to draw firm conclusions about local war planning from Soviet force posture in Eastern Europe, because deployments

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¹ Wolfe *Soviet Power in Europe, 1945-970* p166 suggests that the cuts undertaken in the Khrushchev period reduced Soviet forces in Eastern Europe by about 89,000, according to Soviet statements, out of a total of about 500,000. With some fleshing out of units in response to various crises in the same period (Hungary 1956, Berlin 1958-1961), Wolfe notes that the number of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe probably remained fairly constant over the period.

² Jeffrey Record *Sizing up the Soviet Army* Brookings, Washington DC, 1975, p18; IISS *Military Balance* annual editions

³ US Congress *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1978* Hearings before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, 95th Congress, 2nd session, Part 4, 26 June and 14 July 1978, p85. The total increase in the personnel strength of the Soviet armed forces between 1969 and 1978 according to the US estimate was 500,000 (14 per cent).

there had a place in Soviet plans for general war.\textsuperscript{1} It is however possible to raise some new questions about the conventional wisdom on the balance between local war and general war planning in the General Staff's decisions for its military posture in Eastern Europe.

After the 1946-1948 reduction of divisions in Eastern Europe from 66 to 30, the bulk of Soviet forces there were in East Germany. Figures for their numbers at that time vary: according to the CIA in 1950, there were some 25 divisions;\textsuperscript{2} and according to a 1983 scholarly study, some 22 divisions.\textsuperscript{3} Mackintosh suggested that at this time, there were 22 divisions in East Germany, with two in each of Poland, Romania and Hungary, and one in Austria. About 60 to 80 Soviet divisions were believed to be stationed in the Western USSR in the same period.\textsuperscript{4}

When armed forces manning levels were cut by about 33 per cent between 1955 and 1958, the number of Soviet line divisions in East Germany was reduced by two divisions,\textsuperscript{5} probably reflecting a cut in the number of Ground Forces divisions from 175 to 140 beginning in 1958. Nevertheless, the cuts in the armed forces as a whole did not result in a proportionate reduction of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. Reductions between 1955 and 1961 were offset by new

\textsuperscript{1} To avoid the criticism that this thesis is looking under every log for a local war explanation where there may be none and thereby skewing its interpretation of information to support its claims, it would be tempting to repeat in this sentence here the conventional wisdom that Soviet forces in East Germany had a "large" place in Soviet General Staff plans in the event of general nuclear war. There is little doubt that Soviet forces in East Germany had general war missions and were exercised in general war scenarios, but it is the contention of this thesis that the relative importance of the forces (22 divisions, 1 air army) in general war in comparison with the large reserves in the USSR, and the mobilisation potential of the USSR, has not been examined in the scholarship on military doctrine as exhaustively as it should have been. The importance of the 22 divisions and one air army was greatest for the "bolt from the blue" or "standing start" scenario. As suggested in Chapter Four, scholars who took a broader view of Soviet military policy appreciated that the 22 divisions had purposes apart from general war.

\textsuperscript{2} CIA Soviet Capabilities and Intentions NIE 3 15 November 1950 p5

\textsuperscript{3} Gibson \textit{op cit} p212

\textsuperscript{4} Mackintosh \textit{Juggeraut} pp271-273

\textsuperscript{5} HQ US Army, Europe, Office of Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Periodic Intelligence Report 3-59 30 September 1959, p2 held by the National Security Archive, Washington DC
deployments in times of crisis over Hungary and Berlin, so that the level of about 500,000 troops was sustained from 1947 till the end of the Khrushchev period.¹

Ground Forces units in Eastern Europe were known to be at higher levels of manning (assessed by the US as combat ready) than most of those in Western USSR² but still were not fully manned.³

Formation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955, followed in 1956 by Soviet intervention in Hungary, set the parameters of Soviet preparations for local war in Europe. When the alliance was formed, it provided for a joint military command and a political consultative committee. Between 1955 and 1965, non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces remained fairly stable in size (1,000,000 men in just over 60 divisions, about half of which were at combat strength). The USSR spent considerable effort modernising these forces in that time.⁴

Notwithstanding East Germany’s consistent political loyalty to Soviet strategic goals after the mid-1950s, the USSR restricted it to six divisions, compared with ten allowed to Czechoslovakia, which had a smaller population. As MccGwire observed:

> This arrangement suggests that any advantage that might accrue to the Soviet offensive against NATO from additional East German forces is outweighed by the danger the Soviets perceive in the existence of formed military units [in the GDR]. The Russians persist in this fear even though they have an overwhelming preponderance of military power in East Germany ... ⁵

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² HQ US Army, Europe, Office of Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Periodic Intelligence Report 3-59, 30 September 1959, p2
³ Garthoff "Estimating Soviet Military Force Levels" loc cit p107 suggests that it is now acknowledged that Soviet forces in Eastern Europe "are and have been" manned at about 85 per cent of full strength. Garthoff (p108n) adds that after Soviet disclosures of force levels in Europe, DIA reduced its estimates in 1989 for the total strength of the Soviet Armed Forces by 500,000.
⁴ Garthoff Soviet Military Policy pp149, 151
⁵ MccGwire Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy pp129, 131
After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviet General Staff supervised closer integration of the armed forces under the unified Warsaw Pact Command. The rationale for the integration included the need to neutralise anti-Soviet tendencies within the bloc, and prevent fighting between Soviet and national forces if political opposition to communism increased. The GDR was allowed to produce only a small range of military equipment and remained dependent on the USSR for all heavy weapons and aircraft. GDR army divisions were located near Soviet divisions, and were dependent on Soviet logistic support, transport, artillery and intelligence capability.¹

According to an East European military source, Warsaw Pact war plans included conventional operations for limited conflicts for the first time in 1963.² This training was probably not extensive, if the relatively low levels of activity of the armed forces as a whole, including in Eastern Europe, are any guide.

Penkovsky’s debriefing suggested that there was at least considerable

¹ Douglas A Macgregor *The Soviet-East German Military Alliance* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1989, pp43-44, 50-55. He includes as the cause of closer integration of Soviet and GDR forces the fact that the latter were not built on the basis of pre-existing forces, but completely from the ground up beginning in 1956.
² Joseph D Douglass, Jr and Amorettta M Hoeber *Conventional War and Escalation: The Soviet View* Crane Russak & Co, New York NY, 1981, p9n. One wonders whether Douglass and Hoeber might not have been tempted to explain or investigate this information further if it had not challenged the conventional wisdom about Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. They wrote:

A former senior East European officer has stated that provision for a conventional variant was first incorporated into Warsaw Pact war plans in 1963. This conventional variant was, however, not for major war. Rather, it was for small-scale Berlin-like actions, over which the Soviets believed the United States would not go to war.

Official US statements do not appear to have reflected Soviet interest in conventional war in Europe until the 1970s. Secretary of Defense, James R Schlesinger, said in 1974 that "In their exercises the Soviets have indicated far greater interest in the notions of controlled nuclear war than has ever before been reflected in Soviet doctrine". US Congress Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy Hearings before the Sub-Committee on US Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad and the Sub-Committee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 93rd Congress, 2nd Session, March 7, 14 and April 4 1974 p183. The time this change in exercise patterns was detected was equated with the time the change in doctrine occurred. As Schlesinger said in reporting the information: "I think the doctrine is undergoing change".
talk in the Soviet armed forces about the prospects of a limited conflict in Europe.¹

Czechoslovakia in 1968 was the proof that in the nuclear era, use of military forces in small wars was still prominent in the Soviet geopolitical repertoire. The USSR was confident that NATO would not intervene militarily against the invasion.² After long preparation beginning as early as April, the USSR invaded in August with 29 divisions (16 Soviet and 13 from the GDR, Hungary and Bulgaria), one Soviet tactical air army, and logistic support units - between 400,000 and 500,000 troops.³

The General Staff’s direction of local war operations in Eastern Europe showed preferences for use of surprise and deception, clear superiority in size of forces, and exploitation of specialist interventionary forces (airborne and special forces). After the experience early in the 1956 Hungarian crisis where two Soviet divisions were faced down by the Hungarians, eight divisions were eventually moved in from the Carpathian Military District under the pretext of protecting air-fields during the promised Soviet withdrawal.⁴

In the Czechoslovakia crisis of 1968 and the Polish crisis of 1980,

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¹ Jerold L Schecter and Peter S Dertiabin *The Spy Who Saved the World - How a Soviet Colonel Changed the Course of the Cold War* Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York NY, 1992, pp186, 206-207. Penkovskii’s reports on the Berlin crisis on June 1961 refer specifically to the Soviet expectation and hope that any military conflict, should one break out, could be kept localised. Penkovsky was not a senior officer and his access appears to have been confined to one senior General so his very firm views on the prospects of a war remaining localised cannot be taken as equally firm evidence of a General Staff view to that effect.


