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

BY

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Doctor of Philosophy of the
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work.

[Signature]
Gregory Douglas Austin
ABSTRACT

Military doctrine can be distinguished from political doctrine on the use of military force - that is, a doctrine designed to mobilise political support for the non-military goals of the State. At the same time, one doctrine might satisfy partially or completely each of the two arms of government: the armed forces in pursuit of reasonably structured forces and the political leaders seeking to legitimise or bolster foreign or domestic policy.

American scholarship on Soviet military doctrine to a large degree ignored these distinctions. One group of scholars, the "Armageddon school", took at face value the Soviet claim in political doctrine that the USSR rejected the concept of limited war. This political doctrine probably did not reflect the perceptions of the Soviet General Staff about the USSR’s military requirements.

The Soviet General Staff's approach to wars smaller than general war ("local war" in their terminology) was rooted more in the pursuit of a balanced strategic posture which might be moulded to respond to a variety of contingencies, than in the more elaborate strategic concepts developed in the USA for limited war.

The Soviet Ministry of Defence published its first open source studies on local war in 1960, with the General Staff Academy compiling a more formal study in 1963, although this was classified. Since that time, the General Staff undertook and published a variety of studies of local war because it believed the USSR might become involved in such wars. The General Staff had a firm doctrinal view from at least 1963 of the unique military requirements of local war.

This inchoate military doctrine for local war was never accorded the politically acceptable status that was accorded "official" Soviet strategic doctrine for general war, despite clear evidence of the General Staff's desire for that to happen.

The Armageddon scholars in the USA placed undue reliance on textual analysis of open sources and rarely pursued alternative explanations. They paid too little attention to the evidentiary value and limitations of information on Soviet military posture, which came almost exclusively from US Government intelligence sources. Taking the US doctrine of limited war as some sort of universal yardstick did not help either, particularly as it meant different things to different people in the USA and because variations on it had been shaped by domestic American political battles and inter-service rivalries.

The main shortcoming, though, appears to have been the lack of rigour in pursuing a comprehensive account of the sources of military doctrine.

This thesis argues that of three main sources of military doctrine - international circumstance; personal or group interests; and a country’s ideological framework - international circumstance provided a strong impetus for a Soviet local war doctrine. There is also room to argue that the group interests of the General Staff favoured a Soviet local war doctrine, but, in the final analysis, these pressures for a comprehensive local war doctrine could not overcome the constraints imposed by the ideological framework in which military doctrine was conceived and expressed.
PREFACE

This thesis documents the development of Soviet military doctrine for local war. It places this documentary work in the broader context of the study of military doctrine and strategy, and evaluates scholarly work on Soviet local war doctrine against that broader context.

The thesis argues that the USSR had a military doctrine for fighting local war that was incipient in Soviet policy from at least 1949, if not 1945, and that it was given some expression in official sources, at least from 1960, although in muted terms.

The end point of the period studied - 1991 - brings the thesis to the time of the final collapse of the USSR and the emergence of Russia as its successor. The political revolution unleashed by Gorbachev, brought to crisis point by the August 1991 coup, had by December of that year left the once powerful Soviet military establishment in an uneasy relationship with the nearly twenty independent countries, including former Soviet republics, it had once helped to control. This uneasy relationship led to a call in late 1991 by the Chief of the Soviet General Staff for a reshaping of Soviet military posture to cope with these small scale wars.

The subject of the thesis is the military doctrine of a now defunct empire. The object of the thesis is to provide a case study in the analysis of the domestic sources of a state's military doctrine and military strategy, particularly political and social features. It provides a case study in support of the proposition that the official military strategy of a State represents a social or political contract between the political leadership and the leaders of the armed forces.
The thesis has been able to use information which has only become available to Western scholars as the result of a new openness - albeit still limited - of military institutions in Russia. The author had access to some previously classified studies of the Soviet General Staff Academy during a period of field work in Moscow in late 1991 and early 1992.

The Introduction of the thesis gives a brief account of why the subject is important.

Part One (Chapters One to Four) outlines the concepts analysed in the thesis and reviews the scholarship on the questions addressed in it.

Chapter One defines key terms - doctrine and strategy - and outlines theoretical approaches to the study of them. Chapter Two addresses "local war" as a unique strategic phenomenon, and its commonalities with American concepts of limited war. Chapter Three provides essential commentary on sources of information on Soviet military policy and interpretation of them, in particular the influential role of US Government intelligence information. Chapter Four reviews scholarly work on Soviet military strategy against two criteria: the degree to which questions of local or limited war were canvassed; and the degree to which political, social or institutional influences were taken into account.

Part Two (Chapters Five to Eight) documents the manifestations of the Soviet General Staff’s set of beliefs on local war strategy and Soviet military involvement in local wars.

Chapter Five addresses the published views of the Soviet General Staff on local wars from 1945 to 1969, with Chapter Six looking at 1970 to 1977. Chapter Seven documents some of the efforts made to regularise the study of local war doctrine in the Soviet military establishment between 1978 and 1991. It then
compares the treatment accorded local war doctrine with that accorded general war doctrine, since one of the essential features of this period was the failure of the Soviet General Staff to disseminate a comprehensive doctrine on local wars.

Chapter Eight treads the well worn ground of Soviet force structure and military posture to assess them from the perspective of a multi-variant strategy, designed to cope with a variety of contingencies.

Part Three (Chapters Nine and Ten) offers competing explanations of why local war doctrine developed as it did in the USSR in comparison with general war doctrine.

Chapter Nine reviews possible causes based in personal or group motivations of the General Staff. Chapter Ten examines whether institutional factors - the structures of Soviet ideology and doctrine - had most influence on the General Staff's approach to local war problems.

The Conclusion summarises the main arguments.

Since the thesis refers to the policies of a recently collapsed empire, the convention of using present tense to describe past events has been abandoned to avoid confusion in meaning.

Full citation of a reference is given the first time it occurs in each chapter. In footnotes, the title of a work in Russian is followed by a translation into English for its first citation. Where a Russian work is referred to by name in the text of the thesis, its title is rendered in English.

The Library of Congress transliteration of Russian is used for all referenced titles, but not for proper names where other renderings are more common - for example, Trotsky instead of Trotskii. The names of some Soviet publishing houses are given in modified transliteration. For example, the Ministry
of Defence publishing house is rendered "Voenizdat".

Australian usage is observed for spelling. Where citations from texts written with American usage occur, the spelling of the original source is retained.

I would like to thank Mr Geoffrey Jukes, chairman of the supervising committee, for his guidance in preparation of this thesis. His experience of the Western intelligence community, on which this thesis has some comment, and his work as a historian on the Soviet armed forces and Hitler's military decisions, provided important perspectives which inspired the approach in the thesis.

Dr Robert Miller and Dr Leszek Buszynski, members of the supervising committee, also provided valuable comments in the development stages of the thesis.

I would like especially to acknowledge the practical assistance of General Dmitrii Volkogonov, former Director of the Military History Institute of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR, and the following members of the Institute: Captain Valerii Nikolaevich Vartanov, Colonel Boris Gavrilovich Putilin, Lieutenant-Colonel Yurii Leonidovich Tegin, and Lieutenant-Colonel Yurii Evgenevich Rybalkin. The period of research spent in Moscow from November 1991 to January 1992 provided important documentary sources and direct experience of an organ of the Soviet General Staff. The assistance of Mr Bill Burr of the National Security Archive in Washington DC during my research there was timely at a formative stage of the thesis. Professor Des Ball of the Australian National University gave useful pointers to sources on questions of nuclear strategy and force structure.
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CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY
INTRODUCTION

The study of the military policies of the USSR was one of the most important intellectual endeavours of the entire Cold War period from 1948 to 1991. The same can be said of the study of US military policies.

The reason is that in those years both countries actively developed military plans involving the devastation of each other and Europe with nuclear weapons. Parts of Asia, especially China, would have been targeted by both countries as well, albeit at different times. Chemical weapons were developed by both superpowers, but with considerably different approaches, and the USSR spent considerable effort developing biological weapons.

But the Cold War years were above all else years of nuclear peril. This peril existed because of the strategic rivalry between the USSR and the USA, but their respective arsenals grew to such extreme proportions that the attendant strategies served to redefine the nature of the superpower confrontation.

While the record now shows, as Churchill predicted in 1955, that safety was the "sturdy child of terror" and "survival the twin brother of annihilation", the distinct possibility existed that a nuclear war could have broken out. Scenarios were numerous, but one of the commonly identified causes of the possible outbreak of a new world war was an erroneous assessment by one side of the other's intentions or actions.

One would not expect unanimity in assessment by scholars or governments of any country's strategic intentions, especially where high levels of

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1 Quoted in McGeorge Bundy Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years Schwartz and Wilkinson, Melbourne VIC, 1990, p198
2 Bruce G Blair The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War Brookings, Washington DC, 1993, p1
secrecy hindered normal investigative endeavours. But the record of assessment of Soviet military strategy has some disturbing aspects, given what was at stake.

Some individual scholars and successive US Governments were able to make cautious and soundly-based judgements about Soviet military intentions. At the same time, it is beyond dispute that, to a large degree, the study of Soviet military strategy in the USA became hostage to a range of unscientific processes and presumptions, some ephemeral and some more enduring. One need go no further than the bomber gap, the missile gap, the civil defence gap, and the supposed window of vulnerability.

It would not be difficult to make a case that much work on Soviet military strategy became hostage to shared prejudices among a variety of people working in different parts of the US Government, especially the Defense Department and the armed forces, from which more than a few prominent American Sovietologists came or derived their financial support.

This thesis suggests that the mixed record of assessment stemmed from methodological flaws in much of the work. Garthoff identified one factor which may have lain at the root of some of these problems - that the subject of study was the enemy:

> too little attention has been paid in strategic studies, diplomatic history and intelligence analysis to the subject of assessing the adversary. More needs to be done ...¹

Garthoff mentioned a number of suggestions for improvement, but one which is particularly apt for this thesis is the need to acknowledge the effects on assessments of "blanks and uncertainties".² This thesis contends that the

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¹ Raymond L Garthoff Assessing the Adversary - Estimates by the Eisenhower Administration of Soviet Intentions and Capabilities Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 1991, p52
² ibid p50
principal weaknesses in assessing Soviet military intentions were failure to admit the inadequacy of available information and failure to address a variety of alternative explanations.

The Soviet political and military leadership claimed in public that there was a direct correspondence between the tenets of official Soviet military doctrine and the shape of the armed forces - size, structure, missions and operational deployment. The leadership, through the political organs of the CPSU, claimed that there was a fully rational process for force structure decisions, and that the Party's analysis of the external security environment, the economic and social potential of the State, and its class interests determined the military doctrine adopted.\(^1\)

One example of the Soviet position can be found in the Officer's Handbook published in 1971, which claimed "scientific determination and correct calculation" by the Party leadership in arriving at the USSR's military doctrine, contrasting it with the inability of bourgeois states to make an "objective calculation" because they lack "truly scientific principles".\(^2\)

It is possible that the Party's analysis of the external security environment was followed very closely in building the armed forces and developing doctrinal concepts for their use. After all, if the Party's main concern was to remain in power and build its prestige, it could be argued that it had much to gain by ensuring that its security policies were implemented. Moreover, the CPSU did

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not face the political obstacle of public opinion experienced in democratic countries for most of the same period.

This assertion - that the CPSU's analysis of its external environment offered a nearly exact account of why the armed forces were built as they were - depended on three key assumptions - all unrealistic. First, that the Soviet force structure decision process was immune to distorting bureaucratic pressures to which policy in major Western powers was subjected.\(^1\) Secondly, that all phases of Soviet policy-making (analysis, decision and implementation) were fully responsive to the directives of the leadership and to those alone.\(^2\) Thirdly, that there was no difficulty in adapting the post-1945 forces to the requirements of modern warfare as they developed, particularly with the advent of nuclear weapons, missile delivery systems, and chemical weapons.\(^3\)

As Chapter Four will show, scholarship on Soviet military strategy

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The process is fundamentally political. It is permeated with pulling and hauling over roles, missions, budgetary priorities, and many other institutional considerations.

\(^2\) Matthew P Gallagher "The Military Role in Soviet Decision-Making" in MccGwire, Booth and McDonnell op cit pp46-49 disputed this view and quoted (pp48-49) a senior US official testifying before a Congressional committee about the US experience:

There is no inexorable logic tying one set of decisions to another. ... There is a great deal of slippage and room for judgement and priority debate in the connection between any two steps in the process.

\(^3\) The problem of the force in being is the most serious problem facing any country trying to adapt a force in being to one that a new or emerging doctrine says should exist. The nature of military forces is such that the forces in existence at a particular point in time have a profound influence on their development in subsequent years. Even when a Government dictates change in military posture (through revisions in military doctrine), a period of transition is required before the change can be fully implemented. The nature of the transition and the time it takes can be influenced by many things, such as levels of expenditure committed to the transition or degree of opposition to the change in the officer corps. No factor has greater influence on the pace of change than the shape of the force at the time the change is announced - the "force in being". Any effort to link the force structure of the Soviet armed forces to changing military doctrine must take account of the extent to which the force structure at a given point in time owed more to the force in being or more to supposed changes in doctrine. It is insufficient to assume - as most scholars have - that changes to Soviet force structure at any particular point in time after 1955 must have closely reflected synchronous changes in accepted military doctrine.
mostly assumed a fairly direct correspondence between putative Soviet military requirements (as assumed by Western observers), military strategy, and officially endorsed military doctrine. The "cultural" environment of the Soviet armed forces was not seen as exercising much influence on military strategy beyond dictating a preference for the offensive, use of massive forces, deep operations and preemption.

One blank in official Soviet military doctrine related to limited war. The official doctrine professed non-acceptance of the Western concept of limited nuclear war and the Soviet General Staff eschewed in public any substantive elaboration of "limited war". Some Western scholars accepted these facts as proof of Soviet rejection of the concept of limited war involving Soviet military forces.

For example, Ball wrote in 1983:

Soviet planners evince no willingness whatsoever to seriously consider the possibility of limited or controlled strategic nuclear operations. ...

... the evidence that Soviet military doctrine now incorporates the possibility of control, selectivity, and restraint in a strategic nuclear conflict is actually very fragmentary. ...

... the doctrine that, once the nuclear threshold is passed, it is the task of the nuclear forces to terminate war by achieving military victory through massive, crippling strikes is deeply rooted in Soviet strategic culture, and the preferences and habits of the military bureaucracy would tend to rule out any possibility of improvisation in favor of "American formulated rules of intra-war restraint".¹

Ball - quite clearly talking only of limited strategic (intercontinental) war - may have been correct, but it is noteworthy that the lack of hard evidence

¹ Desmond Ball "Soviet Strategic Planning and the Control of Nuclear War" Soviet Union 10 Pts 2-3, 1983, pp202, 209, 217. Ball acknowledged some evidence in Soviet public statements of interest in escalation control and even that the Soviet command and control system was suitable to control escalation, but concludes for a number of reasons that it would not be practical and that the Soviet military leaders would not really be interested.
from one of the world’s most secretive countries was persuasive in his interpretation. Ball put more faith in consistent statements favouring massive retaliation than in less frequent statements mentioning escalation control. The question of whether there were any constraints on the subjects which could be raised in the military literature was given little attention.

Ball’s view of Soviet military strategy belongs to what this thesis calls the "Armageddon school".1 The term is used because the work of this school suggests very strongly that the USSR, if faced with the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons, would have retaliated instantly with massive and wide-ranging strategic nuclear strikes - that is, with general nuclear war ("Armageddon").

This school of thought did not address with sufficient rigour whether the lack of consistent or elaborate treatment of escalation and selective targeting in officially endorsed Soviet military doctrine was a reliable guide to Soviet military strategy.

There was after all no doctrine for Soviet use of biological weapons, and very little for offensive use of chemical weapons, but the Soviet General Staff, or at least the Soviet political leadership, must have had some intentions concerning their military application.

The reliance by the Armageddon school on express Soviet doctrine had the effect of substituting the doctrine on general war for the strategy in all situations, including limited war.

This thesis challenges that thinking and gives room for further consideration of whether the nexus in Soviet military thinking between limited war

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1 Ball is an Australian but as Chapter Four shows, the Armageddon school was a vigorous school of thought - the dominant one at times - in the USA on Soviet military doctrine.
and general war was more highly developed than the Western literature assumed.

The thesis argues that official doctrine was not a consistent set of objective principles devised in direct response to Soviet assessment of the USSR's international circumstances and goals. It examines the proposition that the sources of Soviet military doctrine included a variety of institutional pressures, group and personal motivations, as well as more conventional assessments involving international circumstance and foreign policy.

The highly structured Soviet system of military science produced a well articulated doctrine for general war on which scholars could rely, but the same system, in rejecting the concept of limited war, and relying instead on a slightly different concept of local war, presented an obfuscation to scholars not prepared to study in sufficient depth commonalities between the two concepts.

This thesis seeks to avoid the methodological failings described above and hence provides a more lengthy treatment than usual of the nature of sources. The use of information derived from intelligence sources in the scholarship receives special attention.

But lack of attention to the evidentiary nature of sources was not the only shortcoming of the Armageddon school. There was generally little effort made to establish the nature of the two phenomena - military strategy and military doctrine - which were being discussed.

This would not have been a difficult or time-consuming task. It was simply a question of applying some basic definitional analysis. For this reason, the thesis places its analysis of Soviet military doctrine in a theoretical framework. By defining not only strategy and doctrine, but also local war, the author hopes to be better placed to give an account of the Soviet perspective of local war doctrine.
The purpose of the theoretical analysis goes a little further. The ways in which the Armageddon school analysed Soviet military doctrine were, in the author's experience, not unique to those scholars or their subject of study. Western analysis of the strategic policies and military doctrines of a number of countries of interest, it seems to this author, has been dominated by the image of military strategy as a policy reaction to a state's international military circumstances. This is essentially the balance of power model of international relations.

While the post-war literature on military policy, including military doctrine, explicitly recognised the possible domestic origins of military policy, including doctrine, and accepted a dynamic interplay between international and domestic circumstances, the notion that military strategy and doctrine might be substantially shaped by domestic factors has not, until fairly recently, been explored in mainstream scholarship.

Thus, proceeding from a disaffection with the lack of a theoretical framework in much scholarly work on Soviet military doctrine, the thesis tests the applicability to Soviet local war doctrine of a fairly recent model of analysis of military strategy, one which does not automatically give primacy to international circumstances over domestic influences. The thesis reviews the development of Soviet local war doctrine against a model developed by Snyder which postulates that military strategy is shaped by the interaction of motivational biases, doctrinal

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1 A good, early example of this is Samuel P Huntington The Common Defense - Strategic Programs in National Politics Columbia University Press, New York NY, 1961. At pp1-2, Huntington wrote: The most distinctive, the most fascinating, and the most troublesome aspect of military policy is its Janus-like quality. Indeed, military policy not only faces in two directions, it exists in two worlds. ... Domestic politics serves as a constraint on the formulation of policies which are primarily responses to the external environment ... Conversely, international politics serves as a constraint on the formulation of policies which are primarily responses to the domestic environment.

2 This presumption was a tenet of Marxist study of military strategy and doctrine.
simplifications, and rational calculations.¹

PART ONE

LOCAL WAR DOCTRINE -

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

AND A RECORD OF ANALYSIS
CHAPTER ONE
DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

This chapter defines two key concepts used in the thesis - strategy and doctrine - and reviews theoretical approaches to the study of them.

Strategy: A Definition

Strategy is a word with several possible levels of meaning which can be traced to the different stages of development of the concept in the last two centuries.\(^1\)

The Clausewitzian definition of strategy saw it as "the deployment of the battles as the means toward the attainment of the object of war" or, in Liddell Hart's view, "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy" implied in war.

The first extension of the meaning of strategy saw it look beyond purely military means to include the whole arsenal of resources at the disposal of the State in war - including economic, political and technological.

In the second extension, strategy came to be seen as more than a tool in war. The existence of war strategy as a tool of international competition and domestic organisation in peace-time makes the war strategy an inherent element of statecraft at all times, as Edward Mead Earle noted:

> strategy is the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation - or a coalition of nations - including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured

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against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed.¹

In the third extension of its meaning, strategy came to embrace not only the vital interests of a State, but the entire range of its political and social goals.²

All of the above meanings would appear to be included in the Webster’s Dictionary entry for strategy:

1. the science or art of employing the political, economic, psychological and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war;

2. careful plan or method or clever stratagem.