³ Tatu "Intervention in Eastern Europe" *loc cit* p230; Alex P Schmid *Soviet Military Interventions since 1945* Transaction Books, Brunswick NJ, 1985, p32; Valenta *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* p147

⁴ Mackintosh Juggernaut p294; Jiri Valetna "From Prague to Kabul: The Soviet Style of Invasion" *International Security* 1980 (Fall) vol. 5, no. 2, p133
the General Staff organised military exercises which served both as coercive diplomacy and preparation for combat.¹ In the Polish case, they included a command exercise involving 150,000 troops, among them the 30,000 stationed in Poland.² Use of protracted and well publicised exercises for public coercion of wayward communist regimes in both cases retained tactical surprise, by adding to uncertainty and desensitising the potential enemy to the real possibility of invasion.³ In both instances, several hundred thousand troops were mobilised.⁴

The General Staff was prepared in each case to fight to win if necessary. The Czechs did not fight, and Poland was not invaded, but in the Polish case the evidence of planning for actual combat is strong. A Polish officer, Colonel Kuklinski, who worked closely with the Soviet planning staff, noted that a new Soviet wartime headquarters existed in Poland for over a year. He also noted that exercise scenarios for Warsaw Pact forces included actions against the Czechoslovak forces, designated in blue (the enemy colour) on military maps.⁵ The Polish invasion plan was conceived in terms of imposition of martial law, and in the Czechoslovak case the General Staff’s assessment of the prospect of fighting may have been low. It is unlikely however that it would have advised against the invasion if there had been a prospect of significant armed resistance. This is not only the view of Kuklinski, but also of a Soviet officer, who commanded a division

² R Kuklinski "The Crushing of Solidarity" Orbis 1988 (Winter) p21
³ Valenta Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968 p190 made this comment about that case. Kuklinski op cit p9 noted the Soviet intention to use a lightning quick operation for any invasion. The General Staff would still have achieved tactical surprise even though any element of strategic surprise disappeared after the earliest days of the crisis.
⁴ Valenta Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia p147; Kuklinski op cit p16
⁵ Kuklinski op cit pp9, 23
during the build-up.¹

As in Poland, the General Staff showed its willingness to set up independent command arrangements in earlier "local war" contingencies in Europe. For the "limited war" in Hungary in 1956, a new command was set up under the commander of the Carpathian Military District.² In the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968, a very large, Soviet forward headquarters was set up in Legnica in Poland in early August.³ At this time, command passed from the Warsaw Pact headquarters, which had supervised the build-up of forces under the guise of a military exercise. Stalin's wartime chief of operations, General S. M. Shtemenko, was recalled from an administrative post to command the invasion under the overall direction of the Commander in Chief of Ground Forces, General I. G. Pavlovsky.

In the 1968 action, intermediate range missiles of the SRF in Ukraine, Bielorussia, and the Baltic republics, moved from "routine" to "increased" [vysshaia], one notch short of maximum alert status, according to Soviet sources. This involved marrying nuclear warheads with missiles. The alerted forces remained in that state for three weeks. An important feature of this alert was that strategic rocket forces in other parts of the country did not change status, with the possible exception of some ballistic missile submarines.⁴

There are reports that the USSR was also preparing to use force against Romania in August 1968, a course obviated by some accommodation between the Romanian and Soviet Governments.⁵

¹ Gen. Viktor Dubynin Interview with Gazeta Wyborcza, a Polish daily, reported by Reuter News Agency, Sydney Morning Herald 16 March 1992
² Mackintosh Juggernaut p294
³ Kuklinski op cit p9
⁴ Blair The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War p25
⁵ For example, Tatu "Intervention in Eastern Europe" loc cit pp257-258 refers to a reported Soviet build-up of 29 divisions against Romania in August at the same time as the Warsaw Pact forces had assembled on Czechoslovakia's borders. US intelligence reported a force of about 14 divisions.
Scholars, like governments, long held irreconcilable views about the readiness of Soviet forces in central Europe.\(^1\) This thesis revisits those debates briefly to note the poor record of the intelligence community - on a contemporaneous basis - in assessing the true state of the balance in central Europe and the readiness of Soviet forces. If there was an even larger gulf than previously assessed between the readiness of Soviet ground force divisions in Eastern Europe and those in Western USSR, this might be further evidence that the forward deployed forces were seen as having important local war functions.

The Director of Soviet Analysis of the CIA conceded in 1990 that Soviet forces in Eastern Europe were not postured exclusively or even primarily for general war:

They have postured their readiness to provide the force structure and mobilisation for their most likely contingency, while ensuring against their ‘worst case’.\(^2\)

In his view, the most likely contingency was clearly not their worst case - general war.\(^3\) In Eastern Europe the most likely contingency was local war.

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\(^1\) The differences arose for a number of reasons, but one important source of difference originated in the efforts of scholars to focus undue attention on what were single elements of an overall balance of forces (Garthoff "Intelligence Assessment and Policy Making" loc cit p24).

\(^2\) US Congress Soviet Readiness for War p55. The Report saw this as a sign that NATO’s efforts to enhance its preparedness had paid off, but that conclusion does not undermine the value of the CIA officer’s observation about Soviet strategic planning.

\(^3\) Some support for the view that Soviet peace-time posture was not related to their worst case can be found in readiness levels. Of the 185 line divisions in 1987, only 54 were fully equipped and capable of reaching full strength within a week after mobilisation. Twelve of them were in the Far East. More indirect support for the proposition that Soviet peace-time force posture was directed towards lesser contingencies than general war can be found in the relatively low alert levels of Soviet strategic nuclear forces. For example up until the late 1970s at least, Soviet nuclear bombers did not maintain airborne or continuous ground alert as equivalent US forces did (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1981 p199). US official figures for Soviet SSBN patrols in 1977 were 11 per cent at sea compared with 50 per cent of the US SSBN fleet (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1977 p94). While alert levels were reportedly raised for ICBMs from 25 per cent of the force in the late 1970s to 95 per cent one decade later as the result of technological changes, the alert levels of SLBMs and bombers remained much lower than in US forces. See Stephen M Meyer "Soviet Nuclear Operations" in Ashton B Carter, John D Steinbrunner, and Charles A Zraket (eds) Managing Nuclear Operations Brookings, Washington DC, 1987, pp487-489, 494
Contrary to US assessments up to the early 1960s, which did not estimate whether a Soviet division in Europe was as capable as US or NATO divisions facing it, it emerged in the mid-1960s that in terms of division equivalents\(^1\) the opposing ground forces in central Europe had been in rough parity all along.\(^2\) As far as readiness was concerned, Enthoven and Smith suggested that up to half of the divisions in the Soviet Ground Forces on Soviet territory may have been skeletal or cadre divisions.\(^3\)

In 1990, a US Congressional Committee concluded that Department of Defense estimates, on which CIA relied, had "significantly overstated the day-to-day readiness of Warsaw Pact forces and understated how long it would take Soviet divisions, particularly those that are manned during peacetime at 50 percent or below wartime strengths, to get ready for combat". The panel report did not specify the period during which the overestimates occurred but observed that NATO (and US) planning "had been based for some time on an exaggerated portrayal of the

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\(^{1}\) US agencies developed the concept of Armoured Division Equivalent (ADE) to give a more sensible comparison in terms of the numbers of units or order of battle of US and Soviet ground forces. The concept was developed because of the wide disparity between the size and capability of one Soviet division and one US Army division.

\(^{2}\) Enthoven and Smith *op cit* pp118, 140-141. As the authors note on pp140-141:

> eliminating paper divisions, using cost and fire-power indexes, counts of combat personnel in available divisions, and numbers of artillery pieces, trucks, tanks and the like, we ended up with the same conclusion: NATO and the Warsaw Pact had approximate equality on the ground. Where four years earlier [1961] it had appeared that a conventional option [for NATO] was impossible, it now began to appear that perhaps NATO could have had one all along.

\(^{3}\) *ibid* p136. In that case, the continued use by the intelligence community of the term "division" was hardly defensible. A Category III division (the lowest category of readiness of the 140-185 Soviet divisions after 1947) was in fact more like an equipment store with a regiment of men at the most. In 1977, the US intelligence community conceded that most Soviet tanks were in storage at any given time and only a small percentage were used for training. The practice was presented as having the advantage of protecting the under-used tanks from wear (US Congress *Allocation of Resources in the USSR and China* - 1977 p95. A year later, the disadvantages of keeping two-thirds or more of combat equipment in storage for all but one or two occasions a year were recognised as a potential penalty for Soviet combat readiness (US Congress *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China* - 1978 p118).
conventional threat posed by the Warsaw Pact".\(^1\)

This followed a similar report in 1988, which observed that the presence of new recruits in Soviet divisions, where basic training was conducted, meant that even the most ready divisions (so-called Category 1) had only 65 per cent trained manpower. The report noted that units did not train extensively for combat, spending half the time of their NATO counterparts in field exercises.\(^2\)

The Soviet mobilisation system had another significant weakness. Reserves were needed to fill out most Soviet units but, unlike US reserves, Soviet reservists did not train with the units with which they would serve. Similarly, Soviet naval forces spent less time at sea than their US counterparts, and most of their sea time was not devoted to combat training.\(^3\)

The evidence is very sketchy, but it is more than likely that the General Staff consistently considered its posture in Eastern Europe as falling far short of the requirements of general war. For example, in the early 1960s, the radical school of Soviet military theorists (called the crisis school by their Soviet contemporaries), supposedly closest to Khrushchev and supposedly supplanted after his ouster, was attacked for proposing force levels in central Europe for nuclear war little different from those that existed there for the entire post-war period.\(^4\)

In the second 1960 issue of the Special Collection, two articles


\(^2\) US Congress *Soviet Readiness for War* pp54-55. The condition of Soviet conscripts, described in 1979 by the Director DIA as "almost total slavery compared with our forces", also meant that their performance was less than US interpretations flowing from unit size might have suggested (US Congress *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China* - 1979 p81).

\(^3\) US Congress *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China* - 1981 p199. Soviet naval forces in port or close-in areas spent more time training than their US counterparts.

appeared attacking the radical views expressed in the previous issue by General Gastilovich, including his argument that in a nuclear war 20 to 25 divisions would be sufficient for the first strategic echelon in Europe ("or 40 if you take into account probable losses"). The second article said that Gastilovich underestimated the numbers of reserves needed, because Soviet exercises had shown that by the ninth or tenth day of war the first echelon would not be capable of fighting, having suffered over 60 per cent casualties. The author concluded that "under such conditions it is clear that if an immediate buildup of strength from the rear is not carried out, the operation can abate and the success attained come to nought". The article concluded that the Soviet armed forces at that time lacked the capability to provide rear support in the initial period of a nuclear war.

Another article the next year observed that the armed forces would need enough divisions to enable rapid replacement of large units knocked out by nuclear strikes. Subsequent available Soviet commentary does not address numbers of divisions as explicitly.

**Far East** Here the General Staff faced local war scenarios less susceptible to instant resolution by military action, but had nuclear superiority over China. In this environment, it demonstrated considerable flexibility and determination to deter continued Chinese attacks on border outposts, and reduce what it saw as the risk of major war with China.

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2 Khetagurov *op cit* pp5-17, 20
Evidence in the public domain on the timing and nature of the Soviet build-up is sketchy but as military incidents began to increase in number and severity, and after a failed Soviet effort to patch up political relations in 1965, the General Staff seems to have decided to redeploy and reequip existing divisions in order at least to provide local defence and contain any incidents.

According to a Soviet source, military incidents occurred on the border with Western China in the Xinjiang region in the northern spring of 1962 and along the Amur and Ussuri rivers at some unspecified time in 1962. The first reports of strengthening of Soviet frontier defences appeared in 1963, and in October 1964 the USSR reportedly held military exercises with scenarios involving a Chinese attack in the Maritime province. By 1963, the first Chinese claims to Soviet territory were aired in a People's Daily editorial, and military incidents on the border had become a regular event.

By July 1964, Mao Zedong was openly accusing the USSR of pursuing an annexationist policy and suspended negotiations, begun only that year, on the border question. In October, China exploded its first atomic bomb and, in 1965, made its first attempts to grab separate pieces of Soviet territory.

According to the CIA, the Soviet military build-up on the China

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2 Garthoff *Soviet Military Policy* p188. The report about the Soviet exercise scenario was made by Victor Zorza in *The Guardian* on 9 October 1964.
3 Volkogonov and Antosiak (eds) *op cit* p196. The authors claim as many as 14,000 such incidents in that year. This is probably a post facto argument meant to convince Soviet readers of the aggressiveness of the Chinese and probably includes the most minor altercations of a verbal nature.
5 Kaplan et al *op cit* p281
6 Scott and Scott *Soviet Military Doctrine* p43
7 Volkogonov and Antosiak (eds) *op cit* p201
border began in 1964.¹ No large build-up of Soviet forces occurred before 1967, but "beginning in 1965, the Soviet forces were brought to a higher state of readiness, equipped with better and more weaponry, and their numbers augmented if only marginally". In 1966, the USSR signed a new mutual assistance security treaty with Mongolia and stationed troops there for the first time in ten years. By November 1967 several divisions had been moved there.²

There is some evidence that in 1967 the USSR began to accelerate its military build-up on the Sino-Soviet border as political polemic intensified and after a number of border incidents,³ including an unconfirmed Chinese account of a battalion sized encounter near Vladivostok.⁴ Up to six divisions were reported in Mongolia by mid-1968.⁵

At the same time, the USSR began to take a more robust attitude toward participation in the Vietnam war. In February 1964, it promised Vietnam military assistance - having rebuffed a similar request in January 1963 - and declared that the "Soviet people cannot remain indifferent to escalatory events in Vietnam".⁶ In December 1964, both Prime Minister Kosygin and Foreign Minister Gromyko made strong statements in support of North Vietnam in the event of US aggression against it.⁷ In 1965, Kosygin offered to send troops ("volunteers").⁸

Some reports suggest that Soviet military aid between 1965 and 1968

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¹ CIA Estimated Soviet Defense Spending: Trends and Prospects June 1978 p8
² Kaplan et al *op cit* pp138, 271-272
³ *ibid* p139
⁴ Jones and Kevill *op cit* p92
⁵ Kaplan et al *op cit* p139
⁶ *ibid* p337 citing *Pravda* 26 February 1964
⁷ *ibid* p340
concentrated on air defence materiel. But in 1968, the New York Times reported the number of Soviet military advisers and technicians to be about 3,000.\textsuperscript{1} Some of them exercised operational control of SAM sites in North Vietnam during 1965 and 1966,\textsuperscript{2} and perhaps until the halt of US bombing in 1968.\textsuperscript{3} While some scholars tend to play down the participation of Soviet forces,\textsuperscript{4} there is no doubt that the USSR sent "volunteers " to the Vietnam War - albeit limited to air defence units.

By March 1969, after a doubling of Soviet forces on the border with China, and more serious armed provocations, particularly incidents on Damansky island in the Ussuri River, the USSR decided to take the fight to the Chinese.

The events of 1969 have been well documented. The General Staff decided to establish clear military superiority in the theatre, including both conventional and nuclear forces. This involved accelerating the reinforcement of the border already in progress and, more importantly, using Soviet superiority to "initiate (or take advantage of) ‘incidents’ to serve as signals to the Chinese of the seriousness of Russian intent".\textsuperscript{5} This campaign, including attacks at a number of widely separate locations and hints of nuclear attack on China, peaked in August and September 1969. The strategy worked: China agreed to cease armed provocations and open border negotiations, while both sides maintained the status quo. Notwithstanding some small incidents in subsequent years, the border problem became quiescent.

\textsuperscript{1} Schultz op cit pp68, 73
\textsuperscript{2} ibid p73. According to Red Star, one Soviet manned regiment claimed 23 planes downed for 43 missiles fired, a success rate which purportedly forced the Americans to stop all flights within two weeks (Francis X Clines "Soviets Say They Fought in Vietnam" International Herald Tribune 14 April 1989 p1, citing Krasnaya zvezda).
\textsuperscript{3} Kaplan et al op cit p347
\textsuperscript{4} For example, Schultz op cit p73 suggests the primary mission of the Soviet personnel was training and that they only operated the SAMs and the air defence network until the Vietnamese were sufficiently well trained to take over.
\textsuperscript{5} Kaplan et al op cit pp273-284
What had appeared to the West as a border problem more or less contained by 1969 came to be seen by the General Staff as a strategic problem of greater proportion. The evidence of this lies in the continued and massive build-up of forces in successive years on the border with China. The greatest single year surge in Soviet defence spending to meet the China threat occurred in 1969, in response to widespread conflict along the border between March and September. By 1969, forces numbering about 400,000 had been deployed against the China threat. This represented an increase of 100 per cent on 1962 levels, and the number of divisions east of Lake Baikal increased from about 12 or 14 to 25 or 27. During the peak period of the build-up, from 1967 through 1972, the number of tactical aircraft (mostly older types) increased by 500 per cent.