The second meaning of strategy given above explicitly mentions the word "stratagem". This term embraces the meaning of "skill in devising expedients" as well as "an act of generalship", or "a military artifice designed to outwit or surprise the enemy".³ Strategy is both a plan and a method, a science and an art.

Thus, in English, the term strategy carries the connotation not only of a general plan but also of skill in devising expedients in response to an unprogrammed or unexpected turn of events.

The meaning of strategy in English is virtually equivalent to the meaning of the Russian word strategiia.

In Ozhiogov’s Dictionary of the Russian Language, strategiia is defined as "the science of the conduct of war"; or "the art of leadership of a social or political struggle".

² Lider Military Theory p194
³ Murray’s English Dictionary 1894
Once the qualifier "military" is attached to the term "strategy", two meanings appear possible:

the science or art of employing all resources (political, economic, military and psychological) for military purposes in peace or war; or

the science or art of employing military resources for any national purpose in peace or war.

It is debatable whether it is possible to make such distinctions, given the possible breadth of meaning of "military purposes" (battlefield effects versus political effects) or "military resources" (military forces versus industrial capabilities or political statements).

Certainly Bull saw military strategy as the art or science of exploiting military force so as to attain the objects of policy,¹ military or otherwise.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "military strategy" is understood as defined in the Soviet Military Encyclopedic Dictionary, which says that military strategy embraces the "theory and practice of preparing the country and its armed forces for war, and the planning and conduct of strategic operations and wars in general".² This is much the same definition that appears in the classic Soviet work of the 1960s, Marshal Sokolovskii's Military Strategy, although Sokolovskii applies a class label to what non-Marxist commentators might term national interests:

Military strategy is a system of scientific knowledge dealing with the laws of war as an armed conflict in the name of definite class interests. Strategy - on the basis of military experience, military and political conditions, economic and moral potential of the country, new means of combat, and the views and potential of the probable enemy - studies the conditions and nature of future war, methods for

¹ Hedley Bull "Strategic Studies and its Critics" World Politics July 1968 p593
² Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar' [Military Encyclopedic Dictionary] USSR Ministry of Defence, Institute of Military History, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1983, p711. The word [strategema] is defined in the same dictionary as "military cunning or the art of deceit of the enemy in war".
its preparation and conduct, services of the armed forces and the
basis of their strategic employment, as well as the foundations for
material and technical support and leadership of the war and the
armed forces.¹

The Soviet concept of military strategy embraced two other concepts
which define it more clearly: military science [voenñaia nauka] and military art
[voennoe iskusstvo]. "Military science", in Soviet terminology, was the system of
knowledge of the character and laws of war, the preparation of the armed forces
and the country for war, and the methods of waging war".²

The theory of "military art" was one of the components of military
science, the others being theories of military organisation, military education and
training, and military economy and the rear. Military art was further defined as the
"theory and practice of the preparation and conduct of military operations".³

The Russian word [nauka], while most often translated as "science",
also carries a more general connotation of "knowledge". The Russian word
[iskusstvo], most often translated as "art", carries the connotation of skill of the
craftsman or workman, as much as it does the creative or innovative aspects of the
work of an inspired artist (painter or writer, for example).⁴

The Soviet conception of strategy therefore provides a reasonable
starting point for analysing Soviet military strategy for local war along the
following lines: military science (nature and methods of waging local wars,
preparing the country for them, preparing the armed forces for them) and military
art (preparing for operations and conduct of operations).

¹ Marshal V D Sokolovskii (ed) Voennaia strategiia [Military Strategy], 3rd edition, Voenizdat,
Moscow, 1968, p20
² Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar', p136
³ ibid pp500, 514
⁴ The Russian word [iskusstvo] can also be translated as "skill". The term [voennoe iskusstvo] can be
conceived as meaning "military skill".
Military Doctrine: A Definition

Military doctrine is that set of organising principles accepted by the leadership of the armed forces for the purpose of guiding the development of the forces including their structure, equipment, and training and exercises.\(^1\) Military doctrine is a relatively recent concept\(^2\) which - not necessarily with that label - has traditionally enjoyed more attention in continental powers, such as Germany, France, and Russia, than in the USA.\(^3\)

Military doctrine can be seen as a very large sub-set of military strategy - the accepted set of principles of military art and military science.

A US Government publication defined doctrine as:

Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgement in application.\(^4\)

Military doctrine is supposed to be the means whereby a state ensures that its armed forces are prepared to conduct military operations in situations considered most likely to arise. Some states attempt to have a military doctrine to cover all possible situations.

The following definition, using the term "strategic doctrine", is a useful summary:

Strategic doctrine refers to a connected series of beliefs, and related statements of what are believed to be facts, about strategy. Such beliefs, together with the associated facts, may be either restrictive or inclusive in character, and may be used to justify, explain, prescribe and, sometimes, to predict.

As the author of this definition observes, strategic doctrine refers to

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\(^1\) Lider Military Theory p355
\(^2\) Lider Military Theory p354
\(^3\) Garthoff Deterrence and the Revolution in Soviet Military Policy p37
\(^4\) Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms USGPO, Washington DC, 1987, p118
a class of theories about use of armed force that may be broken down into constituent elements, such as "targeting doctrine", "deployment doctrine", or "nuclear warfighting doctrine". A different breakdown of the concept might include naval doctrine, big war doctrine, local war doctrine, guerilla warfare doctrine, or doctrine for low intensity conflict.

The suggestion in this definition, that doctrine is about strategy, highlights the importance of clarifying the distinction between doctrine and strategy. Their relationship is not merely linear or sequential, but interactive.

As already stated, military doctrine is a subset of military strategy, in broad terms, but strategy can also be an outcome of doctrine. While "strategy" may be used to define the practical activities of the military leadership, it also exists as theory (the propositions that guided the development of doctrine); and doctrine based on a choice of strategical ideas then becomes the basis on which strategy in conflict is elaborated. As one scholar observed, a small academic and military community has also used the term "military doctrine" to describe the codification of officially accepted precepts on the preparation for the conduct of military operations in war, that is strategy. In fact, in the ordinary discourse of the professional community, the terms "strategy" and "doctrine" are often used interchangeably.

Military doctrine, as a subset of strategy, develops under the influence of the same variety of factors that influence the development of strategy -

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2 Lider Military Theory pp390-391
4 Lider Military Theory p355
political, social, economic, technological and personal factors, including the political power of the high command relative to the government.

The official military strategy of a state in peace-time is usually represented as its doctrine for war - its set of beliefs on the likely nature of the war or wars for which it believes it should prepare its armed forces. Even military strategies centred on doctrines of deterrence (war avoidance) are based on assessments of the perception of forces in conflict.

The state itself - as an abstraction - cannot have beliefs. The beliefs about war on which a state bases its force structure planning are really the beliefs of senior military or political leaders. The way in which one set of beliefs becomes accepted as the officially endorsed view of the state, must therefore be a political process.

Where a state has a formally endorsed, official military doctrine, there may be little distinction between its principles and how it actually conducts military operations. But this is rarely the case.

Military doctrine may be highly structured and widely disseminated, or little more than ideas shared by the senior leaders of a country’s armed forces.

A more sensible definition of doctrine sees it as a "synthesis of scientific knowledge and expertise on the one hand, and of traditions and political assumptions on the other".¹

McCrawire’s formulation that strategy includes the accumulated policies, practices, concepts, and procedures (explicit as well as implicit) which combine to shape and to provide the framework of behaviour at all levels of action,

from planning to weapon procurement and tactical operations, would appear to be applicable to doctrine.¹

The degree to which the leadership of the armed forces in any country accepts political direction on the substance of military doctrine is rarely complete or consistent. The high command can often impose its own view of the official doctrine on a reluctant, weak or ill-informed government.

Moreover, doctrine does not always have a direct bearing on outcomes of strategic deliberation. As a former US Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, observed:

> doctrines control the minds of men only in periods of non-emergency. They do not necessarily control the minds of men during periods of emergency. In the moment of truth, when the possibility of major devastation occurs, one is likely to discover sudden changes in doctrine.²

A Soviet source agreed:

> During war, military doctrine withdraws somewhat into the background because in an armed conflict they are guided primarily by military-political and military-strategic considerations and by the conclusions and generalisations which follow from the conditions of a specific situation. Consequently, war and armed conflict are guided not by doctrine, but by strategy.³

The inherently ideological content of doctrine - that is, its non-objective nature - is one of its essential features. As Buteux observed:

> As soon as doctrines are assigned functions and support purposes in a political context they take on an ideological coloration; that is, they serve to promote interests and counsel policies in relation to some

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¹ Michael McGwire "Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy" International Security 1979 (Spring) p134
If military doctrine is inherently political and personal, then so will be military strategy on which it is based. Beaufre underlined the political nature of military strategy and the need for a very broad conception of the influences on military doctrine when he asserted that strategy is the "art of the dialectic of two opposing wills using force to resolve their dispute".²

This political process, involving domestic power relationships and personalities, undermines the neat hypothesis that a state’s military doctrine is a logical consequence of national interest and international circumstance. That hypothesis is usually associated with the view that the process by which a state determines its doctrine is objective and observable. Yet the processes of defining a military doctrine, like those involved in determining national interest or national circumstance, are quintessentially political and subjective. They can, in certain cases, owe as much to unconscious reactions and personal motivations as to conscious perceptions assumed to be based on the national interest.

**Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Strategy**

The traditional strategic paradigm is based to a large degree on the billiard ball model of international relations, in which the Newtonian concept of action-reaction plays an important part. That paradigm sees strategy as "international relations with many of the complexities taken out".³

Such a paradigm does not survive contemporary definitions of strategy or doctrine. Strategy is a more complex phenomenon than simply the

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1. Buteux *op cit* pp4-5; Lider Military Theory pp354-357, 389-392
summary of its explicit precepts.

The strategy of any country is rooted in a specific cultural and political structure, and this ethnocentric flavour must be understood if the more narrowly defined precepts of the strategy itself are to be understood.¹

As much as strategy may appear coherent, rational and structured, it also has other important dimensions which must be studied. These include the interplay of the rational and the subjective, and the dynamic process whereby a declared strategy is forced continually to adapt not only to the consequences of actions by others but also to circumstances that unexpectedly affect it. This dynamic has been described as follows:

whereas military strategy is devised in a highly structured context that can theoretically provide for comprehensive calculation of detail and coordination of effort, that image dissolves in the broad arena of politics, which arches over elements of military, diplomatic and economic arenas that are often non-hierarchical and poorly coordinated at best, if not in outright conflict. Politics itself implies at its core an unfinished, practical dialectic rather than the efficient implementation of a plan.²

Thus strategy can be seen as a sum of "aggregative processes" resulting in "unintended, articulated and mobilised aggregations".³

Julian Lider summarised the range of possible approaches to the study of the causes of war (and hence the origins of strategy and doctrine) to include biological, psychological, anthropological, ecological, geopolitical, legal, moral, military-technical, sociological, political, politico-economic, and multi-

¹ ibid p24
dimensional approaches.¹

Other writers, such as Ken Waltz, referred to the possible approaches to the study of international events (including war, and hence strategy and doctrine) in terms of level of analysis: individual human behaviour; the internal structure of states; and the anarchic structure of the international community of states.² While scholars have different views on the particular levels that should be analysed, most agree that a multi-dimensional analysis is the most appropriate.³ Jervis recognised its importance but chose to focus on one of four identified levels of analysis - the perceptions of a decision-maker as one of the root causes of policy decisions.⁴

An important further elaboration on the proposition that strategy is merely perception is that of strategy as imagination, a view developed by Kaldor.⁵ While strategy in advance of conflict is always formulated as a hypothetical construct, Kaldor highlighted the fact that the strategy of the superpowers for central war could be redefined "as the way in which military forces would be employed for political ends in an imaginary confrontation".⁶

Pointing out correctly that "different strategies came to reflect different political positions", Kaldor also made the point that "military strategies do not necessarily bear much relation to actual military capabilities". Citing the institutional influences on development of capabilities, such as inter-service rivalry or technological innovation, Kaldor saw strategy as providing a "rationale for these

¹ Julian Lider On the Nature of War Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Saxon House, Westmead UK, 1977, pp5-47
³ Lider On the Nature of War pp26-27
⁶ ibid p192
capabilities that fitted ongoing political concerns".¹

Using language of the peace movement to which she belonged, Kaldor described the nuclear war scenarios of the superpower military leaders as "fantasy". She concluded that "the very unreality of strategic discussions contributed to the imaginary nature of the East-West confrontation, allowing it to become a deep, ongoing, unrealizable fear".² By contrast, she described so-called limited wars in the Third World and Eastern Europe as "real wars".

She also hypothesised that "deterrence, instead of preventing war, actually turns out to be a way of keeping the idea of war and the idea of conflict alive, either to legitimise the growth of military forces or for domestic or intra-bloc purposes", and asserted that changes in stated doctrine came about less as the result of an action-reaction process than as the result of shifts in government and intra-alliance relations.³

Kaldor's thesis about military strategy as imagination is a good reminder that military strategy has a dual identity - one which exists in circumstances when the war as imagined is not imminent or occurring; and one in circumstances where major war is imminent or has already broken out.

In circumstances of actual or imminent war, the relationship between strategy and politics is direct and concrete, with immediate results. In other circumstances, the relationship is less direct, less concrete, and more permissive.

The interaction between these dual identities of strategy in a given country has been seen to be all too compelling when war breaks out and the strategy and doctrine divined beforehand prove inappropriate to the actual

¹ ibid
² ibid pp192-193
³ ibid pp194-195
circumstances of combat. In other words, strategy, no matter how imaginary, can gain embodiment in doctrine and actually come to be believed and practised.

Whole schools of international relations theory have been built around proponents of a particular level of analysis - the bureaucratic decision-making school, and so on.¹

The choice of level of analysis can have some significant implications. As Lider points out in respect of the analysis of war, the choice can reflect the scholar's assumptions about the nature of war or, on the other hand, simply reflect the scholar's desire to narrow the focus of his own enquiry while fully recognising that other lines of inquiry, pursuing different levels of analysis or different approaches, may be just as valid.²

The most important implication of that choice, though, is that the level of analysis chosen gives the analysis a different character.³ As another scholar put it:

While at one level three models produce different explanations of the same happening, at a second level the models produce different explanations of quite different occurrences.⁴

A scholar focussing narrowly on the international relations level of analysis (for example, using balance-of-power type assumptions) is more likely to produce an explanation that emphasises balance-of-power considerations than a scholar who has focussed on a bureaucratic level of analysis. Yet even those who do review the bureaucratic basis of national military strategy can overlook the dynamic of the process. Instead of a straight line process which achieves a result

¹ Lider On the Nature of War p5
² ibid
³ ibid
⁴ Graham T Allison Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis Little, Brown and Co, Boston, 1971, p251
that is implemented fully, the various stages of bureaucratic decision-making can be
cyclical and recurring, with any one phase being able to develop in such a way as
to force the process back into an earlier phase.¹

The study of military strategy should accept as a basic premise that
the relationship between military planning and political goals is not a simple one,
and that the proportionality between ends and means can disappear or become
distorted.² While this distortion is particularly relevant once war breaks out, the
same phenomenon also occurs in peace-time, and was particularly evident in the
nuclear arms race between the USSR and the USA.

A multi-dimensional or interdisciplinary approach to the study of
strategy would, therefore, appear to be mandatory in determining why a country
adopts a particular military strategy or military doctrine. It is only in the knowledge
of these reasons that predictive assumptions can be made with any degree of
reliability.

The need for a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of an
opponent’s strategy was neatly summarised by Brodie: "good strategy presumes
good anthropology and sociology".³

A convincing example of the value of multi-disciplinary or multi-
dimensional analysis has been provided in Atkinson’s Social Order and the General
Theory of Strategy, a study of the way in which the Chinese communists exploited
their grasp of the social bases of strategy - including cultural, political, and

¹ Stephen M Meyer "Soviet National Security Decisionmaking: What Do We Know and What Do
We Understand“ in Jiri Valenta and William C Potter (eds) Soviet Decisionmaking for National
Security George Allen and Unwin, London, 1984, p299. Meyer described the four phases of
decision-making as policy agenda, policy controversy, formal decision, and implementation.
² Lider On the Nature of War p359
³ Bernard Brodie War and Politics Macmillan, New York NY, 1973, p332
economic factors. Atkinson combined his study of the Chinese case with a critique of the work of Clausewitz and attempts to update Clausewitz in the following manner:

The roots of violence do not so much draw substance from the raw nature of man but from that of men cast into social relations. It is the conception of social relations, established patterns of which are the essence of social order, that give rise to the twin notions of power and morality. In terms of these two, war is the natural extension of the substance of social life.¹

Atkinson was seeking to rescue from its classical roots one of Clausewitz' most important achievements: the realisation that war could not be separated from the social - read "political" for Clausewitz - milieu in which it operated. As Clausewitz said:

the principal features of all great strategic plans are for the most part of a political nature, and always the more they encompass the totality of war and state. The whole plan of war results directly from the political existence of both warring states as well as from their relations with others ...
... even in the individual parts of a campaign the political element is implicated and indeed there is seldom any great act of war ... where at least some influence of it was not apparent.²

Atkinson asserts that Clausewitz was recognising the influence of politics so as to postulate a purer form of classical strategy, a strategy still existing independently for a military elite and for the purposes of war which fell somewhat short of total war as it has emerged in the twentieth century. While there are numerous instances where Clausewitz recognised that the absolute form of war is often not reached, but is modified by political factors, he generally proceeded from the notion that politics is a sub-element of war and not vice versa.³

² Carl von Clausewitz On War as cited by Atkinson op cit p243
³ Atkinson op cit p248
Thus, there is some distance between Clausewitz' more narrow conception of the scope of these political considerations and the scope of the social basis of strategy envisaged by Atkinson. His central argument is that strategy can be appreciated in all its strengths and weaknesses only if one looks at the social contract which determines in a given society the power and moral authority of the strategy makers - that is, by understanding the contractual basis (the political, cultural, economic, and institutional bases) on which the strategy is allowed to stand as an abstraction.¹

Beyond the issue of the political basis of the authority which enables the political/military elite in a particular country to develop a specific strategy, the domestic determinants of strategy have probably been best conceptualised by two works which analyse the strategies of the major European powers before the World Wars.

Snyder, in The Ideology of the Offensive, identified three categories of determinants of military strategy: rational calculation; motivated or self-interested bias; and doctrinal oversimplification.² Posen, in The Sources of Military Doctrine, offered a "set of categories, questions, and explanations useful for studying the grand strategy and military doctrine of any state".³

Posen's book compared the relative effectiveness of the balance-of-power model of international relations against the organisational (bureaucratic decision-making) model in explaining three selected aspects of the military doctrine

¹ ibid p225
of France, Britain and Germany before World War II.\textsuperscript{1} The three aspects were: the character of the doctrine (offensive, defensive or deterrent); the degree of coordination of the doctrine with foreign policy; and the degree of innovation the doctrine contains.

Snyder combined in his model the different levels of analysis: international relations, domestic politics, social influences and individual psychological elements. In his model, "rational calculation" in strategy formulation is an accurate assessment of the relationship between national aims (foreign policy goals) and the constraints and potentialities of the environment in which the state finds itself.\textsuperscript{2}

Snyder identified two types of bias that will influence such an assessment and thus reduce the level of rationality in it. The first type originates from the motivations of the decision-makers, especially their parochial interests. The second type results from their attempts to simplify and impose a structure on their complex analytical tasks".\textsuperscript{3} He saw both groups of biases not only as cognitive phenomena ("skewing the perceptions and choices of individual decision-makers"), but also as organisational phenomena ("shaping the structure, ideology, and standard operating procedure of institutions").

With the concept of "rational calculation", Snyder was postulating the concept of an appropriate response to an objective set of international circumstances of a state. This set of circumstances comprised two main elements: a state's foreign policy goals; and the strategic balance between that state and any

\textsuperscript{1} ibid p7
\textsuperscript{2} Snyder The Ideology of the Offensive pp19-24
\textsuperscript{3} ibid p18
adversary.¹

But as a later work by Snyder suggested, the root assumption of the rational calculation hypothesis is that the military strategy and doctrine of a state (its international objectives) should grow out of its international military circumstances.² He suggested there had been no scholarly effort to test the relationship between Soviet grand strategy and the USSR's international circumstances (according to the rational incentive model).³

These circumstances could be conceived in two ways: endemic and variable.⁴ As far as the USSR was concerned, Snyder suggested as endemic circumstances its backwardness relative to other industrialised countries; its relative economic self-sufficiency; and its legacy as a revolutionary state. As variable circumstances, he suggested the character of the opponent; military technology; and the international distribution of power.⁵

Some of the variable factors obviously had a major impact on the intensity of effect of some endemic factors. The difficulty of disaggregating general concepts, such as "legacy as a revolutionary state, in a defensible (scientifically

¹ ibid p19. Snyder postulated a rational strategy (or doctrine) as one which conformed to foreign policy goals of the State, technological and geographical constraints, and the military balance. A more logical view may be that the technological and geographical circumstances of a State’s armed forces are sub-sets of the military balance, not distinct elements. In this view, the military balance might more aptly be described as the strategic balance, a balance between the military potential of two States, rather than a balance between existing orders of battle.
² Jack Snyder Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1991. This assumption would not hold for a country in which the armed forces had a significant internal police function. While KGB border troops were used for the domestic purpose of keeping Soviet citizens in, and Ministry of the Interior troops had a clear domestic function, the Soviet armed forces were conceived by the General Staff in the period covered by this thesis exclusively in terms of external functions (defensive or offensive).
³ ibid p215
⁴ ibid p216
⁵ ibid pp230-233 makes a synthesis of the influence of these factors by dividing Soviet strategic thought into four camps: Molotov (Western hostility is unconditional, defence has the advantage); Zhdanov (Western hostility is unconditional, offence has the advantage); Malenkov/Gorbachev (Western hostility is conditional, defence has the advantage); and Khrushchev/Brezhnev (Western hostility is conditional, offence has the advantage).
usable) way suggests that a sharper method of characterisation, which illuminates more specifically the question of conformity of military strategy and doctrine with perceived Soviet objectives, needs to be found.

Snyder concluded that for the most part international conditions helped make or break Soviet strategic "ideologies" but that Soviet grand strategy was often mismatched with "objective situational incentives" and considerations of realpolitik accounted fairly poorly for the features of Soviet foreign policy in two out of three identified periods of expansion.

There were, Snyder said, Soviet political leaders who appreciated in a "realistic" way the international penalties and benefits of certain courses in response to their objective international circumstances, but that these leaders were constrained by the Soviet system.

In essence, therefore, Snyder in this later work postulated a fundamental contradiction in the Soviet case between the two elements of rational incentive in his model from the earlier work: foreign policy goals and international circumstance. In saying that Soviet grand strategy was not responsive to incentives from the USSR's international circumstances, he was concluding that the USSR's fundamental foreign policy objectives stood in contradiction to its international circumstances and were therefore unrealistic and, by implication, unachievable.

Thus, while Snyder advanced international circumstance as the root assumption of his rational incentive model, he seemed to suggest that the only
scientific way of treating the international circumstances of a state as having an objective existence was through the choices and perceptions of the political leaders.

This would appear to be an important elaboration on Snyder’s 1984 work in that, ultimately, the only test of rationality in military strategy and doctrine is whether the means postulated in them conform to foreign policy goals in the prevailing circumstances. The international circumstances will always be perceived subjectively, and thus cannot provide in and of themselves a benchmark for rationality in strategic choice.

In this respect, Snyder’s concept of "rational calculation" may be open to question. In fact, he conceded, in the conclusion of his 1984 work, that even this element can be "shaped by organizational, cognitive, and strategic variables".¹

Rational calculation in military strategy and doctrine therefore can ultimately be interpreted only as a decision by the military leadership on the use of military force that conforms to the foreign policy objectives of the state.

Snyder’s model probably has greater application in historical analysis of events where the outcomes are known (such as the First World War) and, hence, where judgements of the sort mentioned in the preceding paragraph can be made.

At the same time, much of Snyder’s hypothesis about strategy making in general can be applied to analysis of the sources of a state’s military doctrine. For example, Snyder suggested that motivations for bias will be greatest when three conditions prevail simultaneously: first, institutional interests are severely threatened; second, the interests at stake are fundamental ones, especially self-image and organisational essence; and third, there is some contradiction

¹ Snyder The Ideology of the Offensive p200
between institutional interest and sound strategy.¹ (Exactly what is sound strategy in any particular case may be debatable, but it is often easy to identify unsound strategy - so defined by clear failure to achieve national objectives.)

Both Posen and Snyder refer to the influence of threat on strategy. This dynamic has been the subject of a vast body of literature, known under the rubric of crisis diplomacy studies.² Much of this work has chosen only one theoretical approach or one level of analysis. By contrast, this thesis - while conscious of distinct levels of analysis and a variety of possible theoretical approaches - is based squarely on a principle espoused by Pettman:

> Much more time should be spent by the discipline [international politics] in attempting to connect the conclusions that emerge at different levels of analysis from that of the individual to systems as a whole.³

The thesis aims to analyse the sources of Soviet military doctrine for local war by connecting the conclusions that emerge at different levels of analysis.

That said, the thesis accepts motivation as the central subject of international relations, an approach advanced by Cottam. While his study addressed the perceptual basis of inter-state conflict, his theoretical approach to the study of foreign policy offers an ideal way of incorporating the complex mix of variables that influence the formulation of military policy.

Cottam argued that the realist approach to the study of international

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¹ ibid p25
relations "seriously camouflages motivation" which he defined as "a compound of factors that predispose a government and people to move in a decisional direction in foreign affairs". His view of motivation would thus subsume the two main sources of bias identified by Snyder. This thesis assumes that it is possible and desirable to attempt to analyse motivations that give rise to decisions, and the processes that transform motivations into decisions.

If motivation is the central element of international interaction, then the primary decision-makers should be the focus of analysis of military strategy and doctrine. They are too important to be treated as manifestations of some bureaucratic or social role, because "they are the individuals who define the situation, and the manner in which they do so will determine the choice alternatives they can perceive".

As Gallagher and Spielmann put it:

the character of the leadership is the dominant factor that determines how the whole system operates.

Volten agreed:

It is not the analyst's theoretical design or his selected issues, but the Soviet leadership's concern about their nation and about the development of the system that should be the point of departure.

Unfortunately, lack of data on the motivations of individual Soviet leaders makes more than passing attention to individuals difficult, except in a

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1 Richard W Cottam Foreign Policy Motivation - A General Theory and a Case Study University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh PA, 1977, p20
2 ibid p31
3 ibid p318
4 ibid p320
5 ibid p320
handful of cases.

Yet Cottam was prepared to concede that high level bureaucrats - unlike the ultimate decision makers - could be subsumed under the guise of a single modal individual (their institution or organisation), with insignificant distortion given the level of analysis.¹ Thus the thesis concentrates on the General Staff, the political leadership, the Communist Party (meaning the Central Committee leadership based in Moscow) and the Main Political Directorate of the armed forces as the main players, offering comment on individual motivations where evidence exists.

Scientific Method and the Study of Military Doctrine

The thesis is written with an eye to Popper's observations in his 1967 essay "Knowledge: Subjective versus Objective", which criticised what he called "traditional epistemology" for focusing on documentation of "belief based upon perception".²

He rejected the "causal approach" used by behaviourist, psychological and sociological study, in favour of the "objective approach" which, in his view, starts from effect. He wrote:

In all sciences, the ordinary approach is from the effects to the causes. The effect raises the problem ... and the scientist tries to solve it by constructing an explanatory hypothesis.³

¹ Cottam op cit p320. Volten essentially agreed with Cottam on this point but still advocated a personalised analysis. Volten cited the view of Halperin that the essence of an organisation can usefully be regarded as "the view held by the dominant group in the organisation of what the missions and capabilities should be" (Morton H Halperin Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy Washington DC, 1974, p28 cited in Volten op cit p29). But Volten wanted analysis at the sub-system level (ministries, High Command, Party, etc) to be focussed on personal views held by participants who might attempt to shape their institutions according to their own views.
² Karl Popper "Knowledge: Subjective versus Objective" in David Muller (ed) A Pocket Popper Fontana, Oxford, 1983, p60
³ ibid p66
The relevance of Popper's observation to the study of international relations has been attested in part by some commentators on the lack of rigour in Soviet studies. For example, Hoffman criticised William Dray and other "historians" for rejecting the value of empirical generalisations in historical explanation, and preferring to explain events in terms of the perceptions of the principal actors. He sees these historians as preferring "logic-of-the-situation" analysis and seeking to explain events merely by the elimination of possible causes.

These criticisms - that the historians generally stop at documentation of motive and belief - are exactly those made by Popper in respect of science in general. In the social sciences, documenting motive and belief is an important element in any analysis and, in most circumstance, a difficult enough task. However, Popper would argue, it is essential for the social scientist to go further and explain.

Some guidance as to how Popper's ideas might be implemented in Soviet studies has been provided by Snyder. Like Hoffman, Snyder appears to have accepted the positive features of logic-of-the-situation types of analysis and recognised the degree of latent generalisation in all historical analysis. However, Snyder pushed the argument further in a direction reminiscent of Popper's argument by advocating the use in Soviet studies of fundamental principles of

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3 Hoffman "Methodological Problems..." loc cit p130
4 Ibid p131
6 Ibid p108
scientific method.¹

Thus, in the views of Popper, Snyder and - to a lesser extent - Hoffman, description of the subjective perceptions of key players is merely the documenting and ordering of some of the data on which scientific analysis is subsequently to be performed.

The differences between these two stages of analysis can prove vital. For example, Posen's analysis of the perceptions of military leaders in France, Britain and Germany between the World Wars concluded that balance of power theory explained better than bureaucratic decision theory why those states adopted their respective strategies and military doctrines.² That conclusion is descriptive, rather than explanatory or argumentative; it merely asserts that in the three case studies, the persons most responsible for the outcome of the events under review acted on those occasions as if balance of power considerations were the most important.

An objective explanation would be different, and should go further. It might postulate a reason for those statesmen having internalised balance-of-power abstractions for those decisions. The implication of this is that explanation of the causes of international events must ultimately be rooted in the domestic political and psychological environment of the decision-makers.

This line of argument takes the early Hans Morgenthau at his word: "A theory of international politics is but a specific instance of a general theory of politics".³

¹ *ibid* pp91-92
² Posen *op cit* pp240-241
This thesis does, however, reject Morgenthau’s notion that a theory of politics can merely be a "rationally ordered summary of all the rational elements which the observer has found in the subject matter".¹ As Volten reminds us, knowledge should be transmissible and verifiable, and the logic trail must be visible.²

Conclusion

Military strategy embraces the theory and practice of preparing a country and its armed forces for war, and the planning and conduct of strategic operations and wars in general. Military strategy therefore is a complex phenomenon, existing at several levels and subject to a wide variety of political, personal, social or physical influences.

Military doctrine is a set of organising principles accepted by the leadership of the armed forces for the purpose of guiding the development of the forces, including their structure, equipment, training and exercises. Doctrine is also a synthesis of scientific knowledge and expertise on the one hand, and of traditions and political assumptions on the other.

The relationship between doctrine and strategy is interactive. But as a subset of strategy, doctrine develops under the influence of the same variety of factors that influence the development of strategy - political, social, economic, technological and personal factors, including the political power of the high command relative to the government.

A scientific study of a country's military doctrine, if it claims to

¹ ibid p21
² Volten op cit p248
establish the relationship between doctrine and probable strategy in war, should relate evidence of a High Command’s knowledge, expertise, traditions and political assumptions to the environment in which decisions about war and doctrine are made.

Of the available theoretical approaches to the study of military doctrine, this thesis tests the usefulness of one based largely on the model developed by Snyder (institutional or personal interests, doctrinal simplification and rational calculation) as a means of determining why the Soviet General Staff responded to the doctrinal requirements of local war as it did.
Chapter One suggested that US and Soviet conceptions of the scope of military strategy were much the same, while arguing that the content of a country’s military strategy was heavily influenced by a variety of factors peculiar to each country. Chapter Two identifies common ground between the Soviet conception of local war and the US conception of limited war, but highlights the unique origins of US limited war doctrine in US military strategy. The lack of a single US view on the essential or defining characteristics of limited war, and confusion in usage with the term local war, are also noted.

In this way, the Chapter seeks to demonstrate that scholars looking for a Soviet mirror image of a US doctrine of limited war failed to appreciate that the US doctrine did not represent a universal truth, but rather a unique response heavily influenced by particular ambitions and goals, and by geographical remoteness from likely theatres of conflict (most of which were on the Soviet periphery).

Yet the USSR’s armed forces, while not a slavish copy of US forces, did develop within the context of competition with the principal adversary and, later, with China. Part of this competition was mutual structuring of forces with attention to their combat effectiveness against one another or with attention to achieving similar capabilities.
Local War and Limited War

The presumption of a vital link between small wars and the central balance of power has been an important feature of the modern international system. Small wars had been the principal preoccupation of the peace-time armies of the great empires once political stability returned to Europe after the Napoleonic wars.

Small wars were a distinct object of military studies. For example, in the late nineteenth century, the British armed forces published a work on the subject. The author admitted that the term was "somewhat difficult to define", but used it "in default of a better", to apply to wars in which a regular army found itself fighting either irregular (guerilla) or palpably inferior forces. The author, Colonel C. E. Calwell, sought to make the distinction because he saw the conduct of operations in small wars as distinct from that in "regular warfare" and as an art by itself.1 Similarly, the French developed a concept for small wars on the model of the Algerian war they had fought in the 1840s.

By contrast, Great Powers, seeking to change the status quo (what may loosely be called the central balance) or to defend it against a major assault, shifted to central war strategies - massed armies or navies in high intensity combat to overturn or defend the central balance of power. This was Germany’s modus operandi before both World Wars, as it was Japan’s in the Pacific in the late 1930s.

At the same time, Germany did try in the late 19th and early 20th century to shift the central balance more in its favour without major war, through a policy of colonial acquisition in which small wars were an important tool. In the

same years, the British Empire sought to defend its position in the central balance by resisting threat to its colonies from small wars.

Thus there is some merit in the argument that the limits imposed on conduct of wars after the Second World War, when avoidance of general war became an overwhelming preoccupation, had much in common with those that applied in the early eighteenth Century. Total war was politically nonsensical when the overall *status quo* was acceptable (or at least temporarily tolerable) to the Great Powers, and limited wars became a useful tool.¹

But the limits that applied in the nuclear era differed from those of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries in one obvious respect. The threat of use of nuclear weapons on a strategic scale after 1945 redefined the concept of total war from one involving primarily the armed forces to one involving the totality of the society. The threat of nuclear weapons therefore changed the relationship between total war and power politics, from one ending in a peace treaty, however humiliating, as in the case of Germany after the First World War, to one ending in the devastation and possible destruction of at least one of the antagonists and most of its population.

This image of general nuclear war threw up a requirement, or rather a hope, that should war again break out between major powers, it could be limited to avoid total devastation. This image also eventually led to recognition that the threat of war, if it had to be general nuclear war, had lost much of its political value for all circumstances other than the most imminent and potentially

¹ Maurice Tugwell "Adapt or Perish: The Forms of Evolution in Warfare" in Maurice Tugwell and David Charters (eds) *Armies in Low-Intensity Conflicts: A Comparative Analysis* Brassey's Defence Publishers, London, 1989, pp8-9. Tugwell observed that the concept of limited war has tended to move in and out of fashion through history.
overwhelming attack by one country on another.

At the same time, many of the small wars after 1945 were no different from those of the previous two centuries. Colonel Calwell’s views retained some significance for the superpowers, as like him, American and Soviet strategic commentaries identified a distinct type of war involving forces in combat with irregular (or guerilla) forces, or with palpably inferior forces.¹

Thus, post-war conceptions of limited or local war had two quite distinct aspects, depending on the involvement of the nuclear superpowers.

Soviet sources in the late 1950s and early 1960s used three main terms to describe war according to scale: small [malaia]; limited [ogranichionnaia], and local [lokal’naia] war. Usage did not become standardised until the mid-1960s, when the term "local [lokal’naia] war" eventually became the accepted usage in a neutral or scientific sense.

Official Soviet terminology placed local war in the following hierarchy of concepts:

world war [mirovaia voina]
local war [lokal’naia voina]
military clashes [voennye konflikty].

The distinction in Soviet terminology between world war and local war was that:

local wars are characterised by relatively limited political aims that define the known extent of the scale of military operations, a specific strategy and tactics, and the limited use of weapons systems.²

Local wars differed from "military clashes" in that the latter were characterised "by a significantly smaller scale and by the smaller size of the forces drawn into the

¹ US and Soviet views are discussed in detail later in this chapter.
² General I A Shavrov (ed) Lokal’nye voiny: istoriya i sovremennost' [Local Wars: Their History and Contemporary Significance], Voenizdat, Moscow, 1981, pp8-9
operation". 1 "Military clashes" simply involved the armed forces of a country, or particular units in discrete areas, whereas local wars usually involved the whole country. 2

Local wars in some sources were seen as including wars of national liberation, civil wars, wars between capitalist states, and wars between capitalist states and socialist states. 3 Guerilla war, or "partisan warfare" in Soviet terminology, was one form of civil war or national liberation war. 4

The Soviet Military Encyclopedic Dictionary defined local war without reference to nuclear weapons as follows:

\[
\text{a war which involves, in contrast to a world war, a relatively small number of countries and a limited geographic area.} \]

Thus, in Soviet terminology the term "local war" meant any war apart from a global war between imperialism (the Western military alliance) and the socialist community. The main distinction was between the one big future war (the main focus of published Soviet writings) and the many other wars (the more regular focus of Soviet leaders' foreign policy attention).

In this respect, there was no great difference between the Soviet idea of local war and the official US idea of limited war described below, even though, in public at least, Soviet strategists consistently derided the Western concept of limited nuclear war. 6

A US Joint Chiefs of Staff publication in 1987 defined limited war

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1 ibid p9; see also Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar' under the entry [konflikt voennyi]
2 Shavrov (ed) Lokal'nye voiny p9
3 B V Panov et al Istoriia voennogo iskusstva [History of Military Art] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1984, translated by JPRS, USGPO, Washington DC, 1985, p513; see also the list of local wars in Shavrov Lokal'nye voiny pp296-303
4 Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar' under the entry [partizanskoe dvizhenie]
5 See Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar' under the entry [lokal'naia voina]
6 For example, Henry Trofimenko "The Theology of Strategy" Orbis Fall 1977, pp512-513
as "armed conflict short of general war, exclusive of incidents, involving the overt engagement of the military forces of two or more nations". The same publication said that the term "local war" was "not to be used".¹

Efforts toward consistency of usage in US publications did not succeed, with "local war" used widely in some US publications, especially until the early 1960s,² and "limited war" preferred in others.

An unofficial US source saw limited war as "virtually anything short of central strategic warfare" and equated local war with limited war.³ Another study accepted the view of limited war as anything short of general war but did not equate it with local war.⁴

In most sources, limited wars were defined as wars constrained by geographical extent, by the scope of the political aims of the belligerents, by the means (quantity or quality) with which the war was waged, or by restraint in selection of targets.⁵

While such characterisations served a purpose, some scholars pointed out deficiencies in conceiving local wars as limited.⁶ Some observers tended to confuse the limits on battlefield objectives in so-called limited wars with limited

¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms USGPO, Washington DC, 1987, pp211, 213
² Julian Lider Military Theory: Concept, Structure, Problems Gower Publishing Co, Aldershot UK, 1983, pp75-76 notes that between 1945 and the early 1960s differing concepts of "local war" and "limited war" coexisted in the USA, whereas in Britain "limited war" became a new classification in addition to "local war" in the mid-1950s, and in Germany, "local war" was replaced by "atomic limited war" and "conventional limited war" in the early 1950s.
⁴ Robert McLintock The Meaning of Limited War Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge MASS, 1967, p10 offered the following list: wars of national liberation; limited strategic war; simple wars for independence; domestic rebellion; civil war with outside intervention; wars for the acquisition of territory; and wars for political and strategic objectives.
political objectives. The aims in limited wars were limited not so much in importance but in scope: they were always tactical means toward an important strategic goal.\(^1\) Moreover, in national liberation wars, the liberation forces had a clear determination to crush their opponents’ will.

Another difficulty was that the term "limited war" was used to lump together wars in which the superpowers were involved (on opposite sides by proxy or directly) and wars in which they were not involved.\(^2\) In particular, there was a vast gulf between limited war fought by US forces in a Third World country against local forces, and a limited war fought in Europe with nuclear weapons against the USSR.\(^3\)

To avoid confusion as much as possible, this thesis will use the term "limited war" only in referring to official US policies (for what were local wars), or to describe the views of scholars who have used the term "limited war". On all other occasions, the term "local war" will be used - with one exception. The term "limited nuclear war" will be used to describe an hypothesised local war involving the use of tactical or theatre nuclear weapons, which remains localised (does not escalate to general nuclear war).\(^4\)

The term "limited war" as understood in the USA could also apply

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\(^1\) Tugwell "Adapt or Perish: The Forms of Evolution in Warfare" *loc cit* p14

\(^2\) Garnett *op cit* p124. Small wars, as discussed by Calwell, did not engage all of the military forces of the colonial power, but could nonetheless have engaged the full military power of the other party - the "palpably inferior enemy". So too in the period after the Second World War, local wars were, in the strategic discourse of the superpowers and the two empires (Britain and France), small for them but an all-embracing commitment for many of the other parties.