The seriousness with which the Soviet leadership viewed the escalating military confrontation with China can be gauged from a number of indicators. The most important was its clearly signalled threat of a nuclear strike against China. There were also reports of Soviet efforts to get Warsaw Pact partners to participate in training and deployments in China border areas after the Ussuri clashes in 1969, backed up by isolated reports of actual deployments, especially of air force units.

Even after 1969, the USSR continued to build up its forces on the

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1 CIA Estimated Soviet Defense Spending: Trends and Prospects pp8-9. Spending on forces in the Far East grew on average at twice the rate of growth of defence spending as a whole between 1967 and 1977. In 1969, the rate of increase of spending on forces against China was about three times the rate of increase of defence spending as a whole.
2 Kaplan et al op cit p140
3 US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1978 p89
4 Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 p467n
5 CIA Estimated Soviet Defense Spending: Trends and Prospects pp8-9
6 Kaplan et al op cit p141. In 1969, China did not have any intermediate range ballistic missiles in service.
border with China. Between 1969 and 1978, they increased by 62 per cent, from 400,000 to 650,000.\footnote{US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1978 p89} The perceived threat to the USSR from China was described by a former US Defence Attaché in Moscow between 1971 and 1973 as the "most highly emotional issue" among Soviet three star generals and above.\footnote{US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1976 p105. The officer said: "I am convinced that in their view this is perhaps the No. 1 threat".}

The creation of a theatre headquarters in the Far East in the late 1970s was a further step in institutionalising Soviet preparation for limited conflict in this region.\footnote{MccGwire Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy p121} But independent command arrangements had been put in place earlier. In September 1966, the General Staff reportedly delegated responsibility and authority for handling incidents on the Chinese border to local commanders.\footnote{Haselkorn op cit p39}

In November 1969, a new command, the Central Asian Military District, was created (Kazakhstan, Kirghizia and Tadzhikistan).\footnote{\textit{Ibid} p41; Scott and Scott Soviet Military Doctrine p52} Only about 25 per cent of Soviet Far East Ground Forces divisions were estimated to be combat ready, but they averaged a higher level of readiness than their counterparts in the southern USSR bordering Iran and Afghanistan.\footnote{Dzirkals \textit{op cit} p24}

The prospect of war with China continued to bedevil the Soviet leadership. By the mid-1970s, the share of Soviet defence forces attributable to meeting the China threat was about one quarter - although they also had possible missions against US forces in Asia and Japanese forces.\footnote{US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1977 p147, oral evidence of Barry Blechman; US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1978 p89} They accounted for 50 per cent of the total increase in Soviet armed forces manpower between 1969 and
1978. The increases in the Far East were in Ground Forces and Tactical Air Forces, from about 25 or 27 divisions to about 46 or 47, although the biggest increase (to about 40 divisions) had been undertaken by 1973.

There were few serious border incidents after 1969, but once the spectre of war had been raised as seriously as it had then, only a handful of incidents were required to fuel continuing Soviet concern, in the absence of any amelioration of China’s strategic hostility. This concern was almost certainly exacerbated by the Sino-US rapprochement which began in 1971 and reached a high point in 1978.

In February 1979, when China invaded Vietnam after the latter’s invasion of Cambodia, the USSR indicated that it would not intervene provided the scale of the Chinese attack remained as limited as China had indicated it would.

**Southern Borders** Between the Soviet withdrawal from Iran in 1946 and the fall of the Shah in 1978, the southern borders of the USSR were probably a low priority in terms of local war planning. Iran, and to a lesser extent Afghanistan, were certainly of geopolitical significance because they were Soviet neighbours, and because of the close political and military relationship between Iran and the USA. Beyond possible work on contingency plans for operations into Iran and, less likely, Afghanistan, the General Staff would not have regarded the prospect of local war on these borders as requiring special attention. It also saw its

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1 US Congress *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1978* p85. The total increase in the personnel strength of the Soviet armed forces between 1969 and 1978 according to the US estimate was 500,000 (14 per cent).
2 Kaplan et al *op cit* p143; IISS *Military Balance* 1982-83
3 Kaplan et al *op cit* pp143-144
4 Jones and Kevill *op cit* p164
5 This includes the borders with Iran and Afghanistan, and does not include the border with Turkey.
forces there as having some role in operations in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{1}

In the case of the Iranian border, the General Staff did have significant forces (20 divisions and two air armies) deployed in the two military districts to the west of the Caspian sea which, while useful for the southern flank of European contingencies, were also available for operations in Iran. In addition four divisions and another air army east of the Caspian covered the longer border with Iran and that with Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{2}

When the General Staff came to commit forces to Afghanistan, it felt compelled to limit its involvement there. If the accounts in Chapter Seven of General Staff opposition to the commitment are accurate, this is almost certainly indicative of a combination of two judgements: that the political situation was irretrievable with military force; and the need to retrieve it was not sufficient to justify a significant diversion of resources away from other commitments - such as central Europe, the Far East, possible US intervention in Iran, and perhaps escalation by China of its conflict with Vietnam. Nevertheless, in opposing and then limiting its commitment to Afghanistan the General Staff could be considered to have shown an excellent appreciation of the nature of local war. The accounts of discussion between the General Staff and Politburo, and its advice not to proceed with the plan seem to bear this out. That is not to say that all aspects of the Soviet military action were well planned and successful.

The General Staff began preparations some months before the invasion, actually moving mobilised units into the country and training some of

\textsuperscript{1} For example, on 23 October 1957, in reaction to the Syrian crisis, the USSR announced the appointment of one of its Deputy Ministers of Defence, Marshal Rokossovski, to command the Transcaucasus Military District which bordered on Turkey and Iran (Mackintosh \textit{Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy} pp228-229).

\textsuperscript{2} IISS \textit{Military Balance} 1976-77 pp8, 10
them in situ. The preparations included increasing readiness levels of forces in the military districts adjacent to Afghanistan and deploying an airborne battalion to the main airbase outside Kabul.

The invasion plan emphasised surprise, deception, and speed, and relied heavily on specialist forces (airborne and special forces). Once installed, the Soviet forces pursued classic counter-insurgency objectives similar to those set down by Frunze, including control of the cities and towns; protection of lines of communication; isolation of insurgents from popular support; elimination of resistance; and co-option of rebel leaders. They did not pursue with any vigour at all another important goal of counter-insurgency set down by Frunze - denial of outside aid or sanctuary.

The biggest error was failure to prepare forces for specific missions in Afghanistan. General Gromov, last commander of the force there, noted that 30-35 per cent of all Soviet forces guarded roads or controlled areas, but had not been trained for these tasks. He also observed that there had been no preparation for material or moral support of soldiers serving in small groups of 7-12 men for up to two years in isolation from their colleagues.

Most sources agree that the only forces that were successful in offensive, counter-insurgency missions were the highly trained airborne, air assault and reconnaissance units manned by selected conscripts or volunteers.

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1 Scott R McMichael Stumbling Bear - Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan Brassey's (Macmillan), London UK, 1991, p2; US Congress Soviet Readiness for War p60
4 US Congress Soviet Readiness for War p60
Middle East Within one month after the ceasefire in the Six Day War of 1967, the USSR had committed itself to the defence of Egypt with a massive arms supply effort, including a complete air defence network, and the dispatch of warships to Alexandria and Port Said.¹ The USSR established a near permanent naval presence in Egyptian waters immediately after the war, and sent a squadron of bomber aircraft to Egypt on a visit in December 1967.²

The Six Day War, in which Israel devastated Soviet-supplied Arab forces, brought home to Soviet leaders the full ferocity of a modern local war. The extreme brevity of the war may have prevented the Soviet political leadership from making any effective response.³ However, the USSR had already committed itself, at least rhetorically, to defending the Arab countries. Soviet naval forces in the Mediterranean had been increased significantly - from three to 13 surface combatants - in the preceding months. To prevent the victorious Israeli forces possibly moving on Damascus, Prime Minister Kosygin threatened to take the "necessary measures, including military" to stop them. Unlike Khrushchev’s threat over Suez in 1956, the Johnson Administration took this threat seriously.⁴

Sometime in the second half of 1969, the Soviet leadership accepted the advice of a group of senior military officers to give direct support, including the use of formed Soviet combat units, to anticipated Egyptian military pressure on Israel across the Suez canal.⁵ By the end of 1970, the USSR had sent about 20,000 troops to Egypt, including about 15,000 manning SAM sites and 150 to 200 pilots.⁶