\(^3\) Elaborate studies of limited war in Europe were a feature of Western strategic discourse. For example, Des Ball "Controlling Theatre Nuclear War" *British Journal of Political Science* vol. 19, pp303-327 analysed the threat of escalation to general war posed by the lack of separate command and control arrangements in NATO forces, especially US forces, for general war and theatre war.

\(^4\) This does not imply a position by the author on whether such a war is possible or whether it would last long without becoming a general nuclear war.
to a war involving limited attacks on the homeland of the superpowers.¹ For example, Herman Kahn used the term "controlled general war".² This type of war will be described in this thesis as "limited strategic war".

For the superpowers, a distinguishing characteristic of local, as opposed to general, war was that complete victory was not necessary. It was only important not to lose.³ This contributed to an associated complication. In order to prevent a strategic loss, there was pressure to extend the geographical scope of a war, thereby making it more difficult to bring some local wars to an end.⁴

This was the great fear associated with local war in Europe - that in order not to lose, it would be necessary to expand its geographical scope, and to move rapidly to wide-ranging, pre-emptive strategic nuclear strikes. This fear engendered an unfavourable reception in Western Europe for US concepts of limited war, even when US thinking began to move from exclusive reliance on limited nuclear war to counter a Soviet invasion to include conventional defence as an option.⁵

In some Western scholarly studies, the emphasis in definitions of limited war was on this element of escalation: limited war included "armed encounters short of incidents in which one or more major powers or their proxies voluntarily exercise various types and degrees of restraint to prevent unmanageable escalation. By contrast, the concept of "local war" had a geographical aspect without reference to limits on weapons used: "war confined to a geographically

¹ Morton H Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age John Wiley and Sons, London, 1963, p2
² Herman Kahn On Thermonuclear War Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1961, p174
³ ibid p125
⁴ Edward Rice Wars of the Third Kind: Conflict in Underdeveloped Countries University of California Press, Berkeley CA, pp158-149
limited theater where conventional as well as nuclear weapons may be used".1

In another US interpretation, the concept of "limited war" included the following elements:

a war which did not directly engage the conventional forces of the opposing superpower alliances in the two key regions of strategic confrontation (Central Europe or North Asia);

a war which did not directly threaten the strategic nuclear assets on land or at sea of either superpower; or

a war which did not directly threaten the homeland of either superpower.2

This interpretation, like the officially endorsed US definition of limited war and the Soviet definition of local war, did not exclude a small scale war in central Europe, involving the USSR and only one or two of the major NATO allies, such as the USA and West Germany.

A local war could be limited or large scale war, using most sorts of weapons and for high-stake objectives. The US conception of limited nuclear war in the Persian Gulf under the Carter Doctrine was an example of a local war with few limits except geographical ones.3

Therefore, as Calwell suggested in respect of the term "small war",4 the term "local war" should not be seen as implying an overly narrow description of the scale of operations, if only because of the wide diversity in scale of conflicts

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1 Wolfram F Hanrieder and Larry V Buel Words and Arms: A Dictionary of Security and Defense Terms Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1979, p66. A British source saw limited war as a conflict of greater intensity than guerilla war but one in which nuclear, biological and chemical weapons were not used (Jane's Dictionary of Military Terms Compiled by Brigadier P H C Hayward, Macdonald and Jane's, London UK, 1975, p97).
2 Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age p1; Deitchman op cit p13
3 The essential feature of this doctrine was the declaration that any attempt by outside force (the Soviet Union) to gain control of the Persian Gulf region would provoke a military response by the USA necessary to reverse the situation. The doctrine was meant to imply that if the USA did not have adequate ground forces in the region to achieve this aim by conventional means alone, nuclear weapons would be used.
4 Calwell op cit p21
embraced by the definition. The Western concept of "low intensity conflict" (defined as anything more violent than a show of force and less violent than a limited conventional war)\(^1\) did not fit comfortably with the Soviet concept of local war. The main reason was the ideological precept that low intensity conflict was the normal operating state of the rival social systems in periods not characterised by outright war.

A different typology of local wars offered by a Western scholar suggested three major classes: conventional war; unconventional war (irregular forces on one side); and deterred conflicts (armed forces confront each other but no actual hostilities break out).\(^2\)

As discussed in Chapter One, military strategy, and therefore strategy for local wars, can come into play before hostilities actually break out. In the same way as global nuclear war strategy had a strong deterrent element, local war strategy can concern itself with conflicts in which blows are not exchanged. It is logical to include under the scope of local wars, conflicts where military force was used in anticipation of hostilities or as a deterrent, such as Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Deterrence depends on an appropriate amount of striking power, the will to use it, and the enemy's perception of a strategy or plan to implement the action. Deterrence operations can therefore be an integral part of both military strategy and doctrine.\(^3\)

Deitchman defended the inclusion of deterred war in the study of military doctrine in the following terms:

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\(^1\) Sam S Sarkesian "The American Response to Low-Intensity Conflict: The Formative Period" in Charters and Tugwell (eds) Armies in Low-Intensity Conflict - A Comparative Analysis p21

\(^2\) Deitchman \textit{op cit} p18; Halperin \textit{Limited War in the Nuclear Age} p1 also includes potential local war as a strategic preoccupation.

\(^3\) Lider \textit{Military Theory} pp82-83
The "deterred wars" ... were, of course, really not wars at all, but military actions taken in anticipation of the outbreak of war, which appear to have deterred it. One of the main factors which operated for deterrence was the rapid buildup of a significant military force in the area where the threat existed. While these forces, in all but the Cuban Quarantine, were much smaller, than those that would probably have had to be committed if active warfare had broken out, they were significant to the extent that they would, at the very least, have been able to act effectively in a delaying action pending the arrival of reinforcements. Thus their commitment constituted a clear promise to establish new, higher thresholds of force limitation (that is, to "escalate") if deterrence was unsuccessful.¹

Conflicts such as the Cuban missile crisis, which involved some risk of nuclear war between the superpowers, would not appear to fit the definition of limited war suggested above. Yet opinions vary on the correct characterisation of this event, and it is of some interest that a variety of Soviet sources include the Caribbean crisis, in the period that led up to the missile crisis as an example of a local war. Several American sources also refer to the Cuban missile crisis as a "local" war.²

In the final analysis, notwithstanding a variety of potential disagreements about the scope of the concepts of limited war and local war, the Soviet idea of local war and the American idea of limited war were almost identical, as indicated by a comparison of the following excerpts, the first from a paper by Henry Kissinger, the second from a Soviet work:

A limited war ... is fought for specific political objectives which by their very existence, tend to establish a relationship between the force employed and the goal to be attained. It reflects an attempt to affect the opponent's will, not to crush it, ... to strive for specific goals and not complete annihilation.³

¹ Deitchman _op cit_ p19
² For example, Morton H Halperin _Contemporary Military Strategy_ revised edition, Faber and Faber, London, 1972, p95
Local wars differ from world wars in the fact that they pursue relatively limited political aims. This also determines the limited scale of military operations, the small number of participants, and the specific strategy and tactics of small wars.¹

Both superpowers recognised that all types of wars could be located at various points on a spectrum of hostilities. The "high end" of that spectrum of hostilities was general war (global superpower war). Everything below the high end of that spectrum was more difficult to define and to plan for. Moreover, the crossover point from local or limited war to general war was one of the most discussed and most feared phenomena of this century.

Yet the preoccupation of some Governments, military officers and scholars with classifying wars according to scale (including scope or intensity) as outlined above was not a universal phenomenon. There were several competing classifications, in the political realm (interstate or civil war, subversive war, liberation war, just wars) or military realm (nuclear or non-nuclear, guerilla war, accidental war).²

Local Wars: The Unique Military Characteristics

Local war creates a tension within professional military forces whose raison d'être is, or has been general war.³ The process of their adaptation to lesser forms must either be ad hoc or based on dividing the forces into components designed for the total destruction of a major adversary and components designed for more limited military purposes.⁴

¹ Panov et al op cit p513
² Lider Military Theory pp73-81
³ Tugwell "Adapt or Perish" loc cit p9. Tugwell made this point about the contrast between limited war and total war, but the observation is equally apt for the contrast between local war and general war.
⁴ ibid p9
Local war imposed upon military forces not only a tension between limited and all-out combat operations, but the need to be sensitive to greater intrusion by political circumstances, which could change more rapidly than in total war.\(^1\)

In the post-war period, notwithstanding perceptions of a spectrum of conflict embracing both local wars and world wars, the superpowers identified the need for a strategy for fighting wars distinct from their strategy for superpower conflict. As Herman Kahn put it as early as 1959:

> even if the United States and the Soviet Union cannot wage all-out war against each other this does not mean that the role of force will be entirely eliminated. There may still be many disputes between the two nations - disputes which may tempt one side to use force on a small scale.\(^2\)

For most of the second half of this century, the central determining feature of the course and conduct of most local wars was the degree to which the superpowers saw each other on opposing sides - that is, the relationship of the war to the global strategic competition between them. This relationship governed moves by the superpowers to expand or prolong each conflict, or to curtail it and prevent its escalation.\(^3\) The means they used to control or influence the conduct of local wars included supply of weapons, provision of military advisers, shows of force, or direct military intervention.

For a superpower, the outcome of a local war was seen in terms not only of battlefield objectives but also of foreign policy objectives and political effects in the surrounding region and globally. In some instances, domestic political effects in the USA or the USSR may have flowed from the conduct and outcome

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1. *ibid* pp9, 14; Garnett *op cit* p125
2. Kahn *op cit* p12
3. Halperin *Limited War in the Nuclear Age* pp1, 3
of a local or limited war.¹ The interplay of pressures to act and constraints on
action, was able to create divisions in the domestic consensus.²

The involvement of a superpower in a local war tended to
subordinate the objectives of local belligerents (which may have included total
military victory) to the political - and often more limited - objectives of the
external, superpower actors.³ Or as one scholar put it, superpower objectives in
local wars transcended the place and politics of the hostilities, because these wars
were seen as part of a global contest.⁴

For the superpowers, two principles of local war came to the fore:
the primacy of politics, and economy of force.⁵ For them, local wars were a
"political process conducted by military means",⁶ or "political phenomena with a
martial aspect".⁷ There is a dynamic of political bargaining which subordinates
normal military parameters of victory on the battlefield to special reinterpretation in
the light of political circumstances.⁸

The military requirements that flow from the special nature of local
wars involving the superpowers have been described in terms of the place of a
particular war on the "attrition/manoeuvre spectrum":

The closer they are to the theoretical extreme of pure attrition, the
more armed forces tend to be focused on their own internal
administration and operations, being correspondingly less responsive

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¹ ibid pp3-10, 24-25
² Deitchman op cit p115
³ cf Garnett op cit p125
⁴ Malcolm Hoag On Local War Doctrine Rand Corporation, Santa Monica CA, 1961, p3
⁵ Robert E Osgood Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy University of Chicago Press,
Chicago, 1957, pp123-127
⁶ Garnett op cit p125
Brunswick, 1985, p203
⁸ Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age p30; Garnett op cit pp124-126; Stephen T Hosmer
Constraints on US Strategy in Third World Conflicts Crane Russak and Company, New York NY,
1987, pp80-81; Hoag op cit p3
to the external environment comprising the enemy, [and] the specific phenomena of any one particular conflict...
By contrast, the closer they are to the relational-manoeuvre end of the spectrum, the more armed forces tend to be outer-regarding...
...the keys to success are first the ability to interpret the external environment in all its aspects, subtle as well as obvious, and then to adapt one's own organisational formats, operational methods, and tactics to suit the requirements of the particular situation.¹

It was "simply unprofessional" to fight one type of war with forces equipped, trained and organised for the other.

This observation highlights the essential doctrinal dilemma for major powers which need to be ready both for general and local war. This is the question of force universality: the ease with which standard operating procedures devised for high attrition wars can be reconciled with the requirement in lower intensity conflicts to develop "one-place, one-time adaptive doctrines and methods"; and the interchangeability of personnel trained for high attrition operations and those trained for lower intensity operations with "one-time expertise, embodied in specific individuals with unique attributes".²

The implication for training of personnel was that forces for local or limited wars should be very familiar with their unique environment: both the terrain (desert, jungle, or mountainous) and the culture of the local forces (language and customs). The implication for force structure and unit training was that units and their equipment had to be optimised for the unique environment.

More specifically, it is possible to identify the following force structure priorities for the superpowers in local or limited wars:

conventional rather than nuclear forces;
readiness, but not necessarily sustainability or force size;
naval and marine corps forces, especially aircraft carriers, land attack

¹ Luttwak op cit p198
² ibid p202
weapons, and forces for inshore shallow water operations; army airborne, air assault and light divisions; reserve components rather than standing active army and air force units; long range air force attack planes; anti-terrorist forces; airlift assets and afloat prepositioned materiel, but not necessarily sealift assets; and a narrower research and development effort focussing on selected technologies ... such as advanced naval mine countermeasure systems and stealthy equipment for special forces.¹

The superpowers had a requirement to fight two different types of local or limited war: against regular or conventional forces; and against irregular, guerilla forces. The counter-revolutionary or counter-insurgency function required specially designed units, with unique command structures, operational planning, targets, and personnel.²

A typology of local wars which contrasts the conventional and the unconventional aspect is not rendered useless by the observation that guerilla wars can grow into conventional warfare or vice versa.³ Two different types of forces are still needed for the conventional or unconventional phases of combat remain much the same, but their composition, quantities, training and deployment would be affected.

US Limited War Strategy

From the early 1950s, US military strategy embraced political and military concepts for limited war (including a range of operational concepts, force structure decisions, and specific training). US experience after the Second World War in planning for limited wars was extensive. According to one study:

¹ Ronald O'Rourke "Defense Spending Priorities" Congressional Research Service Issues Brief, Washington DC, 26 January 1989, p4
² Sarkesian "The American Response to Low-Intensity Conflict" loc cit p22
³Rice op cit pp148-149
The need for general purpose forces to implement the policy of containment had been foreseen before Korea and by 1955, it was accepted that the principal components of US defense policy included "American forces and allied forces strong enough to deter or suppress small-scale aggressions or disorders inimical to American interests in the "grey areas" of the world.¹

But it was not until the 1960s that military planning, force structure and training began to be based on elaborated concepts specific to limited or local war.

Early in 1950, President Truman authorised the preparation of a strategic policy document to cope with perceived new threats to US security and perceived weaknesses in US ability to meet them. The National Security Council document which emerged, NSC 68, emphasised the importance of flexibility in US forces to match a variety of threats from the USSR and its satellites, including both general war and more limited conflict:

The mischief may be a global war or it may be a Soviet campaign for limited objectives. In either case we should take no avoidable initiative which would cause it to become a war of annihilation, and if we have the forces to defeat a Soviet drive for limited objectives it may well be in our interest not to let it become a global war.²

For the authors of the paper, the flexibility being sought was vertical flexibility - the ability to escalate to general war - because they believed in a reasonable prospect of general war provoked by the USSR. This contrasted with other views, including those of George Kennan, whose ideas on containment had provided a starting point for the authors of the paper, and who believed that general war with the USSR was unlikely. Kennan had argued for horizontal flexibility - the ability to apply limited military force in a variety of contingencies at the same time

as relying on the other tools of international relations to achieve US objectives.¹

Many of the broad range of policy responses outlined in NSC 68 had their roots in domestic policy - especially persistent inter-service rivalries and debates over the total defence budget.² But the international circumstances postulated as the basis of the document included the prospect of a Soviet-initiated general war, as soon as Soviet military capability overtook American sufficiently to risk it - a condition judged likely to be reached in 1954.³ The paper identified war by proxy as the greatest danger until the USSR reached that point.

The Korean war undermined the exclusive preoccupation of American post-war strategists with general war.⁴ The USA confirmed in 1951 in a National Security Council document, its view of the need to limit its commitments in Korea. But the perception of need not to overcommit in Korea or against China sprang as much from the desire not to degrade general war posture as from consideration of the proportionality between interests and commitment in Korea.⁵

In 1954, President Eisenhower gave official sanction to the strategy of massive retaliation. The doctrine was based in part on presumed US inability to defeat the multi-million armies of the Sino-Soviet bloc without using nuclear weapons.⁶ It implied that the US would not become involved in limited wars, preferring to deter Soviet probes by threatening nuclear retaliation.⁷

In espousing this strategy, the USA was reacting to the "mounting costs" of having to "be ready to fight in the arctic and in the tropics; in Asia, the

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¹ Gaddis op cit p101
² ibid p90
³ NSC 68 pp251, 267 cited in Gaddis op cit p97
⁵ Gaddis op cit p123
⁶ Haffa op cit pp18-20
⁷ ibid p20; Sarkesian "The American Response to Low-Intensity Conflict" loc cit p25
Near East and in Europe; by sea, by land and by air; with old weapons and with new weapons". The Government could not continue to meet those commitments "without grave budgetary, economic and social consequences".¹

Even with the strategy of massive retaliation, so-called "brushfire wars" or small, local wars were still seen as possible, and the US strategy for coping with these was predicated on the need for forces, American or allied, based in the theatre to hold a defensive position until US air and sea power, or the central strategic reserve of ground forces, could be deployed.² These wars were conceived of as small, not involving the Soviet Union directly, and of sufficiently low intensity to leave the brunt of the fighting to the allies concerned.³

But the doctrine of massive retaliation was not the essence of US military strategy, merely one of its elements. The main principle of the "New Look" doctrine advanced by the Eisenhower administration was that of asymmetrical response: reacting to challenges in ways that exploited one's own strengths, even if this meant changing the nature and location of the confrontation.⁴ This might involve what subsequently became called limited nuclear war:

the United States cannot afford to preclude itself from using nuclear weapons even in a local situation, if such use will bring the aggression to a swift and positive cessation, and if, on a balance of political and military consideration, such use will best advance U.S. security interests.⁵

Asymmetrical response also added to US strategy the element of keeping the USSR guessing about how it might respond to a particular crisis.

² Haffa op cit pp20-21
³ ibid pp22-23
⁴ Gaddis op cit p147
⁵ NSC 162/2 "Basic National Security Policy" 30 October 1953, Modern Military Records Division, National Archives, p22 cited in Gaddis op cit p150
The integration of nuclear weapons into tactical considerations became more of a preoccupation in the 1950s, with the USA announcing in 1956 that it had activated its first Army division capable of fighting with nuclear weapons.¹

The late 1950s saw a gradual shift in American official policy away from a public doctrine of massive retaliation to one of flexible response. In 1957, President Eisenhower supported a Joint Resolution of Congress which declared that the USA was "prepared to use armed force to assist any nation or nations requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism".²

Moves toward a US limited war strategy followed - as a natural consequence - the expansion of US interests in remote areas under the policy of containment, which by the mid-1950s had become a policy of encirclement.³

The framework for this policy was a series of security treaties signed by the USA or established under its sponsorship between 1949 and 1960.⁴ These would also provide, it was hoped, a mechanism for countering localised Soviet aggression.⁵

The essential elements of American local war strategy were

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¹ Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age pp59-61
² Sarkesian "The American Response to Low-Intensity Conflict" loc cit p25
³ Gaddis op cit p153
⁴ The network included the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) set up in 1949; the ANZUS pact based on treaties signed with Australia and New Zealand in 1951; the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) set up in 1954; and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) set up in 1955; and mutual security treaties with the Philippines (1951), South Korea (1953), Republic of China (1954), and Japan (1960). The USA was not a signatory to the Baghdad Pact between Turkey, Iran and Pakistan of 1955 but it sponsored the formation of the treaty and in 1959 signed bilateral security treaties with each of the parties. The USA also had security commitments to some countries, such as Israel, that have never been the subject of a formal - or at least public - treaty (John M Collins American and Soviet Military Trends since the Cuban Missile Crisis Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington DC, 1978, p161).
⁵ Gaddis op cit p153
summarised as early as 1956 by Kaufmann, in one of the first post-war works on limited war:

the United States should still be able, with the help of indigenous forces, with mobility, well organized logistical facilities, great conventional firepower, and highly trained central reserves, not merely to match but actually to beat the enemy at this type of game. After all, Greece and Korea are not figments of the imagination.¹

By 1960, several major critiques of massive retaliation had been written, and the theoretical basis of limited war doctrine had been elaborated. Landmarks in the literature on limited war strategy included works by Brodie between 1954 and 1959;² a 1956 collection of essays edited by Kaufmann advocating a limited war strategy, Military Policy and National Security;³ 1957 books by Osgood, Limited War: The Challenge to American Security.⁴ and

¹ William Kaufmann "Limited Warfare" in William Kaufmann (ed) Military Policy and National Security Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1956, p122 cited in Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age p122. In the late 1950s, there was broad agreement in the USA on the need for rapid deployment capabilities, but there was little agreement on how that force might be composed. The Army took the lead, with the creation in 1958 of the Strategic Army Corps, comprising three divisions but lacking dedicated strategic airlift, organic tactical air power or closely coordinated tactical air support from the United States Air Force (USAF). The USAF concentrated on the primary strategic mission of massive retaliation, convinced that it had insufficient forces to meet this primary mission, let alone undefined limited contingencies elsewhere. The USAF did create a Composite Air Strike Force in the late 1950s for limited war missions, but these were conceived in the strategic nuclear bombing mode rather than as strategic air lift or close air support to ground forces. The Navy, including the USMC, continued to emphasise its independent power projection role rather than pay much attention to limited contingencies as a specific form of operation requiring joint force operations (Haffa op cit pp90-91).

² Bernard Brodie "Unlimited Weapons and Limited War" The Reporter XI, Nov 18 1954, pp16-21 presented the view that the USA must be prepared to fight limited wars if total war was to be avoided. See also Bernard Brodie "More about Limited War" World Politics 1957 (October) no. 10, pp112-122; "The Meaning of Limited War" Rand Memorandum RM-2224, July 30 1958; and Strategy in the Missile Age, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1959. Chapter 9 of the book, which is largely about strategic deterrence, deals with local war planning as part of a comprehensive strategy.


The need to accommodate limited war strategies in the US force structure was included in the Democratic Party Platform of 1960, with specific demands for greater expenditure on diversity, mobility, and greater numbers of weapons and forces "to deter both limited and general aggressions".³

As Huntington observed in 1961, US limited war doctrine was a home-grown US response to the post-War world:

> The requirement for a limited war capability ... was not the direct result of a need to match some clearly identifiable increase in Soviet capabilities. ... The need for limited war forces flowed instead from Soviet development of strategic forces designed for general war. Logically, the argument that a nuclear balance of terror increased the likelihood of limited war seemed irrefutable. It did not, however, produce a concrete threat ... which could serve as a stimulus and a standard for the development of comparable American capabilities.⁴

In particular, the US Army's early support for limited war doctrine in 1954 was the result of the threat posed to its traditional missions by preoccupation with nuclear weapons and long range delivery vehicles arising from total war strategies.⁵

But the military requirements for limited conventional war were not met easily, and efforts to meet them were opposed by conservative officials and a system in which the limited war doctrine did not sit comfortably.⁶

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² Maxwell D Taylor *The Uncertain Trumpet* Harper & Bros, New York NY, 1959
³ Haffa *op cit* p25
⁵ *ibid* p345
⁶ *ibid* p342
the habits of mind linked to an institutional disposition for preparing for total war meant that the nation was seemingly disarmed in coming to terms with conflicts short of all-out war.¹

As Deitchman observed, the tactical forces with which the USA entered the Korean war were virtually all that could be spared from the central mission of defending Europe.² Even after that, the US armed forces were developed with all eyes on the Soviet European threat, "to the virtual exclusion of possible wars elsewhere".³

Coming to the Presidency on a platform which included a new military policy, John Kennedy wasted little time. In his first months, Kennedy read to his Cabinet Khrushchev's January 1961 speech on Soviet support for national liberation forces to justify his belief that the USSR was imbued with a "bellicose confidence" that "declared faith in victory through rebellion, subversion and guerilla warfare". Kennedy was firmly of the view that US doctrine and forces were inadequate to the threat posed by the USSR and world communism in localised conflicts.⁴

In a message to Congress in March 1961, Kennedy outlined a new strategy based on the principle of "flexible response":

\[
\text{to deter all wars, general or limited, nuclear or conventional, large or small - to convince all potential aggressors that any attack would be futile.} \quad 5
\]

The following month, he elaborated: non-nuclear conflicts posed the "most serious threat to Free World security" but "do not justify and must not lead to a general

¹ William Olsen "The Concept of Small Wars" Small Wars and Insurgencies, 1990 (April) vol. 1, no. 1, p40
² Deitchman op cit p2
³ ibid p3
⁴ Haffa op cit p28. The words in quotation were attributed by Haffa to an account by Arthur Schlesinger of the impact of the speech on President Kennedy.
⁵ cited in Gaddis op cit p214
nuclear attack".¹

In a special message to Congress on 25 May 1961, he said:

I have directed a further reinforcement of our own capacity to deter or resist non-nuclear aggression. In the conventional field, with one exception, I find no need for large levies of men. What is needed is rather a change of position to give us still further increases in flexibility.²

The main elements of his proposed plan concerning limited war were:

- to reorganise the Army's divisional structure to increase its non-nuclear firepower;
- to improve the army's tactical mobility in any environment;
- to improve coordination with allies;
- to set up new airborne brigades in the Pacific and Europe;
- "to expand rapidly and substantially ... the orientation of existing forces for the conduct of non-nuclear war, para-military operations and sub-limited or unconventional wars";
- to increase the rapid deployment capability of Army reserve forces; and
- "to enhance the already formidable ability of the Marine Corps to respond to limited war emergencies".³

Three separate studies commissioned by the Government in 1961 highlighted deficiencies in US doctrine for limited war.⁴

In the next two years, US military planning began to move away from the notion that the West would gain a strategic advantage by using tactical nuclear weapons, and placed more emphasis on strengthening conventional forces.⁵

By 1963, limited war concepts began to take root in US military doctrine and studies had been conducted for limited war in Europe, the Middle East, Southeast and Northeast Asia.⁶

¹ cited in Gaddis op cit p215
² quoted in Deitchman op cit p4
³ Deitchman op cit pp4-5
⁴ Haffa op cit p27. The Assistant Secretary for Defense, Paul Nitze (the Limited War Study Committee), the Secretary of the Navy, John Connally, and Dr Luis Alvarez of the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, each directed a separate study.
⁵ Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age p63
⁶ Haffa op cit p32
The new emphasis on limited wars did not detract in any way from attention to nuclear weapons, for which Kennedy implemented a procurement program well beyond that contemplated by Eisenhower.¹

In 1965, Secretary for Defense McNamara enunciated a unified doctrine to cope simultaneously with a large-scale war in Europe, low-level conflict in any region of the world (brushfire war), and a war resulting from direct attack by a communist state on its neighbour. This was the "two-and-a-half" war doctrine.²

Escalation in Vietnam after mid-1965 constrained the effectiveness of earlier planning aimed at expanding general purpose forces for the two-and-a-half war doctrine. By August 1967, when US forces already in or committed to Vietnam reached 500,000 troops, units had for the first time to be drawn from the central strategic reserve, thus rendering it unavailable for other, lesser contingencies.³

By 1969, a number of influences (the Vietnam war, US congressional pressure on defence spending, and realisation that the Sino-Soviet split reduced strategic pressure on the Western alliance) contributed to moves to redefine US global military strategy.⁴ In that year, President Nixon's National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, following a review of the assumptions of the two-and-a-half war strategy, recommended its replacement by a "one-and-a-half war" strategy, on the grounds that:

¹ Gaddis *op cit* p218 notes that by mid-1964, the number of available nuclear weapons had increased by 150 per cent, a 200 per cent boost in deliverable megatonnage, and ten additional Polaris submarines (for a total of 29) and 400 additional Minuteman missiles (for a total of 800) above the figures planned by Eisenhower.

² *ibid* pp32-33

³ *ibid* pp33-35

⁴ *ibid* pp38-39
a simultaneous Warsaw Pact attack in Central Europe and a Chinese conventional attack in Asia is unlikely. In any event, I do not believe such a simultaneous attack could or should be met with ground forces.¹

According to Kissinger, President Nixon and he agreed that the USA would avoid involvement in foreign civil wars and plan to fight a major war in either Europe or Asia, but not both, as well as more limited contingencies.²

On 3 November 1969, President Nixon outlined the new strategy in a press conference at Guam, and formalised it in his Foreign Policy Report on 18 February 1970. Its essential point was that while providing a nuclear shield to allies, the USA would expect the country directly threatened to provide the forces for its own defence.³

In terms of US military planning there was little change, since the force levels required for the two-and-a-half war concept had never been reached.⁴ Nixon had however made plain that insurgencies (a form of civil war) were best fought with economic and military aid short of direct US combat intervention.⁵

Apart from this obvious retreat from limited wars, the US armed forces may have lost confidence in their ability to counter Soviet-sponsored aggression in small wars. As Osgood wrote in 1973:

The popular disaffection with the Vietnamese war does not indicate a reversion to pre-Korea attitudes towards limited war. Rather it indicates serious questioning of the premises about the utility of limited war as an instrument of American policy, the premises that originally moved the proponents of limited war strategy and that underlay the original confidence of the Kennedy Administration in

¹ Henry Kissinger *White House Years* Little, Brown & Co, Boston MASS, 1979, p221 cited in Haffa *op cit* p41
² Haffa *op cit* p42
³ *ibid* p41
⁴ *ibid* p42 citing Secretary for Defense Laird in his 1970 Posture Statement

In 1974, Defense Secretary Schlesinger admitted - in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israel War - that US forces were even inadequate for the one-and-a-half war strategy.\footnote{"Schlesinger Seeks More Army Divisions" \textit{Washington Post} 17 October 1974 cited in Haffa \textit{op cit} p49} By 1976, the strategic concept of one-and-a-half wars had been turned upside down, with the lesser contingency (the half war) coming to greater prominence.\footnote{Haffa \textit{op cit} p49}

Review by President Carter in 1977 of the bases of US military strategy preserved the "one-and-a-half" war concept but placed most emphasis on a big war in Europe and a potentially explosive small war, in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere. Soon, the mismatch between US forces designed for the major war in Europe and the requirements for much more mobile forces in a Persian Gulf scenario became apparent.\footnote{\textit{ibid} pp53-56}

A planned withdrawal of US forces from Korea, announced in 1977, also drew considerable attention to the need for highly mobile reaction forces.\footnote{\textit{ibid} p57}

A strategy review completed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1978 recognised the need for a joint service rapid deployment force, questioning the value of the one-and-a-half war concept and raising the prospect of direct Soviet participation in a half-war scenario. By mid-June 1979, proposals for such a force were being considered, including a 100,000 man strike force, increased access to Indian Ocean basing, and greater military cooperation with friendly countries in the
Middle East.¹

By the end of 1979, US national security policy and strategic doctrine were in ferment. The US loss of influence in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan forced the formulation of the Carter doctrine based on a new premise that the USSR could now operate military forces simultaneously in several parts of the world. The USA began at this time to consider more vigorously than ever before the use of military force against the USSR in non-NATO scenarios. The new thinking became a "one war and two half-wars" scenario.²

US forces for a non-NATO contingency became the subject of a separate chapter in the Department of Defense Annual Report presented at the end of 1980:

When this administration came into office four years after the 1973 oil embargo, we found that the United States had little or no capability for quickly deploying military forces to that critical area of the world. ... While the potential missions of Rapid Deployment Forces are global, in practice most of our planning and programming has focused on Southwest Asia.³

The early Reagan years saw specific rejection of the "half war" concept in favour of reliance on new strategies of horizontal escalation (fighting on other fronts where damage would be unacceptable to the USSR), coupled with a complex posture of global confrontation with the sole enemy, the USSR. A new element of the confrontation was reassertion of US naval supremacy.⁴ In response to Soviet exploitation of civil wars in the Third World, especially Central America, and US determination to use military assets to undermine the Soviet occupation of

¹ ibid pp60-62
² ibid pp60-65. Haffa is citing the phrase from comments by Under-Secretary of Defense, Robert Komer, to the Senate Committee on Armed Services in 1980.
⁴ Haffa op cit pp228-230
Afghanistan, the USA paid considerably more attention to the doctrine of low intensity conflict. This doctrine embodied, for the first time since the end of the Vietnam war, a more vigorous US para-military effort to oppose what it saw as Soviet expansionism.

The doctrine demonstrated a new willingness to engage the USSR in low risk conflicts, almost exclusively in the Third World. This doctrine was a restatement of Kennedy's pledge to "pay any price ... support any friend, oppose any foe", but it was conceived within the framework of low-risk engagements. As in the Kennedy era, Defense Secretary Weinberger in 1983 saw the military skills required for low intensity conflict as found "chiefly ... in our special operations forces".¹

As the Reagan Administration's determination to confront and oppose the "evil empire" - grew, the strategists took the necessary steps to put behind them the perceived mistakes of the Vietnam War era. In 1984, in a major address on the uses of military power, Weinberger listed six tests to be applied when considering the commitment of United States forces to combat. These were:

- US forces should not be committed to combat abroad unless the national interest or that of allies is at stake;
- the USA must have a clear intention of winning the engagement;
- political and military objectives must be clearly defined, along with a means for achieving those objectives;
- there must be continuous reassessment of the conditions, objectives and combat requirements, with adjustments as necessary;
- there must be reasonable assurance of popular support; and

the commitment of US forces should be a last resort.¹

By 1985, the US Navy was advocating a new version of the concept of horizontal escalation for major war in Europe - the so-called "maritime strategy". This strategy envisioned US naval forces countering the Soviet Navy worldwide to win a war in Europe. The strategy, while expressed in terms of general war, was used to justify the US Navy's plans for 15 carrier battle groups and a 600 ship fleet.²

The Weinberger Doctrine and the determination to maintain powerful interventionary naval forces under the maritime strategy together represented a potent limited war doctrine, although the ambitious targets for the Navy were not reached.

The 1988 Report of the Commission on Integrated Long Term Strategy, prepared for the Department of Defense, called for even greater efforts in developing strategies for operations in limited, conventional force conflicts in Europe, the Far East, or the Third World.³

The US-led Gulf War against Iraq in 1991 was in many respects the culmination of decades of effort in perfecting plans for limited war. Although not against the USSR and largely facilitated by the end of Cold War, it demonstrated US Governmental determination to apply the Weinberger doctrine.⁴

¹ cited in Bernard F McMahon "Low Intensity Conflict: the Pentagon's Foible" Orbis Winter, 1990, p12
² ibid p8
⁴ In some respects, the existence of the Weinberger doctrine, in particular its link between ability to achieve clearly defined political and military objectives and a decision in favour of use of force, may have predisposed the US Government to the action it took.
US Force Structure for Limited War

Planning for wars outside US territory requires a choice between rapid deployment of a central reserve ("strategic mobility capability") and the basing of forces outside the country, or a combination of both.¹ Forward basing provides several advantages, especially deterrence through the so-called trip-wire effect.² In US calculations, forward basing also had disadvantages, especially lack of flexibility and mobility, if the limited contingency broke out distant from the force bases.³

The US accepted a combination of a home-based central reserve, dedicated to responding anywhere in the world, with forward basing of equipment and supplies appropriate to particular regions.⁴ The choice was backed with deployments of troops, naval forces and air forces in the key theatres of Europe and Northeast Asia for much of the post-war period.

The most visible changes to US force structure in response to the new limited war missions came in the areas of command structures and in special forces, but naval and airborne forces, while undergoing less change, were important elements of the strategy.

Command Structures  In 1961, a unified Strike Command was established to meet the limited contingency (half war) requirement but it had

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¹ Haffa op cit p156. This view was expressed by Neville Brown in a 1963 study when he observed that the world-wide distribution of "Anglo-American" forces reflected a compromise between specially assigned reserve forces on home territory, garrison forces in flashpoints, or overseas-based theatre reserves (Neville Brown Strategic Mobility Chatto & Windus, London UK, 1963, p27).
² Haffa op cit pp146-147
³ ibid p147
⁴ ibid pp148-152
responsibility only for the tactical air and army assets assigned.\textsuperscript{1} By December 1963, its missions had been more fully articulated as follows:

- to conduct operations in the Middle east, Southern Asia and Africa south of the Sahara;
- to augment other unified commands;
- to execute contingency missions as the Joint Chiefs might direct;
- to develop a doctrine for the employment of forces assigned;
- to be responsible for the joint training of forces assigned; and
- to conduct joint training exercises to ensure maintenance of a high state of combat effectiveness and a rapid reaction capability.\textsuperscript{2}

Strike Command suffered from the outset from the lack of full-time assigned forces, the exclusion of naval and marine forces, conflict with geographic unified commands in likely hot spots, and the continued allegiance of assigned army and air force commanders to their single services.\textsuperscript{3} Another principal weakness was its universality: its mission to go "anywhere, anytime".\textsuperscript{4} Kennedy’s Defense Secretary, McNamara, had opined that US limited war forces should be capable of dealing "with the entire spectrum" of limited contingencies.\textsuperscript{5} In the first five years of Strike Command’s existence, 22 separate contingency plans were drawn up; and in a representative 18 month period in 1962-1963 it participated in 27 joint operations, including exercises as far flung as Alaska, the Philippines, the Caribbean and Europe.\textsuperscript{6}

The force universality of Strike Command led to the other major

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{ibid} p93. Strike Command comprised the Strategic Army Corps, the USAF Tactical Air Command and the Composite Air Strike Force.

\textsuperscript{2} Joe Wagner "Strike Command - Paper Tiger or Peacemaker" \textit{Armed Forces Management} October 1963 cited in Haffa \textit{op cit} pp93-94. Haffa also cites Strike Command OPLAN 7080 (15 September 1970).

\textsuperscript{3} Haffa \textit{op cit} pp94-95, 100-102. A number of military operations in the 1960s, including the Cuban crisis in October 1962, demonstrated the pre-eminence of the unified commands over Strike Command.

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{ibid} pp100-101

\textsuperscript{5} US Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on H.R. 7851, 87th Congress, 1st session, USGPO, Washington DC, 1961, p25 cited in Haffa \textit{op cit} p100

\textsuperscript{6} Haffa \textit{op cit} p100
weakness of US limited war strategy: the use of forces designed for general war in a limited war. The Vietnam War showed that the general purpose forces were less flexible than had been thought:

nor did the prevailing concept that conventional forces designed to meet the worst-case contingency - high-intensity, non-nuclear conflict - would also be suitable for lesser contingencies prove to be as valid as expected.¹

US forces in Vietnam encountered major difficulties in applying command and control arrangements designed for major war, including the conflicting priorities of agencies outside the military command, such as State Department and CIA.²

On 8 July 1971, the US announced that Strike Command would be dissolved, and its functions assumed by US unified commands throughout the world.³ These commands, as well-established entities whose focus was confined to specific regions, presented a solid basis for a limited war, the essence of which had to be the ability to respond to the unique circumstances of each war, particularly those of terrain, climate and probable enemy.

At much the same time, in 1972, Readiness Command, was set up as the immediate institutional successor to Strike Command as a limited contingency force. Readiness Command had no operational command in the event of hostilities, was responsible only for training forces, and had no specific geographic area of responsibility. It lacked any sense of mission.⁴

By 1974, under pressure of events in the Middle East, the USA

¹ ibid p104
³ Haffa op cit p105
⁴ ibid p107. The low profile of Readiness Command and the institutionalised constraints on its ability to provide ready reaction forces were the direct result of the period of foreign policy retrenchment that followed the Vietnam experience and the Guam doctrine (p109).
began paying attention again to the outbreak of limited war and the need for forces in that theatre, although it took until 1980 to establish officially the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). This force was established as subordinate to Readiness Command, and at its inception was not assigned a specific geographic area of responsibility. Its mission, to "deploy and employ forces in response to contingencies threatening US interests anywhere in the world", was still based on the theory of force universality or force versatility.¹

By the end of 1980, the Persian Gulf region emerged as the focus of responsibility of the RDJTF, and the most likely perceived enemy became the USSR. The narrowing focus of the RDJTF led to its removal from Readiness Command. A proposal to establish a new theatre command in the Middle East received little support in the services, but by early 1981 the Secretary for Defense announced plans to create a separate unified command. Central Command was formally established in January 1983.²

It took over some areas previously under the responsibility of the European and Pacific Commands, and comprised subordinate Service Component commands of all the services, thus overcoming a number of the inter-service problems that existed with the RDJTF. It had much in common with other unified commands and few characteristics of a rapid deployment force designed to extinguish brushfire wars anywhere in the world. As in other unified commands, its single service components were responsible to their service chiefs for daily operations and training. At the same time, the presence of the components in a central staff enhanced service cooperation better than the weaker organisation of the

¹ ibid pp112-114, 128
² ibid pp128-129, 227-228
The creation of Central Command marked a departure from the concept of a strong, central reserve force with a versatile command structure to respond to a wide variety of contingencies. Yet the reliance on versatility of forces and the hope that forces would not be needed simultaneously in different areas were not eliminated, since many of the units assigned to Central Command could also be assigned to other commands. And the need for rapid deployment forces based in the continental USA to respond in lower priority contingencies, such as in Africa, Central America or the Caribbean, remained very much a factor in US force planning.