¹ Rubinstein op cit pp139-140
² Kaplan et al op cit p168
³ Porter op cit p23
⁴ Kaplan et al op cit p167
⁵ Uri Ra’anan "Soviet Decision-Making in the Middle East, 1969-73" in McCGwire, Booth and McDonnell op cit pp192-194. The combat units were to include air defence units and interceptor pilots
⁶ Alvin Z Rubinstein "Air Support in the Arab East" in Kaplan et al op cit p474
Combat involvement was limited to air defence, but Soviet troops were involved at all levels of tactical and logistic planning.\(^1\) The level of commitment reached 10 squadrons of combat aircraft in mid-1972.\(^2\)

According to a speculative reconstruction of events, this plan was significantly modified sometime in 1971 or 1972 to the point where Soviet combat units would not participate directly but the plan, as implemented in 1973, still involved substantial Soviet military support in the form of equipment, training and a final guarantee.\(^3\) The extent of that final guarantee was never clear, and in the 1973 Arab-Israel War the USSR did not follow through on its promises in 1970 to defend the Arab countries, but was nevertheless made some preparations to intervene.\(^4\) The USSR also took some steps to prepare sections of the SRF that needed longest to prepare, but this order was cancelled before preparations were complete because the US nuclear alert which had prompted the Soviet move was cut short.\(^5\)

During Israel's clashes with Syria in 1982 in which large numbers of Soviet supplied aircraft and SAMs were destroyed, there was little evidence to suggest Soviet interest in direct combat intervention.

**Sub-Saharan Africa** Soviet political leaders authorised the close involvement of senior military officers in planning and conduct of other local wars in the 1970s (Angolan civil war 1975, Ethiopia/Somalia war in 1978, and the short

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1. Porter *op cit* p25
2. IISS *Military Balance* 1972-73 p8
3. Ra'anana "Soviet Decision-Making in the Middle East, 1969-73" *loc cit* pp198-203
4. James M McConnell "The 'Rules of the Game': A theory on the Practice of Superpower Naval Diplomacy" in Dismukes and McConnell (eds) *op cit* p244. Towards the end of the 1973 crisis on the Syrian front, 3 airborne divisions were put on alert on the night of 10-11 October, with the remaining four airborne divisions being alerted one day later when the Israeli Defence Force began its offensive (Stephen S Roberts "The October 1973 Arab-Israeli War" in Dismukes and McConnell (eds) *op cit* p202).
5. Blair *op cit* pp25-26
conflict between South Yemen and North Yemen in February 1979.\textsuperscript{1}

**Force Elements for Local War**

While the US requirements for local wars after 1950 mandated discrete forces which could be allocated to a wide variety of geographic theatres far from American territory with relatively short warning, Soviet requirements were in contiguous theatres where large forces already existed. There was therefore less pressure on the Soviet General Staff than on its US counterparts to develop separate forces or commands for local wars.

At the same time, there were certain elements of the Soviet force structure in place by 1962 whose functions might have included local war missions similar to those of the US Marine Corps and the US airborne divisions. These included the airborne forces, KGB border troops, and special forces. After 1962, the General Staff began to develop amphibious forces and naval task groups which could be used in local wars, but this took place from a weak base and gradually.

**Airborne Troops** In testimony to a US congressional committee in 1989, the Soviet Chief of General Staff, Marshal Akhromeev, likened the Soviet airborne forces (VDV) to the US ready reaction forces developed for regional contingencies.\textsuperscript{2} While his comment may be taken as a latter day reinterpretation, the history of the Soviet airborne forces bears out the view that they were seen

\textsuperscript{1} Porter *op cit* pp31-33. Two Soviet Generals and other commanders directed the Ethiopian offensive in 1978 against the invading Somalian forces, and Soviet advisers played the leading role in logistics and communications (p229).

consistently in this light.¹

The ability of airborne forces to act as a strategic level force at the direct disposal of the General Staff for local contingencies in the post-war period was enhanced by their experience of subordination to the Supreme Command very early in the war (4 September 1941).² In the reorganisation of the armed forces in 1946, the airborne forces were subordinated (reprotedly from the Air Forces) to the General Staff, and the post of Commander Airborne Troops, with his own staff, reinstated.³ The decision to create a dedicated military airlift capability to support the airborne forces was implemented the same year, with creation of the Assault Transport Aviation, subordinated to the Commander Airborne Troops.⁴

Available sources do not provide a clear picture of the subordination of the airborne forces between 1946 and 1964. Subordination direct to the General

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¹ The first use of parachutists by the Red Army was in the late 1920s during operations against peasants resisting collectivisation in Tadzhikistan (Mark L Urban "Soviet Airborne Forces" British Army Review 1981 (August) no.68, p50. Porter op cit p57; Raymond L Garthoff How Russia Makes War - Soviet Military Doctrine George Allen & Unwin, London UK, 1954, p351). In June 1940, before the USSR entered the Second World War, a Soviet airborne brigade was dropped to seize a group of aerodromes in Lithuania; and two airborne brigades were dropped in Bessarabia to capture two towns near the Ploesti oilfields (Viktor Suvorov Spetsnaz: The Story behind the Soviet SAS Hamish Hamilton, London UK, 1987, p23). Airborne forces were used in the Manchurian campaign of 1945 in some twenty groups of 35 to 40 men (D P M McGill "Soviet Air Mobility - Keystone or Millstone of the Threat to the West" Air Power September 1981 p17).

² Lt.-Gen. L M Surochenko "Proschiy planirovanii" [Miscalculations in Planning] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1989 (1) pp78-79. The VDV were designated as independent forces, withdrawn from the command of fronts, and subordinated directly to the Commander airborne troops under the Supreme Command. It was then that five division sized formations of about 8,000 men - the post-war division establishment - were established on the basis of what had hitherto been airborne brigades.

³ Sovetskie vozduushno-desantnye - voenno-istoricheskiy ocherk [Soviet Airborne - A Military Historical Work] Voennizdat, Moscow, 1980, p262. The forces were commanded at the time by Col.-Gen. Margelov, who had been commander since April that year and who was a decorated veteran of the naval infantry in World War II (Urban "Soviet Airborne Forces" loc cit p50). Margelov, the commander of the airborne forces until 1959, was reappointed to the post in 1961 where he served until 1979. The airborne forces had been moved from the Aviation of the Red Army to the Ground Forces in 1938, but in 1941 were withdrawn from the command of fronts and subordinated directly to the Commander Airborne Troops (Surochenko "Proschiy planirovanii" loc cit pp78-79). From 1936 to 1941, the airborne troops were part of a "Force of Special Designation" [armtia osobogo naznachenia] (Garthoff How Russia Makes War p354).

Staff may have ceased for a period between 1946 and 1956, perhaps associated with the abolition of the post of Commander Airborne Troops. According to one Western source, from 1956 the VDV were part of the ground forces, regaining direct subordination to the General Staff only in 1964.¹

The name of Assault Transport Aviation was changed to Military Transport Aviation (VTA) probably when it was resubordinated to the Air Forces in 1955.² Therefore, the VTA, like the Airborne Troops must have been resubordinated to the General Staff some time between 1955 and 1964.³

Soviet sources say almost nothing about the role of Soviet airborne forces in local wars, although their use by "imperialist" countries was accepted as commonplace. In 1963, Soviet airborne units were introduced abroad for the first time since the Manchurian Campaign of 1945 in an exercise called "Quartet" in East Germany.⁴ After that, they were consistently used by the USSR in local wars: on alert in the 1967 Arab-Israel war;⁵ in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 to seize key locations, signpost routes into Prague for advancing Soviet forces, and capture the Czech Government;⁶ to threaten intervention in the 1973 Arab-Israel War; and on alert during the Cyprus crisis of 1974.⁷ Use of airborne forces as the advance guard of the 1979 Afghanistan invasion is well documented.⁸

¹ Mark L Urban "The Strategic Role of Soviet Airborne Troops" Jane's Defence Weekly 14 July 1984 p26. The restoration in 1955 of the position of Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces and in 1964, the abolition of the position (until 1967) may well have been connected with that change in subordination - or contributed to the view that it occurred.
² Babakov op cit p105
³ Military air transport was controlled by the senior logistician of the armed forces, a Deputy Minister of Defence ("Soviet Air Power" Air Clues Nov 1984 p405).
⁴ James Hansen "Airborne" National Defense 1986 (April) p32
⁵ M Bar Zohar Embassies in Crisis Englewood, New Jersey, 1970, p216 quoting the Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff
⁶ Urban "Soviet Airborne Forces" loc cit p50
⁷ Hansen "Airborne" loc cit p32
⁸ Urban "soviet Airborne Forces" loc cit p50
forces were reportedly alerted in 1980 along with 26 other Soviet divisions in reaction to US military deployments to the Persian Gulf and events in Iran.¹

The divisions were trained for independent operations characteristic of local wars, but were not intended to conduct for them for long periods. Training also took account of the variety of geographical locations that characterised US training of its airborne and special forces specifically for small wars (cities, the Arctic, mountains, desert, or swamp) where normal troops were not considered proficient enough.² The airborne officers’ training school in Riazan’ had a faculty for training officers of sabotage units³ which would have an important role in local as in general war. Information on when these activities began is not readily available.