Special Forces The US Government consistently regarded special forces as an important tool in limited war. It was in them that the requirement to mould forces according to a specific region (the distinguishing feature of local or limited war) was given most prominence.

The first permanent Army organisation in the USA with a formal

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1 *ibid* pp234-236
2 *ibid* p240. The effectiveness of Central Command using US forces assigned from other Commands, including in Europe, was demonstrated in Operation Desert Shield in late 1990 and in the war against Iraq (Desert Storm) in 1991. It is an open question whether the scale of redeployment of US forces undertaken in the war against Iraq would have been considered at the height of the Cold War.
3 *ibid* pp129, 240-241
4 Maurice Tugwell and David Charters "Special Operations in US Strategy" in Barnett, Tovar and Shultz (eds) *op cit* p35 define special operations as:

   Small-scale, clandestine, covert or overt operations of an unorthodox and frequently high-risk nature, undertaken to achieve significant political or military objectives ... Special operations are characterised by ... the discriminate use of violence, and by oversight at the highest level.

These operations did not sit easily with the American political system or many military professionals, despite the use of unconventional operations by the USA in its War of Independence, some of its Indian wars (1836-1843), the Spanish American war (1898) and the Filipino insurrection (1898-1901) (Sarkesian "Organizational Strategy and Low Intensity Conflicts" *loc cit* pp263-264).
mission of unconventional operations was set up during the Korean War in 1952. Its mission was to infiltrate the enemy’s sphere of influence and train indigenous guerilla fighters to complement operations by US regular forces. Roles included organising resistance groups, running agent networks, agent training, espionage, sabotage, guerilla warfare.

Shortly after the Korean War, US special forces were at their nadir, with total strength standing at 2,000. With President Kennedy’s foreign policy based on the principle of "go anywhere" and "bear any burden", special forces began a period of growth that extended into the Vietnam War. A Special Group (Counter-Insurgency) was set up in January 1962 to coordinate policy. These forces refocussed their attention on counter-insurgency operations rather than

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1 Sarkesian "Organizational Strategy and Low Intensity Conflicts" loc cit p263. This unit, the 10th Special Forces (SF) Group (Airborne), was organised around the concept of 15 man teams trained in a range of skills from intelligence collection, and demolitions to basic medical care. The men were trained to operate with foreign equipment and to operate in small, isolated teams in a foreign environment for long periods of time (Sarkesian "The American Response to Low Intensity Conflict" loc cit p35). This centre, under the Psychological Warfare Center, which had been set up one year earlier at Fort Bragg, North Carolina was renamed the Special Warfare Center in 1956, then the John F. Kennedy Center for Military assistance in 1969, to become the basis of the 1st Special Operations Command in 1982 (Alfred H Paddock "Psychological Operations, Special Operations and US Strategy" in Barnett, Tovar and Shultz (eds) op cit p244).

2 Sarkesian "The American Response to Low Intensity Conflict" loc cit p35

3 *ibid* p36. Although the 10th had been assigned to Germany, and a new unit, the 77th, had been raised in Fort Bragg, lack of sympathy in the Army hierarchy with the value of the special forces in Germany saw the 10th SF Group reduced from 800 to 400 by the mid-1950s. In 1956, two SF detachments were formed in the Pacific (Hawaii and Japan), to become the 1st SF Group (Airborne) based in Okinawa a year later. By 1961, the 1st SF Group had 123 officers and 586 men, organised into four separate detachments assigned to four separate geographic based missions: Southeast Asia; China; Korea; Okinawa and Japan (Leroy Thompson *De Oppresso Liber - The Illustrated History of the US Army Special Forces* Paladin Press, Boulder CO, 1987, pp23, 33).

4 Sarkesian "The American Response to Low Intensity Conflict" loc cit p37. By the mid-1960s, four Special Action Forces (SAF) had been formed, each with a 1,500 strong SF Group, a civil affairs group, a psychological operations battalion, an engineer detachment, a medical detachment, an intelligence detachment, and a signals intelligence unit. The four SAF each had a specific geographic area of responsibility: the Far East (1st), Latin America (8th), Africa (3rd) and the Middle East (6th). There remained three additional smaller SF detachments, such as the 10th SF Group in Germany. These SF units provided special forces training to foreign countries in their area of responsibility where possible. The SF School went from producing 500 graduates in the mid-1950s to 3,000 per year (Thompson *op cit* p42).

5 McLintock *Instruments of Statecraft* p163
operations against Soviet targets behind their front line. Naval special forces were set up in 1962.

The role of special forces in Vietnam came to the fore in May 1961 when as a result of the deterioration of South Vietnam’s position, Kennedy approved the assignment of 400 US special forces personnel to act as trainers and advisers to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, especially to its special forces. He also ordered a campaign of clandestine warfare in North Vietnam to be conducted by South Vietnamese personnel trained by CIA and US special forces.

Later in 1961, he approved special operations by US personnel in Laos against North Vietnamese forces. Responsibility for conducting unconventional warfare in North Vietnam was transferred from the CIA to the Army in December 1963. The special forces groups in Vietnam were under a Special Assistant for Counter-Insurgency and Special Activities in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Their operations had little success, so their mission was redirected after October 1965 from infiltration to harassment, destruction of enemy forces, and intelligence collection activities.

The counter-insurgency era began with Kennedy and the April 1961

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1 Sarkesian "The American Response to Low Intensity Conflict" *loc cit* pp36-37
2 McLintock *Instruments of Statecraft* p350
4 Simpson *op cit* pp144-147; Sarkesian "The American Response to Low Intensity Conflict" *loc cit* p38. Hit and run raids and intelligence missions became primary missions, while psychological operations against the popular support base of the guerillas were not a high priority.
Bay of Pigs operation, and faded away with the US withdrawal from Vietnam,\(^1\) reviving temporarily under President Reagan, when low intensity conflict provided a rationale.\(^2\)

Along with ready acceptance of the interventionary role of designated airborne units, the US Army also began to develop battlefield mobility concepts that broadened the concept of airborne forces, in association with the Kennedy Administration’s introduction of the flexible response doctrine.\(^3\)

Airlift assets were considerably augmented under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as a complement to the forward strategy and limited war

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\(^1\) McLintock *Instruments of Statecraft* p162, 348. Special Forces personnel had peaked at 13,000 in 7 Groups in 1969, dropping to three active Groups in 1974. By 1970, of 249 separate camps and installations built for US special forces, only 49 were still active (Simpson *op cit* pp199, 202). The USA could not sustain the high numbers of SF personnel in Vietnam that it committed itself to, because of declining recruitments and declining interest among serving members to volunteer for reassignment to Vietnam (Shelby Stanton *Green Berets at War - US Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia, 1956-1975* Presidio, Novato CA, 1985, pp167-170). The advent of anti-Western terrorist groups in the early 1970s put a renewed emphasis on US special forces, but changed their missions somewhat to include anti-hijack and hostage rescue roles (Sarkesian "The American Response to Low Intensity Conflict" *loc cit* p42). Even so, by 1980, the total strength of SF units was only 3,000, which was less than the peak strength of just one SF Group in 1968 (McLintock *Instruments of Statecraft* p348).

\(^2\) Sarkesian "Organizational Strategy and Low Intensity Conflicts" *loc cit* p263. In 1982, a reversal began when the Army Special Operations Command was established. Active duty SF forces in the three services rose from 11,600 in 1981 to 14,900 in 1985, with a 1990 target of 20,900. Reserve SF strength also grew, with the 1990 target being 17,600 (McLintock *op cit* p348). While the bulk of the special forces assets were in the Army (9,100 active duty personnel in 1987), the US Air Force also had impressive assets (4,100 active duty personnel, a Special Operations Air Wing and Five Special Operations squadrons, including one in the Philippines and one in Germany). The Navy had 1,700 SF troops by 1986, and the CIA’s unconventional warfare capabilities had also been built up (McLintock *Instruments of Statecraft* pp349-350). Funding for the special operations in FY 1988 was $2.5 billion, compared with $440 million in 1981 (Kenneth Brooten, Jr "The US Special Operations Command" *Journal of Defense & Diplomacy* vol. 5 no. 10 1987 pp22-23).

\(^3\) Airborne operations relying on small scale air fleets became a central element of strategically mobile forces of the major powers after the Second World War - from the Dutch airborne landing on Magewo airfield in Java in 1948, through 156 separate parachute assaults by French troops in Vietnam between 1946 and 1954, to the Malayan Emergency, the Algerian Revolutionary War, the Arab-Israel War of 1956, and the Suez crisis. A 1962 study commissioned by Defense Secretary McNamara recommended the complete integration of air mobility into the Army field force and the formation of air mobile divisions, with light scales of equipment and weapons. After some trials and the establishment of a training unit, McNamara approved in 1965 the formation of a full strength air mobile division. The 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) was ordered to Vietnam in July 1965 (Maurice Tugwell *Airborne to Battle - A History of Airborne Warfare 1918-1971* William Kimber, London UK, 1971, pp289-315, pp318-319).
planning. For example, the incoming Kennedy administration announced funding in June 1961 for 129 new long range transport aircraft compared with the 50 previously programmed. McNamara called for a 100 per cent increase in airlift capacity by 1964.¹ Yet when 1964 arrived, he was forced to acknowledge that the USA was still "obviously far short of any reasonable goal" with respect to airlift capabilities for the first 30 days of a large-scale war in a remote area.²

Regular study and review of rapid deployment transport support, by air and sea, became a feature of strategic analysis after 1964.³ By 1970, the demands of the Vietnam war on US airlift capacity made support of any other limited war contingency impossible, causing a Congressional panel to conclude that airlift support for even a one-and-a-half war strategy was questionable.⁴

The 1973 Middle East War provoked renewed interest in strategic transport assets, especially airlift, but very quickly the need for increased airlift for rapid deployment in a limited contingency outside NATO faded. But events in Iran, Cuba and Afghanistan in 1979, and the formal establishment of the RDJTF in 1980, put the need for bolstered airlift and sealift assets on the agenda again. New air transport acquisitions were planned and decisions on afloat prepositioned stocks were announced in 1979. The focus of the new strategic mobility assets was very clearly on the Persian Gulf region. The new goals were not reached in the early 1980s, partly because of past funding shortfalls, but also because the new requirement after 1979 to combat the USSR in the Persian Gulf imposed new

¹ ibid pp156-158, 168
² McNamara's Posture Statement of January 29 1964 cited in Haffa op cit p169
³ Brown op cit p157; Haffa op cit pp157-159. A decision was made in 1965 to begin construction of a new class of Fast Deployment Logistic Ships.
⁴ Haffa op cit p170
demands on transport support.¹

**Naval Forces** After 1945, debate about the future size of the US fleet and the role of super-carriers erupted into the "Admirals' revolt", fuelled in part by their disenchantment with the predominance accorded strategic (nuclear) bombing and massive retaliation over a more flexible strategy which also took account of limited wars.²

Defense Secretary Johnson, opposed the Navy's views and declared only months before the Korean War began, that amphibious landings were a thing of the past. That war vindicated the admirals because the Navy provided shore bombardment; carrier strikes against bridges, supply depots and transport; close air support for ground troops; amphibious landings - and evacuations - and logistical support for the Army. By 1951, six 78,000 ton carriers were laid down, only two years after Secretary Johnson had cancelled a 60,000 ton carrier.³

In the 1950s, the Navy was regularly called on to defend US interests in localised conflicts in the Mediterranean, the Carribbean and the Taiwan Strait. The intervention of the Sixth Fleet in Lebanon in July 1958 showed that the USA had a decisive, rapid reaction force that served to undermine Soviet

¹ *ibid* pp176-183, 184, 191
² Nathan Miller *The U.S. Navy - A History* Revised edition, Quill, William Morrow, New York NY, 1990, pp248-249. There had been a rapid demobilisation and contraction of the United States Navy - from more than 3 million men and women on active service at the time of the surrender to about half a million one year later; and construction was halted on 9,800 vessels, mostly small craft; another 2,000 were decommissioned or mothballed, and an even larger number were declared surplus.
³ *ibid* pp251, 254
pretensions to be seen as a defender of its new Arab allies.¹

In 1961, the USA had 16 aircraft carriers in operation. They were joined in 1962 by the nuclear powered *USS Enterprise*. These carriers, supported by another 860 ships in the active fleet, were regarded at the time as "a major element in the limited war posture" of the USA.² Even in 1963, the carriers were "becoming less and less suitable for general war purposes" but were still "subtle, flexible and powerful instruments of local deterrence".³

By the mid-1970s, the US Navy had been reduced to 460 ships in commission, its lowest level for forty years.⁴ Yet US naval power in the 1970s did not necessarily decline. At least 13 attack carriers were in service throughout the decade, and helicopter carriers were increased from 7 to 11 by 1979.⁵ Numbers of destroyers fell slightly, but numbers of frigates and nuclear attack submarines increased by a factor of three.⁶

**Force Structure: An Assessment** US Force structure developed in an *ad hoc* manner in response to the strategic guidance about limited contingencies or half wars. In particular, only gradual and incomplete recognition was given to the four organisational elements critical to the preparation of a limited contingency force:

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¹ Miller *The US Navy* pp256-257. By 1963, the US Marine Corps totalled 200,000 men, comprising three divisions - one on each coast of the USA and one in Okinawa. The fleet of amphibious assault ships included four Helicopter Assault Ships, ranging from 10,000 tons to 38,000 tons. There were also 79 tank landing ships (4,000-6,000 tons), and 15 larger ships. Fifteen attack transports had been added to the amphibious fleet in 1961 (Brown *op cit* p112).
² *ibid* pp116-117
³ *ibid* p119
⁴ Miller *The US Navy* p268
⁶ *ibid* p565
unity of command;  
stability in forces assigned;  
consistency in assigned mission (specific scenario and adversary);  
and  
proper basic training to equip assigned forces for the  
specific theatre.¹

Against these criteria, US attempts to plan rapid deployment forces between 1960 and 1980 were not successful.²

It could be argued that the American national security apparatus was basically unsuited to the conduct of limited wars. Various constraints existed, such as public opinion and disagreement between the President and Congress over war powers. But the reluctance of the armed forces to prepare suitably for such wars, and the inability of the higher command authorities to conduct limited wars with the finesse and firmness required, were "deeper, more permanent, and more dangerous problems".³

In another sense though, the United States armed forces may have been better prepared than some commentators were willing to admit. As the critic cited in the preceding paragraph acknowledged, limited wars were likely to occur simultaneously, and therefore a force structure solution based on a single small war "fire brigade" could not have hoped to cover all contingencies.⁴ Failure to grasp the limited war nettle firmly did not mean the difference between being able to fight and not being able to fight. Rather it meant the difference between fighting well and fighting poorly.⁵

¹ Raffa op cit p82  
² ibid p222. Haffa observed: "Strategic concepts containing the 'half war' were only partially formed, organizations were fractionated, support was neglected".  
⁴ ibid p354  
⁵ ibid p355
Such debates notwithstanding, the paradox is that limited war theory and planning never had a consistent influence on US strategic thinking. As one observer noted in the 1980s:

Despite nearly forty years of experience of small wars and no war with the Soviets, the essence of military thought and planning continues to derive from big war scenarios.\(^1\)

The central preoccupation of US strategy remained the prospect of general nuclear war.

**Conclusion**

Local or limited war was identified in Soviet and American strategic commentary as distinct from general or central war, or world war. Both superpowers assumed a vital link between local or limited wars and the central balance of power.

Opinion on what constituted limited or local war was not unanimous. To many commentators, there was little distinction between the term "limited war", as understood in official US doctrine, and the preferred Soviet term "local war". The irony is that US official doctrine rejected the term "local war" and Soviet official doctrine rejected the term "limited war".

Most definitions did not preclude the possibility of a local nuclear war in central Europe. Some scholars suggested deterred conflicts should also be considered.

It was widely accepted in the USA that local war forces would be different from general war forces, to reflect different priorities in force structure, such as conventional rather than nuclear forces; readiness, but not necessarily

\(^1\) Olsen *op cit* pp40, 45
sustainability or force size; naval and marine corps forces, especially aircraft carriers, land attack weapons, and forces for inshore shallow water operations; army airborne, air assault and light divisions; reserve components rather than standing active army and air force units; and airlift as opposed to sealift assets.

It was accepted that local war creates a tension within professional military forces whose raison d'etre is general war, posing a doctrinal dilemma, since forces would find it difficult to be ready to fight both types of war. Counter-revolutionary or counter-insurgency mission in certain local wars required yet another set of forces, command structures, planning, and personnel. Forces for these sorts of wars needed special familiarity with their specific operating environment - in terms of terrain (desert, jungle, or mountainous) and culture of the local forces (language and customs).

The US armed forces had difficulties coming to grips with limited war issues, but by the end of the 1960s they began to address the problems more or less comprehensively.

The continuing requirement to guard against the possibility of general nuclear war constrained in several important respects the way in which forces were developed, but victory (or at least not losing) in limited wars was seen as a sufficiently vital element of the central strategic competition between NATO and the USSR to warrant development of specific capabilities for such wars. The global scope of US limited war strategy followed - as a natural consequence - the expansion of its interests in remote areas of the world under the policy of containment.

In some respects, the USA relied on the questionable versatility of force elements designed for general war to adapt to limited wars. For example, US
special forces trained for roles in both general war and in limited wars. In the event, these units had many combat missions in limited wars and none in a general war. But more importantly, the size and disposition of US special forces depended almost entirely on the changes in US limited war policy.

The USA was not content to rely on forces designed for general nuclear war to fight limited wars. It rejected the notion that a trained soldier could fight just as well in any region against any enemy, and US forces made special efforts (language training and in-country exercises) to train for a variety of regions.

The balance between the USA’s limited war forces and general war forces, or more accurately between their missions, rarely remained the same for long. Within limited war planning, the balance between forward based forces and home based reserves also changed over time.

US efforts to meet limited war requirements were heavily influenced by bureaucratic and political struggles, involving the armed forces, Congress and successive Administrations. These battles also flared between single services within the armed forces.

The concept of limited nuclear war figured most prominently in US strategy when there was lack of confidence in US strategic power, with the feeling of insecurity centred on the inability to deliver sufficient conventional military power to match Soviet military power in important theatres remote from US territory, most notably in the late 1950s and early 1960s in respect of Europe, and in the late 1970s in respect of the Persian Gulf.
CHAPTER THREE

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE

Military doctrine is an inherently subjective phenomenon, encompassing scientific knowledge and expertise about the conduct of war on the one hand, and, on the other, traditions and political assumptions about how to prepare the armed forces for war and how to fight. Military doctrine, as a set of beliefs about strategy, can be highly structured and widely disseminated, or little more than the ideas shared by the senior military leaders of a particular country.¹

Evidence of a country’s military doctrine may therefore be found in two types of sources - formal (highly structured and officially endorsed) or informal (less structured and more individualistic). Formal sources would be command decisions of the armed forces, force structure decisions, field regulations and manuals, course material of military academies, and official statements of doctrine by military and political leaders. Informal sources would include personal views of military officers, such as those found in the military press, journals or memoirs.

Informal sources represent only personal opinions, although in some countries such sources make up the more substantial part of visible military doctrine.² A case would need to be made for attributing any particular informal source of evidence the quality and reliability of a formal source.