Until 1957 at least, the Soviet airborne forces also had the role of coastal assault that the US Marine corps had.⁴ There was no strong leadership interest in amphibious assault capability at this time except for the purposes of coastal defence, because the air force had taken over the role of moving troops long distances.⁵

Interest in large scale airborne operations for general war does not seem to have endured in the General Staff. Division-sized exercises of airborne troops were seen only between 1967 and 1971,⁶ the normal exercise pattern tending

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² Urban "Soviet Airborne Forces" loc cit p53
⁵ Khrushchev Khrushchev Remembers - The Last Testament p31
⁶ Hansen "Airborne" loc cit p32
to involve a reinforced battalion. In 1969, the Ground Forces created a number of air assault brigades, comprising three rifle battalions with heavy troop-carrying and attack helicopters. By 1982, there were 8 such brigades.

VDV troops were specially selected for political reliability.

Almost nothing is known about the readiness levels of the airborne units between 1946 and 1961. Most accounts suggest that at least after 1959 the USSR maintained most of its airborne divisions at high readiness. In January 1960, the CIA assessed 8 out of 10 Soviet airborne divisions as "combat ready". Similar assessments fill the subsequent literature but with little discussion of how the assessment was made or how readiness was defined.

It would seem reasonable to assume some linkage between the timing of the decision on substantial increases in the military airlift capability of the Soviet armed forces - first undertaken in the late 1940s and 1950s - and a possible confirmation of the role of airborne forces to serve as the USSR’s ready reaction force.

Glantz, the author of one of the few open source studies on the Soviet airborne forces, noted that although the USSR maintained as many as 10

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1 James F Holcomb "Soviet Airborne Forces and the Central Region" Military Review 1987 (November) p44. A division sized airborne assault would encompass an area 80 km by 100 km.
2 Miller "Airborne Warfare" loc cit p51
3 IISS Military Balance 1982-83
4 Urban "Airborne" loc cit p51; Suvorov The Liberators p90
5 CIA Strength of the Armed Forces of the USSR SNIE 11-6-60 3 May 1960 p2 in the Appendix to Garthoff "Estimating Soviet Military Force Levels" loc cit p113
6 For example, Jeffrey Record Sizing up the Soviet Army Brookings, Washington DC, 1975, p12
7 D M Hart "Soviet Approaches to Crisis Management: the Military Dimension" Survival 1984 (September-October) vol. xxvi, no. 5, p216 noted that the airborne forces had the following readiness levels: termination of leave and recall to duty; assuming a ready to move status; and departure to designated airfields.
airborne divisions\(^1\) in the immediate post-war years, they were given an auxiliary role alongside the large, increasingly mechanised army.\(^2\) Glantz noted at the time of writing that the role of the airborne divisions was to act as a strategic reserve acting exclusively under the direction of the General Staff, and in local war to serve as "fast troops" with their full complement of heavy equipment to take advantage of a given situation.

A Soviet book on the airborne forces published in 1980 talks of the major improvements in tactics, support aircraft and associated parachute technology as having occurred in the immediate post-war years.\(^3\) This view is repeated in a book on the organisational development of the Soviet Armed Forces published in 1978.\(^4\)

**Special Forces** Units for special operations were first formed in the Ground Forces in 1918 during the Civil War\(^5\) and were used in the Polish campaign of 1920.\(^6\) Many of the Red Army's leaders, such as Frunze, had been terrorists before the revolution and organised a group called the "Military Academy" which drew up the first strategy to be followed by armed detachments in the event of a Bolshevik uprising.\(^7\)

The partisan experience of the Second World War probably had a

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1. This was the CIA estimate for 1957. CIA Main Trends in Soviet Capabilities and Policies 1957-1962 p29. The estimate gave a total figure of 100,000 for airborne forces (or 10,000 per division) on p29 but said on p39 that the strength of each was about 7,500 each. The gross figure suggests a discrepancy of total strength of the order of 25,000.


3. *Sovetskie vozdushno-desantnie* pp263-267

4. Tiukhevich et al *Op cit* p418


big influence on subsequent Soviet planning for special operations.¹ After World War II, the Ministry of State Security employed officers who had served in the "special detachments" to build up an underground infrastructure for possible future operations against US military bases in Europe.² Soviet special forces, like the airborne forces, were trained for independent operations, and were therefore better prepared for local war, especially the counter-guerilla war in Afghanistan, than their regular Ground Forces colleagues.³

Unlike the USA, which trained many of its special forces for operations in exclusively local war scenarios, such as Vietnam and South America, the USSR concentrated its training of special forces for areas which coincided with the three general war theatres - Europe, North East Asia and the Middle East. This geographical focus of training allowed Western commentators to see the special forces training purely for general war scenarios, when these forces actually provided a greater capability for local war. It is likely that the General Staff had both missions in mind.

The USSR had special forces in the Ground Forces, Navy, KGB and Ministry of Interior troops, and their capabilities therefore ranged from covert reconnaissance and commando functions to deception, political subversion (including organisation of guerilla groups), and political repression similar to CIA covert operations.

In the KGB, Department V of the First Chief Directorate was founded in 1969 to replace the old Thirteenth Department ("wet affairs" or "dirty

² Nikolai Khoklov In the Name of Conscience Van Rees Press, New York NY, 1959, pp31, 127-128
³ Foy D Kohler "Spetsnaz" USNI Proceedings 1987 (August) p52
tricks"). Department V had a much broader brief than its predecessor. Its function was to prepare contingency plans to sabotage foreign governments and infrastructure in times of crisis or at the outbreak of war. In the early 1970s, "wet affairs" and other special actions became the preserve of a newly constituted Department Eight in Directorate S.¹

The organisation chart for the First Chief Directorate of the KGB drawn up by Andrew and Gordievsky² shows several units which could have had some responsibilities for local war planning or operations. These included Directorates R (Operational Planning and Analysis), S (Illegals), T (Active Measures), and Service A (Disinformation and Covert Action). Each Department of the First Chief Directorate responsible for geographic areas, such as Department 8 (Non-Arab countries of the Near East), appears to have had its own special forces assigned to it. KGB commandos led by Colonel Boyarinov, commandant of the Department Eight special operations training school, spearheaded the attack on the presidential palace outside Kabul in 1979.³

The naval special forces brigades may have been created as early as the late 1950s, although the source for this timing, Suvorov, did not have direct

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¹ Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky KGB - The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1990, pp435, 480-481. It was Department Eight which organised an attempted assassination of Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin several months before the Soviet invasion and which provided part of the advance forces for the invasion of Afghanistan. Gordievsky was the pseudonym of a senior KGB officer who defected.
² Andrew and Gordievsky op cit pp552-553. Their chart is based on a compilation of information from Gordievsky on the one hand and on the other from Desmond Ball and Robert Windren "Soviet Signals Intelligence (Sigint): Organisation and Management" Intelligence and National Security 1989, vol. iv, no. 4.
³ Andrew and Gordievsky op cit p481
experience of the Navy.¹

The GRU’s Fifth Directorate (operational intelligence) supervised most special forces’ activities² but the KGB would have supervised strategic type missions, such as those aimed at undermining national will.³

Special forces units were used in Czechoslovakia in 1968. A reconnaissance/sabotage group attached to the 103rd Guards Airborne Division mounted the initial assault on guard posts and other key points at the airport to clear the way for landing the airborne division; possibly in the arrest of Czech leader, Dubcek.⁴ These units were also used in the invasion of Afghanistan⁵ and later for extended dismounted operations to interdict Afghan supply routes, calling in air or artillery strikes, deception operations, and advance protection of convoy routes.⁶ They were probably not used for field operations until 1981, building up to quite widespread use by 1982.⁷ Many special forces units had a low level of readiness because they were manned by conscripts but the headquarters company

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¹ Mark N Berkowitz “Soviet Naval Spetsnaz Forces” Naval War College Review 1988 (Spring) p9 quoting Suvorov The Liberators p86. There were four naval spetsnaz brigades (one for each fleet), 16 ground force brigades (one for each group of forces and one for each military district), and 41 separate companies. Each brigade had a headquarters company, 3 or 4 airborne battalions, a signals company and support detachments, for a total of 900-1300 soldiers and officers in a brigade. The 16 brigades were not fully manned, with only the headquarters company and some of the companies of up to five strike battalions likely to be maintained at full strength (Ross S Kelly Special Operations and National Purpose Lexington Books, Lexington MASS, 1989, p79. Kelly was the current chief of DIA’s Instability/Insurgency Branch).