¹ Military leaders in a country include the political figures who direct the armed forces as well as the highest command authorities in the uniformed services.
² Some countries, such as India, do not have formal statements of military doctrine at the national level in the same way as the USA and USSR did during the Cold War.
The formal and informal sources of evidence can be termed direct sources. Indirect sources of evidence of military doctrine also exist:

Equipment and field organisations 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 organisation ...\(^1\)

The indirect sources may be more reliable for assessing practical implementation of doctrine than either the formal or informal sources mentioned above. In particular, they could potentially be far more reliable than informal sources, which offer no \textit{prima facie} evidence of a country's military planning.\(^2\)

This chapter discusses the evidentiary limitations on the information available to US scholars about the Soviet armed forces, and the implications of the fact that much of that information came from the US intelligence community.\(^3\)

In particular, the chapter canvasses the possibility that US intelligence assessments in the period 1950 to 1960, and the frame of reference of US intelligence analysis after 1960, set parameters for subsequent CIA work to such an extent that many scholars could not escape their influence. The primary feature of this influence was preoccupation with evidence of Soviet general war planning to the exclusion of lesser scales of war.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Albert Seaton and Joan Seaton \textit{The Soviet Army - 1918 to the Present} The Bodley Head, London UK, 1986, p171

\(^2\) \textit{ibid}

\(^3\) This is not to imply \textit{ipso facto} anything about the quality of such information or the important purposes open source publication of it served, but to register the point that primary sources for the scholarly study of government policies are usually their own documents recording their decisions, memoirs of key players and domestic records of the implementation of the policies, not a foreign intelligence agency's assessments.

\(^4\) The implication of this suggestion is that the framing of intelligence collection requirements and the questions agencies were asked to answer unduly restricted the scope and quality of the assessments that were being made.
Evidence of Soviet Military Doctrine

Scholars faced special difficulties in studying Soviet military policy because of a strict Soviet ban imposed on public discussion of almost all detailed information about the armed forces. This well known fact is rehearsed here for the important purpose of distinguishing between knowledge (fact) and supposition (theory). If a basic test of scientific knowledge is that it be verifiable, scholars are obliged to assess a level of confidence in their key judgements - would other scholars with the same information reach the same conclusions? Levels of confidence should be expressed in terms of the evidentiary nature of sources used, the range of activities that the information covered, and the effect on conclusions of information reasonably assumed to exist but not available.

The Soviet blackout on military information was codified in a law in 1956 to cover any plans, movement details, locations, size, armaments, training, reserves or accommodation of any military or border force unit. What made the Soviet secrecy law unique was that it covered not only detailed information but "generalised" or "overall" information. It was an all-embracing, totalitarian law enforced with considerable vigour.

While there was some weakening of control in respect of generalised or overall information through its official release, the detail of military policies, like the activities of the armed forces, remained secret. This was true even of the most harmless sorts of information. For example, a history of Soviet naval infantry

2 For example, when Khrushchev announced in 1960 the size of the Soviet armed forces in 1948, this was the first time that information had been revealed.
written in 1957 is very vague about the role of naval infantry, and even its formal status, after the Second World War.¹ Little changed in the next thirty years, with a history of the Soviet armed forces written in 1987 being equally vague, noting only that the capabilities of the naval infantry were improved sometime in the period before 1961, and nowhere giving a date for the decision to reconstitute it as a separate branch of the navy.²

Key Soviet documents recording formal decisions of the General Staff or revealing strategic level plans since 1948 are not available and there has been no public domain release of any US intelligence may have. Other sources of evidence of formal decisions on military doctrine after 1950 are meagre: occasional books (classified and unclassified) published by the General Staff, and censored by the Communist Party;³ occasional articles in the military press;⁴ extremely rare

⁴ An article attributed to the Minister of Defence or the Chief of the General Staff should be regarded as more authoritative as a source of General Staff views in most cases than articles by middle ranking officers. That is not say that on occasions the Chief of the General Staff may not have relied on more junior officers to carry into the public domain views which political masters or even the Minister of Defence may have opposed. But the fact remains that the most senior Soviet military officers only rarely went into print on doctrinal issues. Works such as R Ia Malinovskii (then Minister of Defence) Bditel’no stoiat’ na strazhe mira [Vigilantly Stand Guard for Peace] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1962 or N V Ogarkov (then Chief of the General Staff) Vsegda v gotovnosti k zashchite Otechestva [Always Ready to Defend the Fatherland] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1982 are some examples. Ogarkov went into print more than once with such a work as Istoriiia uchit bditel’nosti [History Teaches Vigilance] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1985, published after he had been moved from Chief of the General Staff to the position of Commander of the Western Theatre.
references in memoirs by senior military officers; books attributed by their Western publishers to Soviet defectors, such as Penkovsky and Suvorov; and personal accounts of particular events, like that of a Polish military officer, Ryszard Kuklinski, about Soviet military planning for invasion of Poland in 1980. These sources are discussed in the second section of this chapter.

Thus, of the types of the sources referred to above, scholars only had unfettered access to one formal source (official statements of doctrine) and a few informal sources (the least valuable from an evidentiary perspective); all of these were subject to political propaganda controls by the Communist Party.

Scholars’ access to all other information which might provide evidence of Soviet military doctrine (plans, deployments, exercise patterns, and training activities) was available only through an intermediary which controlled the

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1 Most military memoirs published in the Soviet Union before 1991 contained almost no references to the detail of decisions taken after the end of the Second World War. One rare exception is the note included by M A Moiseev (then Chief of the General Staff) "Ob avtore i ego knige" [About the Author and his Book] in M V Zakharov General’nyi shtab v predvoennye gody [The General Staff in the Pre-War Years] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1989 in which Moiseev relates (p305) what he says were Khrushchev’s attempts to eliminate the General Staff Academy. Another exception is the recounting in various places after 1988 about how the decision to invade Afghanistan was taken. For example, an unsigned article "Kak prinimalos’ reshenie" [How the Decision was Taken] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1991 (1) p40 reported that the decision was taken by a committee of four in the leadership and that "no written orders or documents of any kind could be found in the Ministry of Defence".

2 O Penkovsky The Penkovsky Papers translated by P Deriabin, Collins London UK, 1965; Viktor Suvorov (a pseudonym) The Liberators - Inside the Soviet Army Hamish Hamilton, London UK, 1981; Suvorov Inside Soviet Military Intelligence Macmillan, New York NY, 1984; Suvorov Spetsnaz: The Story Behind the Soviet SAS Hamish Hamilton, London UK, 1987. These books were of questionable reliability in that they were assisted into the public domain by US and British intelligence agencies. It is not that the information was necessarily false, but the books carried an unspoken implication that all information reported in the works was reliable. The publication many years later of a new account of Penkovsky’s information, Jerold L Schecter and Peter S Deriabin 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, was to reveal the limitations on some of the information attributed to Penkovsky in the 1975 book.

3 R Kuklinski "The Crushing of Solidarity" Orbis 1988 (Winter) pp7-31
presentation of the information - the US intelligence community.¹

The Intelligence Community: Primary or Secondary Source

The principal source of information on the Soviet armed forces was - and even now remains - US intelligence reports.² Most formally released intelligence reports were assessed information, not raw data. In scholarly terms, therefore, almost all officially released US intelligence reports were secondary sources.

Comprehensive information on the Soviet armed forces has not been available for most of the last fifty years, except at the broadest level of generalisation - order of battle information, such as numbers of strategic missiles, ships, aircraft or divisions, their general location, and their assessed level of readiness. While at first glance, the numbers of ships or missiles might be regarded as not open to interpretation or distortion, very few intelligence "facts" were not subject to some interpretation before being subsumed into generalisations in intelligence assessments. And most such generalisations, made by intelligence analysts before the release of the information, were obscured from scholarly scrutiny at that stage. Some account was possible in US Congressional Committees,

¹ Many scholars of Soviet military doctrine worked in the intelligence community or with access to intelligence information at various stages of their careers, and hence may have reached conclusions different from those suggested exclusively by open source information. These scholars were in a good position to understand the ways in which the intelligence information had been collected, analysed and disseminated, as well as the intelligence gaps. They might reasonably have claimed, as many sought to do by implication, that their scholarly work would not be as affected by any distorting influences in this process as the work of some scholars who had never been exposed to the classified information or the intelligence process. Unfortunately, only a few of those who had experience of both worlds were rigorous (and humble) enough to admit gaps in information and uncertainty in judgement.

² The UK intelligence agencies, like those of most countries, rarely put into the public domain detailed information on the Soviet armed forces beyond order of battle detail and general organisational information.
but this was constrained by the peculiar features of that process.

Throughout the entire post-war period, the US intelligence community was ordinarily disposed to put detailed information about the Soviet armed forces into the public domain either on the occasion of publishing finished "assessments", mostly in the context of policy decisions on US forces, or on an *ad hoc* basis, through officially sanctioned or unofficial, individually motivated leaks.

Raw intelligence data was almost never put into the public domain. It was therefore impossible for anyone outside the intelligence agencies, such as scholars, to test many of the interpretations put on the raw data. Thus, the English speaking scholarly community relied heavily on released or leaked US intelligence information for study of the activities of Soviet armed forces. Independent open sources commonly cited in studies, such as the annual publication of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, the *Military Balance*, could only have derived their order of battle information from intelligence officials, whether British, French, German or American.

Scholars found it hard to overcome the constraints imposed by the manner in which the information (mostly order of battle) and the readiness assessments were put into the public domain. The main constraint was that one purpose in releasing information was to support budget bids, readiness posture or procurement decisions of US forces. Since a primary purpose of the US intelligence community’s work on the Soviet armed forces was the worthy purpose of preparing US forces for possible war, the information released was collected, analysed and published in such a way as to serve that purpose.

Another constraint was that the record of the US intelligence community was not perfect - the quality and reliability of its information or
assessments could not be taken for granted. The bomber gap, the missile gap, the
civil defence gap, and the defence spending gap were all revised in important ways
by the CIA only some years after the original inflated estimates had been made
public.

The community’s record in discovering information on the locations,
equipment and activities of Soviet military units was weak until the 1960s, but
consistently good from the 1970s. By the time the USSR collapsed in 1991, US
intelligence information on locations, equipment and activities was excellent. By
contrast, the record of the US intelligence community in interpreting the
relationships between the various pieces of the Soviet military jigsaw, remained
mixed even after technical means (satellite photography and signals intelligence)
improved and after detente in Europe provided valuable access to some former
Soviet military officers in emigration.

Persistence in misinterpretation of some Soviet capabilities was
demonstrated by the belated admission in 1988 by the Director of Soviet Analysis
of CIA that Soviet military posture in Europe had been geared to lesser
contingencies than general war, while at the same time offering some support for a
general war contingency.¹ The panel reviewing the information and this admission
concluded that:

DoD estimates 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 at 50 per cent or below
wartime strengths, to get ready for combat.

...NATO (and US) force planning had been based for some time on an
exaggerated portrayal of the conventional threat posed by the

¹ US Congress Soviet Readiness for War: Assessing One of the Major Sources of East-West
Instability Report of the Defense Policy Panel of the Committee on Armed Services, House of
Representatives, 100th Congress, 5 December 1988, USGPO, Washington DC, 1988, p55
Warsaw Pact.¹

Moreover, in the formative years of Soviet military strategy prior to 1962, there were very few scholars studying Soviet military policy and the wall of secrecy was rarely penetrated. US intelligence on the USSR was only just beginning to understand Soviet military preparations (evidenced by acknowledgment of the missile gap as non-existent). After Khrushchev's overthrow in 1964, the intelligence community rarely looked back, yet on occasions when it reviewed past assessments of Soviet military forces, significant deficiencies and important new facts were found.

For example, the readiness levels of the armed forces - one of the most important elements in assessing the readiness for various types of war - were not seriously studied until 1960, when the CIA made the first study of peacetime manning of Soviet ground force divisions.² However, CIA estimated strengths for the Soviet Air Force and Navy in 1960 on the basis of full strength establishment, because it had insufficient information to determine manning levels.

There were other examples of US intelligence failings in these years:

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² Raymond L Garthoff "Estimating Soviet Military Force Levels: Some Light from the Past" International Security 1990 (Spring) vol. 14, no. 4, p98. Matthew A Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" International Security 1982-83 (Winter) vol. 7, no. 3, p118 points out that a 1955 CIA estimate concluded that even Soviet line divisions were only at 70 per cent of wartime strength. This acknowledgment of less than full manning of Soviet divisions was repeated in some subsequent assessments, for example a 1957 NIE, but only in general terms - as far as the declassified versions indicate.
failure to detect a large though partial mobilisation at the time of the Korean War;¹ failure to detect a large scale conventional force build-up in Cuba between July 1961 and October 1962, including 40,000 Soviet combat troops and a high level command and control system for conventional operations;² over-estimation of the Soviet conventional threat in central Europe;³ lack of consideration of Soviet concerns about the East European threat of insurrection, particularly by the emerging East German forces;⁴ and in the 1960s, possible failure to appreciate changes in readiness levels of Soviet nuclear forces - all assumed to be in high

¹ The evidence on this failure can be drawn from a number of sources including S A Tiushkevich The Soviet Armed Forces - A History of their Organizational Development translated by the USAF, USGPO, Washington DC, 1978, p374 which gives the date of commencement of a buildup as 1949; Ernest R May, John D Steinbrunner, Thomas W Wolfe History of the Strategic Arms Competition 1945-1972 Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, March 1981, p251 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". The limited mobilisation undertaken by the USSR from 1949 to 1951 began to be reversed sometime in 1952, with the US intelligence community unaware at the time that any large scale mobilisation of Soviet forces had occurred. Garthoff "Estimating Soviet Military Force Levels: Some Lessons from the Past" loc cit p99 says that US intelligence did not recognise the large increases in Soviet armed forces during the Korean War. Contemporary CIA estimates of the size of Soviet forces were held nearly constant at about 4 million from 1948 to 196.

² Raymond L Garthoff Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis revised edition, Brookings, Washington DC, 1989, pp18, 35-36; May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit pp479-480; William G Hyland The Cold War - Fifty Years of Conflict Random House, New York NY, 1991, p126 cites a Politburo decision in June 1961. The US intelligence community did not detect the build up until after the Cuban crisis and even then thought it only be to half as large as it actually was (about 20,000 troops).


> 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.

⁴ Notwithstanding the consistent political loyalty of the German Democratic Republic to Soviet strategic goals after the mid-1950s, the USSR never allowed it to have more than six divisions, compared with ten allowed to Czechoslovakia, which had a smaller population. Czechoslovakia was allowed 5 tank divisions and the GDR only two, and 13 fighter and ground attack squadrons compared with the GDR's four. (Michael McCwire Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy Brookings, Washington DC, 1987, p129).
states of readiness.  

The inadequacies of a number of important US intelligence assessments were spelled out in a classified study commissioned in 1974 by then Defense Secretary Schlesinger and completed in 1981. The authors concluded:

denied any but the most meager evidence about the Soviet military establishment, and most of that relating to actual deployments, American planners had to make estimates open to a wide range of error. This made possible the "missile gap" alarm of the late 1950s and the swing in the opposite direction which produced in 1962-1970 consistent underestimates of the rate of expansion and future levels of strategic forces ...

The US intelligence community's lack of success in estimating the size of Soviet strategic nuclear forces has been analysed comprehensively. The key works conclude that the essence of the failure lay in the lack of due recognition by scholars, commentators and intelligence analysts of the US domestic political environment in which the intelligence assessments were made.

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1 By 1977, the US intelligence agencies were admitting publicly to new, lower but unspecified assessments of Soviet ICBM readiness (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1977 Hearings before the Sub-Committee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, 95th Congress, 1st session, 23 and 30 June, 6 July 1977, p94). These levels were revealed publicly later to be about 30 per cent of the ICBM force compared with about 98 per cent for the US force, and about 15 per cent of the Soviet SSBN fleet on patrol at any one time, compared with 66 per cent of the US fleet (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1977 Hearings before the Sub-Committee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, 95th Congress, 1st session, 23 and 30 June, 6 July 1977, These levels were revealed publicly later to be about 30 per cent of the ICBM force compared with about 98 per cent for the US force, and about 15 per cent of the Soviet SSBN on patrol at any one time , compared with 66 per cent of the US fleet (Tom Gervasi Soviet Military Power: The Pentagon's Propaganda Document, Annotated and Corrected Vintage Books, Random House, New York NY, 1988, p19). A number of alerts of nuclear forces may also have been missed, possibly during the Cuban missile crisis and the Czechoslovakia invasion in 1968 (Bruce Blair The Logic of Accidental Nuclear War Brookings, Washington DC, 1993, pp24-25).

2 May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit pp815-816. This study was declassified more than ten years later.

3 John Prados The Soviet Estimate: US Intelligence Analysis and Russian Military Strength Dial Press, New York NY, 1982, pp292-299 noted that the inaccurate intelligence information conditioned the public debate, that the residual uncertainty in intelligence assessments provided the basis for misinterpretation (often willful), and that the only responsible way out of the intelligence uncertainty - through policy choice - could not escape the parameters of the earlier public debate. Lawrence Freedman US Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat 2nd ed, Macmillan, London, 1986, p198 observed that the process by which the Soviet threat came to be perceived was a political process, not one of intelligence assessment.
There has not been similar detailed study of the intelligence record with respect to the more central elements of Soviet military strategy or doctrine because of lack of access to Soviet secrets and US intelligence information. A number of authors did however assume a serious intelligence failure in this field.\(^1\)

In 1991, Garthoff was moved to observe that the importance of blanks and uncertainties about Soviet military capabilities and political intentions has not been adequately recognised.\(^2\) He noted that the estimates of capability had been corrected over time, but only after the USA had made policy decisions based on the inaccurate estimates, and he observed that many of the judgements of Soviet intentions have not been validated, and "remain uncertain to this day".

Important changes in capability assessment were often accompanied by new interpretations which left the overall threat assessment unchanged. As Garthoff wrote in 1984:

> the more refined, more confident, and less threatening intelligence estimates served to confirm, rather than to challenge, defense programs and policies established on the basis of much more threatening estimates.\(^3\)

In 1990 Garthoff observed about the 1950s that:

> there were restraints against suggestions as to Soviet policy motivations that departed from the implicit stereotypical cold war consensus.\(^4\)

He raised the question whether the intelligence failures in the 1950s arose from poor appreciation of the unconscious dangers for intelligence analysts of "assessing

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\(^1\) For example, Alan Wolfe *The Rise and Fall of the "Soviet Threat": Domestic Sources of the Cold War Consensus* Institute for Policy Studies, Washington DC, 1977

\(^2\) Raymond L Garthoff *Assessing the Adversary - Estimates by the Eisenhower Administration of Soviet Intentions and Capabilities* Brookings, Washington DC, 1991, p50

\(^3\) Raymond L Garthoff *Intelligence Assessment and Policymaking: A Decision Point in the Kennedy Administration* Brookings, Washington, DC, 1984, p4

\(^4\) Garthoff *Assessing the Adversary* pp50-51
the adversary". But he allowed himself a broader swipe at the whole post-war period in observing that there was "never" recognition in American assessments of the need to weigh Soviet threat assessments and concerns over the US military buildup, alliance building and global basing, and criticised the inability of the scholars and analysts involved to empathise with the other side or visualise its interests in other than adversarial terms.

The existence of an enduring link between the key judgements and assumptions of US intelligence estimates in the 1950s and subsequent may explain this lack of perspective. For example, there is a clear link between the 1950s estimates and the conclusions of the Armageddon school about limited war. Between 1946 and 1955, US intelligence assessments of Soviet military capability were grossly inflated and expressed in terms of preparedness for general war. The aim of a 1950 estimate set the tone:

To estimate Soviet capabilities and intentions with particular reference to the date at which the USSR might be prepared to engage in a general war.¹

While the CIA had abandoned by 1952 the fanciful notion of determining the date at which the calculus of risk may change on the sole basis of order of battle considerations, the pattern of concentration in annual estimates on the least likely scenario (no matter how important) to the almost total exclusion of estimates of lower levels of conflict displayed an imbalance that was never corrected.²

Moreover, most annual US estimates of Soviet military policy were

¹ CIA Soviet Capabilities and Intentions 5 November 1950 p1
² This can be seen in the discussion later in this chapter of a 1982 estimate.
heavily oriented towards consideration of capability,\(^1\) with their assessments of a single weapons system often being elevated in status to some sort of strategic level assessment.\(^2\)

An equally consistent feature of major intelligence assessments was that readiness and sustainability were not understood by many analysts, and were probably not studied as intensively as they warranted.

For example, after the Second World War, the US intelligence community failed to derive concomitant reductions in combat readiness of the forces from the massive Soviet demobilisation. By 1947, the Soviet 1945 military strength of 11.365 million had been slashed to 2.874 million - a cut of more than 70 per cent,\(^3\) and by the end of that year, the number of divisions had been reduced from 500 to an estimated 175 divisions ranging from nearly full strength to cadre

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\(^1\) CIA did publish annual estimates of Soviet military policy in broad terms along with its estimates of strategic nuclear capability for general war. The military policy estimates were represented in the 1950s by titles such as Probable Soviet Courses of Action to Mid-1952 2 August 1951 or Soviet Capabilities and Main Lines of Policy through Mid-1959 7 June 1954.