⁴ Kohler op cit p48

⁵ Vladimir Kuzichkin Inside the KGB - Myth and Reality translated by Thomas B Beattie, André Deutsch Ltd, London UK, 1990, pp316-317 reported that KGB officers, mainly from the First Chief Directorate, and GRU officers attached to the KGB, led the operation to kill President Amin. The intelligence officers (the special group [spetsgrup]) had undergone only a brief training in weapons and tactics. They were supported by a battalion of airborne troops.

⁶ Kohler op cit p52

was manned entirely by professional soldiers.\textsuperscript{1}

Marshal Akhромеев told the US congressional committee in 1989 that Western reports that the USSR had as many as 100,000 special forces were "pure fantasy",\textsuperscript{2} and that it had only a few thousand. This was probably true; the US Army certainly found considerable difficulty in maintaining large numbers of special forces at any level of proficiency in the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{3}

Soviet special forces did not have specialised infiltration aircraft, like the US Air Force’s modified Hercules aircraft (MC-130E Combat Talon),\textsuperscript{4} and probably no equivalents of the US Navy’s SEA VIKING special warfare craft, or the two specially refitted ETHAN ALLEN class submarines used as amphibious transports. Some Soviet submarines were converted to carry two miniature submarines and an ECHO class submarine may have been modified to carry spetsnaz swimmers.\textsuperscript{5}

Soviet special forces’ missions in major war included destruction of headquarters, command posts, communications, nuclear weapons and related delivery facilities and systems, sabotage, and sowing uncertainty and panic in the enemy rear.\textsuperscript{6} Of course, these missions are equally applicable to local war, as the documented experiences of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan show.

**Amphibious Forces** Coastal assault operations were not well developed in Soviet practice, probably because most landings made in the Second

\textsuperscript{1} Kohler \textit{op cit} p49. The headquarters company was always kept in the highest state of readiness. A spetsnaz company had 9 officers and 11 warrant officers compared with 5 officers and one warrant officer in a normal army company.
\textsuperscript{3} This is discussed in a footnote in Chapter Two (p75n).
\textsuperscript{4} Kohler \textit{op cit} p54
\textsuperscript{5} C F Carnes "Soviet Naval Intelligence Gathering Operations - Part 1" \textit{Naval Forces} 1987 (6) p63
\textsuperscript{6} Suvorov \textit{The Liberators} p153
World War were either small-scale or against negligible opposition.\footnote{Garthoff \textit{Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age} p206}

The naval infantry appear to have survived after the Second World War only as a small part of naval coastal defence units,\footnote{Dominik George Nargele \textit{The Soviet Naval Infantry - An Evolving Instrument of State Power} 2 vols Ph D Thesis, Georgetown University, 1983, p217} and was not assigned the mission of amphibious assaults.\footnote{The naval infantry had been the subject of a book published in 1957 in which the author pleaded for the proper naval training of those forces currently allocated the duties of naval infantry but who could not be called naval infantry in the strict sense of the term. See Kh Kh Kamalov et al \textit{Morskaia pekhota: kratkie istoricheskii ocherk morskoi pekhoty otechestvennogo flota} [Naval Infantry: A Short Historical Study of the Naval Infantry of the Fatherland’s Fleet] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1957, pp106-109}

The official view in the USA was that the naval infantry was deactivated after the Second World War but reappeared in the early 1960s after the lessons of Suez (1956), Lebanon (1958), and Cuba (1962) were absorbed, and because of their potential role in conventional operations in a nuclear war.\footnote{Lt. Rick Kirn \textit{Soviet and NSWP Amphibious Warfare} US DIA, Washington DC, 1984, (DDB-2680-211-84), p2} This view was based on statements and photographs in the Soviet press in 1964 indicating that it had been reestablished in the Baltic and Pacific Fleets.\footnote{IISS \textit{Military Balance} 1964-65 p7} Wolfe suggested the naval infantry may have been deactivated sometime in the 1950s when it "dropped out of the picture".\footnote{Wolfe \textit{Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970} p192n. Thomas W Wolfe \textit{Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads} Harvard University Press, Cambridge MASS, 1964, p187 noted that the second edition of Sokolovskii’s \textit{Military Strategy} included a reference to the need to plan for amphibious operations after the authors were criticised by a Soviet Admiral for ignoring this aspect in the first edition. The 1957 book on the naval infantry noted that "occasionally in peacetime, for one reason or another, the naval infantry has disappeared and been reborn again in the course of war" (Kamalov et al \textit{op cit} p106).}

The naval infantry began to develop its capacity for use in local wars
from the late 1950s or early 1960s. Tiushkevich's book mentioned improvements to it, including equipping it with the latest small arms, artillery, and armour, and providing well-armed, amphibious assault ships, in his treatment of the period before 1961. The same view was expressed in Babakov's history, but without supporting detail.

The naval infantry increased from about 3,000 in the early 1960s, to 6,000 in 1966, and to 12,000 in 1969. After 1965, new classes of amphibious ships began to appear: in 1965, POLNOCNY, capable of carrying 180 troops; and in 1966, the 4,000 ton ALLIGATOR tank landing ship, which could transport a marine battalion; but by 1970, the USSR still only had 9 amphibious ships capable of open ocean transit. In 1974 and 1978, other new classes were introduced, but only two of the later one, IVAN ROGOV, were ever built, notwithstanding its impressive capabilities. It was capable of carrying one battalion with some supporting helicopters, hovercraft and tanks.

The first deployment of Soviet amphibious vessels beyond home waters was to the Mediterranean in 1967. In 1970, the Navy held an amphibious exercise on Socotra at the mouth of the Red Sea. Fleet training exercises on the Syrian coast in July 1981 and in the South China Sea in March 1984 involved the

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1 Geoffrey Jukes "The Soviet Armed Forces and the Afghan War" in Amin Saikal and William Maley (eds) The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1989, p85 suggested the naval infantry was re instituted in 1963. He wrote: "There is no direct evidence whether this indicated a nascent interest in distant limited war or was merely intended to improve amphibious assault capability for general war" but concluded that the exercise patterns and deployments suggested the latter may have been the predominant motivation.

2 Tiushkevich et al op cit pp416, 422

3 Babakov op cit pp58, 107

4 Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 pp192n, 450


6 IISS The Military Balance 1967-68 p8
first Soviet naval infantry landings in those areas.¹

By the early 1980s, the Pacific Fleet had a 7,000 man SNI division (three infantry and one tank regiments, and supporting units) comparable in size and structure to an airborne division. The other fleets each had only a brigade of four infantry and one tank battalions.²

The Pacific Fleet’s larger naval infantry force may have been developed for local war situations in distant waters, since that fleet was nominally responsible for deployments to the Indian Ocean after 1968. One battalion was based for some time on Dahlak island in Ethiopia. But since another battalion was based on two of the disputed islands in the southern Kuriles, they may have been intended as much for local war scenarios closer to home.³

But the local war potential of the Soviet Naval Infantry was severely constrained. Even at the peak of its peacetime manning in 1986 of 18,000, the naval infantry did not develop a powerful intervention capability. It was deficient in organic air support, and consistently had a low level of peacetime manning relative to war establishment.⁴ At the peak of its development the Soviet Navy had a small amphibious fleet (just over 200,000 tonnes all up) with limited carrier-borne air support.⁵

Soviet amphibious units were used in a number of regional crises and conflicts, including the 1973 Arab-Israel War (six amphibious ships); the Angolan Civil War in 1976 (a Soviet tank landing ship shelled the port of

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¹ Hansen "Soviet Vanguard Forces - Naval Infantry" loc cit p57; Haselkorn op cit p45
² Hansen "Soviet Vanguard Forces - Naval Infantry" loc cit pp52-53
⁴ Suvorov Inside the Soviet Army p138
⁵ Hansen "Soviet Vanguard Forces - Naval Infantry" loc cit p58. This contrasted with the American fleet (in 1986) of 60 amphibious ships displacing over 950,000 tons. The US had 23 ocean-going amphibious ships larger than the two IVAN ROGOVs in the Soviet Navy
Mocamedes); the war between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1978 (for logistic support and possibly some fire support); the 1979 China-Vietnam war (two amphibious ships carrying naval infantry were sent to Vietnam); and during internal crises in the Seychelles in the early 1980s.¹

**Naval Task Groups** The most serious limitation on the USSR’s ability to use amphibious forces in local wars was the lack of powerful naval task groups, such as those possessed by the USA.

Aircraft carriers were to be included in Stalin’s plans for modernising the Navy after the war,² but after his death, the Politburo decided unanimously that the USSR could not afford them.³ Senior Soviet officers regularly disparaged them, with Marshal Malinovskii referred to them as floating coffins.⁴

These views probably had an element of political expediency: Soviet military leaders needed to denigrate a weapon only the potential enemy possessed. The view of carriers themselves was not necessarily completely hostile. Even Sokolovskii remarked on the growing importance attached by the USA to carrier based forces in limited war missions.⁵

By 1969, the public Soviet view of aircraft carriers had clearly changed. Gorshkov observed in *Pravda*:

> Of course, one should not minimise the combat potential of aircraft

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¹ *ibid* p57
² The June 1946 issue of *Military Thought* expressed the view that: The conditions of modern war at sea demand the mandatory participation ... of powerful carrier forces, using them for striking devastating blows against the naval forces of the enemy as well as for the contest with his air forces. Both at sea and near one’s bases, these tasks can only be carried out with carrier aviation.
⁴ Khrushchev *Khrushchev Remembers - The Last Testament* pp49-65
⁵ cited in Mackintosh *Juggernaut* p308
⁶ Sokolovskii (ed) *Voennaia strategiia* 2nd ed p119
carriers, especially, for instance, when they are brought to bear against poorly armed countries.\(^1\)

By then, construction of the KIEV class aircraft carrier had been approved.\(^2\) This ship, capable of operating vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft and helicopters, came into service in 1975, and three more followed up to 1984. This carrier clearly had an important anti-submarine role,\(^3\) but was also used and almost certainly conceived by the General Staff, as a good capability for local war.

Notwithstanding the small size of Soviet carriers compared with US carriers, and poorer afloat support capability, Soviet naval force structure by the 1980s was quite well suited to use in local wars if the expectation of direct conflict with the USA was small.

Soviet naval force structure displayed little evidence of an intention to provide carrier battle groups comparable to those of the US Navy. The highest number of surface combatants ever deployed by the USSR to the Indian Ocean at any one time was 9 (February 1980 in response to a massive US naval buildup), with 8 being deployed at the time of the Ethiopia/Somalia crisis in 1978. During the Iranian hostage crisis deployment in 1980, the USSR needed as many auxiliary vessels as the USA had combatants.

However, the Soviet Navy clearly had acquired the capacity to deploy a small force rapidly and thus provide some military assets in a local war or crisis, to back up local clients or to deter US escalation.

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\(^1\) Quoted in H Adomeit Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behaviour Adelphi Paper (no. 101) 1982 p27
\(^2\) Haselkorn op cit (1978) p45
\(^3\) Michael MccGwire "The Evolution of Soviet Naval Policy: 1960-1974" in MccGwire, Booth and McDonnell (eds) op cit pp507-514. The USSR had decided in the mid-1950s to build the Moskva class anti-submarine cruiser (helicopter carrier), a program which Soviet leaders decided sometime in 1963 or 1964 to cancel in favour of another helicopter carrier with an ASW mission, the KIEV class.
Conclusion

After 1946, the General Staff vigorously pursued the development of strategic and general purpose forces which would form an appropriate expansion base for general war. For localised conflicts on the Soviet periphery (most of the Eurasian landmass), the General Staff had at its disposal a massive force, but one geared largely to conventional operations, as opposed to irregular warfare, and to land based operations rather than coastal assault. This force included a number of airborne divisions (probably up to ten) which could spearhead any intervention, although air transport capability was still limited. The existence of KGB special forces probably took some of the pressure off the General Staff to field similar units.

The USSR’s interventionary capability was mobilised between 1949 and 1952, probably in response to events in East Asia. The demobilisation after 1952, like that after 1945, was evidence that at that time the General Staff did not regard general war, or even a major war, as imminent. The capability was used again in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and threatened in Poland. In the 1960s, the local war capability was tested and developed in a defensive and deterrent mode on the Sino-Soviet border.

Towards the end of the 1950s, probably convinced that there was little risk associated with regional military involvements, the Soviet leadership became bolder in its support of friendly countries in the Third World, such as Syria. This new political assertiveness by the political leaders was probably not supported by the General Staff until mid-1961, when in the course of one year, the USSR took several decisions on strategic commitments and force structure.

Notwithstanding heavy emphasis on strategic nuclear weapons and
statements on changes to the role of general purpose forces because of the introduction of nuclear weapons, the General Staff at no stage downgraded its capability to intervene on a limited scale on the Soviet periphery. The reverse is true. The modernisation of general purpose forces, especially airlift capability and mechanisation of Ground Forces units, enhanced Soviet interventionary capability significantly.

Moreover, decisions taken at around the same time (1961-1963), such as the reestablishment of the naval infantry, suggest a heightened determination to maintain and use an interventionary capability. The decision in 1962 to send 40,000 troops to Cuba would appear to confirm a new General Staff enthusiasm for local war commitments.

The General Staff did not favour elaborate planning or the development of large forces especially for local war. It appeared content to rely on its broad mix of general purpose forces. Since 1946, it maintained specialised forces for local war in the shape of its airborne divisions, towards which it showed full commitment by setting in train a development program for military transport aircraft and a military transport command subordinated to the General Staff. No changes to airborne forces were found after 1961 such as to reflect the new General Staff interests in local war doctrine. The development of naval infantry may have been one of the few force structure changes that grew out of consideration of local war doctrine in the first years of the 1960s, but the constraints on growth of this force were such as to suggest a low level of commitment to these as an interventionary force. They did however serve some purpose where demonstration of political interest in a crisis was concerned and where the prospect of direct conflict with the USA was low.
There is some evidence that the Soviet armed forces undertook training for specialised local war scenarios, including in Eastern Europe, but this training was probably not extensive. There is little evidence of the contingency planning for local wars so prevalent in the USA, but lack of evidence does not necessarily mean such plans did not exist.

In Eastern Europe, where the Warsaw Pact countries represented both a defensive glacis for the USSR and, of equal importance, the basis for Soviet claims to dominate the Communist world, any localised military threat had to be crushed. This aim was served by maintaining large conventional forces in Eastern Europe, whose local war functions were abetted by a network of political allies. As the armed forces of the non-Soviet Pact members were modernised after 1955, the scale of the potential local war problem in Eastern Europe grew.

As long as direct evidence of General Staff deliberations about the motivation for the military posture in Eastern Europe remains poor, there must be some doubt whether these distinguished sharply or consistently between the value of the forces there for local war and for general war (either in deterrence of it or in provision of a solid base for mobilisation in the event of it). But equally the existence of an inchoate doctrine for local war, Soviet strategic interests in Eastern Europe, the Soviet record of use of force, and the cost of a major war all suggest that a rational view would have the General Staff thinking more about how to snuff out a local conflict rather than extend it.

Regardless of motivation, the General Staff effectively achieved the goals that the political leadership imposed on it in all local war situations in Eastern Europe. This was done largely through sustained preparation, including deception, massive use of force, and reliance on allies in the armed forces or
security forces of the enemy.

In the Far East theatre, the General Staff faced a local war scenario less susceptible than Eastern European ones to instant resolution by military action, but in a situation where it enjoyed nuclear superiority over China. In this environment, the General Staff demonstrated considerable flexibility and determination to deter continued Chinese attacks on border outposts and reduce what it saw as the risk of major war with China, especially in the period 1967 to 1969.

In Afghanistan, the General Staff was not able to secure one important strategic goal (sealing the border with Pakistan) but it demonstrated some flexibility in the conduct of other aspects of the war.

The Soviet armed forces were used in a number of local wars well beyond the periphery of the USSR but always in strictly controlled circumstances, because the USSR had not developed a power projection capability that it would have dared to pit against US forces at any great distance from its immediate periphery. This pattern, like the initial lack of enthusiasm for the involvement in Afghanistan, has often been cited as evidence of lack of a local war doctrine. But it is possible to argue the contrary - that the General Staff consistently demonstrated, Cuba excepted, a highly developed appreciation, indeed "a doctrine", of the nature of local wars and how to fight them, and that this was reflected in a multi-variant force posture designed to meet the more likely contingency of local war, while also providing insurance against the worst case of general war. While the posture provided considerable insurance against the worst-case, this presented merely an obfuscation for analysts, rather than the full extent of the strategy or doctrine.