\(^2\) This became the case with the Backfire bomber. As Prados op cit p292 observed:

> As the general image became more hostile and the specific claims as to the Backfire's performance became progressively more extreme, a point was reached at which legislators ... were insisting that such a powerful weapon had to be included within the [strategic] arms limitation treaty.

\(^3\) Raymond L Garthoff "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine" in Bruce Parrott (ed) The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy The 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 Western scholars came to accept (Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" loc cit p115). Evangelista "Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised" loc cit 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 Cristann Lea Gibson Patterns of Demobilization: the US and USSR after World War II Ph D thesis, University of Denver, 1983, 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).
units. The US Government estimated in 1948 that there were 11,500 combat aircraft in the Air Forces and 3,100 combat aircraft in Naval Aviation - a cut to just over half 1945 levels.

Most US intelligence assessments between 1946 and 1948 concluded that war with the USSR was unlikely but were generally alarmist. For example, the CIA advised President Truman in August 1946 that there was "some possibility of near-term Soviet military action" such as a "concerted offensive through Europe and Northern Asia" even though there were no military indicators that such an event might occur.

The US intelligence community appears to have made little serious effort in those years to assess the actual combat readiness of the Soviet armed forces, despite making wild claims about it. A 1948 CIA assessment "assumed" that the USSR at that time could rapidly overrun Europe and the Near East.

1 Garthoff "Continuity and Change in Soviet Military Doctrine" loc cit p144; Mackintosh Juggernaut - A History of the Soviet Armed Forces Macmillan, New York NY, 1967, p271 cites the 175 figure. May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit p81 note that most of the 175 divisions were "shells". They report that the figure of 175 was based on the presumption that a wartime division was 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.


3 The Air Forces had been reduced from 20,000 aircraft in 1945 to about 14,000 or 15,000 in 1946 (Robert A Kilmarx A History of Soviet Airpower Praeger, New York NY, 1962, p226) with an estimated 50 per cent reduction in manpower (May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit p95).


5 Memorandum to the President from the office of the Director Central Intelligence 24 August 1946 pp1-2

6 May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe op cit p81 note that the director of CIA's clandestine collection efforts in the USSR claims to have continually questioned the estimates of Soviet strength and readiness which were circulating in Washington. The authors note (p82) that the US Government was putting information into the public domain about the Soviet armed forces to "produce effects rather than make disclosures".

7 CIA The Strategic Value to the USSR of the Conquest of Western Europe and the Near East (to Cairo) prior to 1950 30 July 1948, p2. The paper does note that if Soviet forces did overrun Europe, they would not be sufficient to defend it (p4).
Between 1949 and 1952, US estimates of Soviet readiness for war became more consistently alarmist. Persistence of the presumption that general war was a Soviet objective was demonstrated by the State Department when, even while seeking to "dissent" from the main conclusion of a 1950 Interim Estimate that there was a "continuing danger of war", used the contorted formula: "We do not consider, however, that lack of evidence of a Soviet intention to use military force on the US can be taken as evidence of the absence of such intention."\(^1\)

The cause of such intellectual gymnastics was obvious. The US Army dissent from the same Interim Estimate argued that in it the "threat of Soviet aggression is minimized to the point where dissemination of the paper and its use for planning purposes could seriously affect the security of the United States."\(^2\)

The final version of the Estimate, published several months later by a different body charged with resolving the controversies, concluded that the Soviet possession of the atomic bomb increased the possibility of war.\(^3\)

A Navy Intelligence dissent from the paper showed up the narrow basis on which the US was confirming its fears about Soviet military capability:

The reader is actually left to infer that the only factor under Soviet control which would induce a decision to attempt a surprise and crippling atomic attack on the U.S. is possession of what they estimate to be a requisite number of atomic bombs to accomplish the task. It is inconceivable that the Soviets could arrive at such a decision without regard to political or economic factors and all the other military factors, offensive and defensive.\(^4\)

But the Navy's good reason did not prevail and the CIA concluded

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\(^1\) CIA Estimate of the Effects of the Soviet Possession of the Atomic Bomb upon the Security of the United States and upon the Probabilities of Direct Soviet Military Action 6 April 1950 p20

\(^2\) \textit{ibid} p31

\(^3\) Joint Ad Hoc Committee \textit{The Effect of the Soviet Possession of Atomic Bombs on the Security of the United States} 9 June 1950 p1

\(^4\) \textit{ibid} Enclosure B p1
in August 1950:

the USSR is vigorously and intensively preparing for the possibility of direct hostilities with the U.S. ... on a sufficient scale to secure virtually all of continental Europe and the Near East.\(^1\)

And the basis of the Soviet offensive was to be its "powerful, combat ready ground army and tactical air force". The study concluded that the USSR would not be capable of a large scale atomic bombardment campaign in 1950 but could use against the continental USA "the 25 bombs estimated to be currently available".\(^2\)

Another Estimate of the same year concluded that "the Soviet Union is in a position to conduct general war now" and that its air force, "numerically superior to Western tactical air forces", was adequate to support all land campaigns it might be expected to undertake in the event of general war.\(^3\) This Estimate concluded:

At present the Soviet Union possesses the capability of initiating hostilities in Western Europe without any additional warning and invading Western Europe with an initial force of about 25 divisions at present located in East Germany and Poland, and of rapidly building this force to about 75 to 90 divisions.\(^4\)

This same picture was presented in the important policy document NSC-68 of 1950 which described the USSR as an enormous hostile force, "animated by a new fanatic faith", seeking to "impose its absolute authority on the rest of the world", and posing the threat of annihilating warfare, with the threat of "increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction".\(^5\) NSC-68 nevertheless did not consider the threat of general war to be imminent.\(^6\)

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1. CIA Soviet Preparations for Major Hostilities in 1950 25 August 1950 p1
2. ibid pp1-2
3. CIA Soviet Capabilities and Intentions NIE-3 15 November 1950 pp2,6
4. ibid p5
6. Carl-Christoph Schweitzer "American Threat Analyses in the 1950s" in Schweitzer (ed) op cit p60
In 1951, CIA estimated that "in view of the high state of war-readiness of the Soviet economy and armed forces", the USSR could simultaneously launch land campaigns against western Europe and the Middle East with little or no warning. In the same Estimate, CIA said the USSR could mobilise an additional 145 divisions within 30 days or shortly thereafter.¹

A 1952 assessment talked of the "intensive training" the Soviet forces were undergoing that would support rapid transition to general war.² The severe logistical and communications problems they might face were acknowledged in this and subsequent assessments, but the presumption that military units were ready for war was not challenged.³ And the USSR's mobilisation potential was upgraded to an unqualified "additional 145 divisions in 30 days".

By late 1952, the CIA had reversed its position, and concluded that the USSR would not initiate a general war.⁴

A critique of US assessments in this period noted:

The Intelligence Services of the United States were well aware of the lack of capacities for transport, the relatively low degree of motorization of the Soviet land armies, of the surprisingly high number of desertions, of the fact that a large part of the Soviet army was pinned down by the task of helping to rebuild the shattered homeland, and ... tasks of occupation both in the occupied and liberated territories in Europe. ... also the Soviet Union had systematically, well into 1950, thinned out the railway tracks in Central Germany ... [leaving] a railway system run more or less on single-track lines.⁵

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¹ CIA The Strength and Capabilities of Soviet Bloc Forces to conduct Military Operations against NATO 12 October 1951 pp2, 16. Official intelligence assessments in Washington in the last months of 1950 predicted that war with the USSR was not far off. The consensus in the American capital was that war had become inevitable, as laid down in Soviet political doctrine (Schweitzer "American Threat Analyses in the 1950s" loc cit pp57-58).
² CIA Soviet Bloc Capabilities, Through Mid-1953 12 November 1952, p9
³ ibid; CIA Soviet Capabilities and Probable Soviet Courses of Action through 1960 NIE 11-3-55 17 May 1955 p28
⁴ ibid p62
⁵ Rautenberg "The Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s" loc cit p234
Notwithstanding explicit judgements that the USSR would not initiate general war, the US vision of the Soviet threat in the period to 1961 was consistently one of a possible large scale offensive against NATO. Some US estimates of the 1950s claimed that a total Soviet force of up to 400 Soviet divisions (that is, an additional 225) could be mobilised in 30 days.\(^1\) By the early 1960s, this estimate had been reduced by a factor of five - to between 45 and 55 divisions in 30 days of "uninterrupted mobilisation".\(^2\) The new estimate resulted not from any change in Soviet plans, but from US access to new data on the actual state of readiness of Soviet units.

The 1955 CIA estimate showed no change from earlier estimates of the total number of Soviet Ground Forces divisions (175) or Ground Forces divisions in Eastern Europe (30).\(^3\) But the 1955 CIA estimate, in comparison with earlier estimates, began to play down the threat of general war, and talk more in terms of the greater likelihood of localised Soviet military actions.

Even as the estimates of the numbers of Soviet war-ready divisions were changing and the low levels of manning in some locations acknowledged, there were still assessments that the USSR could mount offensive operations by ground and airborne forces, without an observable military buildup. For example, a 1957 assessment concluded that the 22 line divisions in East Germany (the number had dropped from 33) could attack without reinforcements, and that the USSR could airlift 4-5 airborne divisions in one day.\(^4\)

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1. Enthoven and Smith *op cit* pp120-121
3. CIA *Soviet Capabilities ... through 1960* Table 2
The CIA’s shift away from the threat scenario of global war continued unto 1957:

they [Soviet leaders] are probably confident that their own growing nuclear capabilities, added to their great conventional strength, are increasingly deterring the US and its allies from courses of action gravely risking general war. As a result the USSR probably regards itself as progressively achieving greater freedom of maneuver in local situations ...

the chief military contingency against which the USSR feels it must guard is that of general war involving all-out use of nuclear weapons. The USSR almost certainly believes that the West’s current military posture and strategic doctrine are such as to compel the West, if general war occurred, to fight it primarily by nuclear means...

A major corollary aim of Soviet military policy, to which the maintenance of a strong deterrent posture is an essential concomitant, is to provide the Soviets with military superiority in situations which they may estimate can be dealt with short of all-out nuclear war...

In assessing the size and types of forces essential to meet the above requirements the Soviets have apparently concluded they must keep a large and diversified force structure designed to meet a variety of contingencies...

their continued maintenance of strong ground, naval, and tactical air forces, indicates their belief that such forces, equipped with conventional and nuclear weapons, would be of great importance in both general war and limited conflicts.¹

The 1957 CIA estimate drew another important conclusion about Soviet belief in the possibility - indeed the desirability - of keeping any conflict with the USA localised:

a key element of Soviet strategy in any war, whether with the US or with another nation, would be to attempt to keep the conflict limited in geographic scope.²

The estimate assessed that Soviet leaders would prefer to keep such a conflict limited to conventional weapons, but that they think such a limitation "would be

² ibid p35
impossible in many circumstances".  

But even with acknowledging that general war was a remote prospect, the 1957 CIA Estimate still confined most of its military analysis to general war for the following reason:

The number and variety of conceivable local wars is so great as to preclude any attempt to consider in this estimate the manner in which the Soviets might conduct them. We therefore confine ourselves to one aspect only of Soviet military strategy - that for the initial phase of general war.  

One may ask whether this observation set the standard for subsequent neglect of limited war in US Government estimates. While it would have been difficult to canvass specific local war scenarios, the number could have been confined to two or three important ones. After all, local wars the USSR could undertake would have been confined to the periphery of the USSR: Europe, Central Asia, or the Far East. One suspects there may have been some concern to avoid discussion of local war in Europe lest it blur perceptions of the requirement to meet a general war threat.

While the elements of fear and exaggeration in US assessments had abated by 1961, the spectre of the Soviet leadership at some time in the future actively favouring a massive attack on the Western Alliance continued to be canvassed at consistently greater length and in more detail than lesser

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1 ibid. The West German Ministry of Defence reached a similar important conclusion in 1956: The Eastern bloc is now in a position of strategic defence with regard to a future outbreak of hostilities ... the Soviet Union, in spite of now being able to draw the satellites into its orbit, has so far not succeeded in a geographically complete deployment of front-line forces for a possible attack. (Rautenberg "The Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s" loc cit p239).
contingencies, but more likely contingencies.¹

The CIA estimates were not wrong to devote such attention to general war. The failing was in not identifying the possibility of general war as hypothetical. And the context in which the possibility was raised was illogical because the spectre of this war was raised in official Estimates up to 1961 purporting to represent the likely or probable courses of Soviet action. This imaginary war was often discussed at length even in Estimates which dismissed it as unlikely - and this at a time (before 1961) when the USA indubitably enjoyed massive military superiority.

It was reasonable that CIA should assess Soviet capabilities for general war, but not reasonable to do so at the expense of canvassing local or limited war options.

This illogicality probably contributed to persistence of the image, because it could never be proven wrong by intelligence information. It was perpetuated right up to the demise of the USSR in the manner in which the US intelligence community reported on Soviet military policy. In annual estimates of Soviet capabilities for general nuclear war, Soviet limited war options were not examined in comparable detail.

¹ It is difficult to agree with the view of assessments in this period published by CIA in 1993: The estimates of the 1950s portray the Soviet Union as aggressive but unwilling to take foolish risks. The assumption running through the estimates is that, while the USSR would use every opportunity to extend its influence, it would not do so in areas or ways that could escalate into general war with the United States. The essential intelligence question then became to determine what risks the Soviet Union would be willing to take in any given instance. These estimates reveal that the Office of National Estimates reassured American policy-makers and planners that the USSR would not deliberately go to war unless it thought its vital interests were at stake. The Office counselled vigilance rather than panic in American responses to Soviet moves. (Scott A Koch (ed) CIA Cold War Records - Selected Estimates on the Soviet Union 1950-1959 History Staff, Center for the Study of Intelligence, CIA, Washington DC, 1993, xiv).
Without access to a full set of CIA intelligence estimates from 1950 to 1991, and the many other reports on Soviet military policy from CIA or the Defense Intelligence Agency, it is difficult to make conclusive judgements about the influence of the early, one-sided work of the US intelligence community on its subsequent analyses. There may well have been individual estimates or certain periods when the work of the agencies was not skewed by preoccupation with general war to the virtually complete exclusion of other contingencies. Nevertheless, there are examples of estimates in the 1980s where the possibility of general nuclear war was elevated to the status of all-consuming preoccupation - a preoccupation which the same estimates regarded as unhealthy in the case of the Soviet leaders, and as a sign of implied danger to the United States.

For example, in a 1982 estimate, the aim was not essentially different from the 1950 estimate:

In this NIE we are focussing on the USSR's strategy, plans, operations, and capabilities for strategic nuclear conflict as we believe Soviet leaders perceive them.¹

The key judgements of the 1982 estimate discuss capability for the most part, with a brief nod in the direction of strategy. But the presumed Soviet quest for a level of military superiority which would allow it to prevail in a general nuclear war is present in 1982 as it was in 1950, albeit updated to give the Soviet leaders some credit for common sense:

Soviet leaders have stated that nuclear war with the United States would be a catastrophe that must be averted if at all possible ... Nevertheless, they regard nuclear war as a continuing possibility and have rejected mutual vulnerability as a desired or permanent basis for the US-Soviet strategic relationship. They seek superior

capabilities to fight and win a nuclear war with the United States.\(^1\)

As with the 1950 estimate, the axiomatic condition, that if a country enters a war it should have forces capable of winning victory, was raised to the status of implied intent even in the absence of a war threat.\(^2\) The suggestion that the USSR sought superior capabilities to win a nuclear war should not of itself have been regarded as threatening, especially if Soviet leaders were judged to be determined to take all available measures to avert the catastrophe. Moreover, capabilities for winning a war would serve a greater purpose in intra-war bargaining than lesser levels of capabilities. Thus a "fight to win" capability can also be a "fight to bargain" capability. And was the US posture any different?

The 1982 estimate claimed to revise the official US view of the place of limited nuclear war in Soviet strategy:

The Soviets in our view are unlikely to initiate nuclear conflict on a limited scale, with small-scale use confined to the immediate combat zone, because they would probably see it as being to their advantage instead to keep the conflict at the conventional level. However, they appear to be developing a means for dealing with the possibility of NATO's initiation of such limited nuclear use, without the USSR's necessarily having to go to large-scale nuclear war. We believe that they would see an initial localized use of nuclear weapons as probably being the last realistic opportunity to avoid large-scale nuclear war.\(^3\)

The most important admission or revision in this estimate was probably the following:

In a situation in which nuclear war in Europe was still limited to a battlefield stage, the Soviets' recognition of the consequences of

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\(^1\) ibid p5

\(^2\) The "fight to win" slogan was used to support a claim that the USSR did not accept the concept of deterrence. But a "fight to win" posture can be used equally well to support the opposite claim - that the USSR did accept the concept of deterrence. As noted in Chapter One, deterrence depends on an ability to deliver the implied threat.

\(^3\) ibid p10. The claim to having revised the official view of limited nuclear war in Soviet thinking is carried on p1.
intercontinental nuclear conflict could give them incentives to wait.\textsuperscript{1}

The estimate accepted the limitations of its information and acknowledged the possible gap between doctrine and strategy:

There are no easy prescriptions for what the Soviets would actually do under a particular set of circumstances, despite the apparent doctrinal imperative to mount massive preemptive nuclear attacks.\textsuperscript{2}

We are unable to judge what information would be sufficiently convincing to cause Soviet leaders to order a massive preemptive attack.\textsuperscript{3}

We do not know how the Soviets would assess their prospects of prevailing in a global nuclear conflict.\textsuperscript{4}

But the estimators' unwillingness to accept that these considerations reduced certainty in the central conclusion is shown in an alternative view (a dissent) carried in the estimate:

the Soviets have not resolved many of the critical problems bearing on the conduct of nuclear war, such as the nature of initiation of conflict, escalation within the theater, and protracted nuclear operations. ... the Soviets recognize that nuclear war is so destructive, and its course so uncertain, that they could not expect an outcome that was "favorable" in any meaningful sense.\textsuperscript{5}

The alternative view also recognised the limitations of doctrine for nuclear war:

The Soviets recognize that the concept of prevailing in nuclear war is far too imprecise to guide force acquisitions and operations, and are fully aware of the great uncertainties and catastrophic losses that would be incurred by all parties in a nuclear war.\textsuperscript{6}

About as far as majority view in the Estimate was prepared to go in recognising the above considerations was to acknowledge that Soviet perceptions of the "growing complexity of warfare" had led to greater efforts to plan forces and

\textsuperscript{1} ibid p30
\textsuperscript{2} ibid p2
\textsuperscript{3} ibid p11
\textsuperscript{4} ibid p12
\textsuperscript{5} ibid p14. The Director of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State recorded this view.
\textsuperscript{6} ibid p28
operations "against a backdrop of more varied contingencies".\(^1\)

If the most important CIA estimates for thirty years addressed general war to the exclusion of lesser contingencies, then there would have been little requirement to collect or analyse intelligence from the perspective of limited war.

**Non-Intelligence Sources**

In the absence of comprehensive primary source information on force structure decisions, scholars of Soviet military doctrine had to fall back on published Soviet books, journals and newspapers, or translations of radio broadcasts. The open source journals were supplemented by access to translations of a number of issues of the Ministry of Defence's journal, *Military Thought* [*Voennaia mys'\(^1\)*], which was circulated on a restricted distribution confined to military officers.

In some cases, it was legitimate to regard particular speeches or articles as authoritative. In so doing, there was still a requirement for an analyst or scholar to characterise each source correctly and to establish its relative authority.

Since the organs of the General Staff involved in the study of military strategy were the Directorate for Military Science, the General Staff Academy, the Historical Directorate, and the Institute of Military History, the main journals with a serious claim to reflecting - at least in part - the opinions of military professionals and the General Staff on military doctrine at the national level were *Military History Journal* [*Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*] and *Military Thought*.

\(^1\) *ibid*
The Main Political Administration (MPA), the Communist Party's vehicle of political rectitude in the armed forces, was not involved in the formulation of purely military operational aspects of doctrine. Its main claim to legitimacy in this sphere was comment on the political aspects of war, or the politically correct interpretations of military subjects. The MPA operated as a Department of the Central Committee, and had representatives on the editorial boards of all military newspapers, journals and publishing houses to oversee political rectitude.¹

The primary function of the MPA's "journal", Communist of the Armed Forces [Kommunist vooruzhionnykh sil], was Party propaganda on a broad range of issues. As far as military doctrine was concerned, the MPA's function was to put the correct political spin on what the General Staff wanted to do and say. The MPA had the function of reconciling the public presentation of General Staff views with the broader propaganda and policy goals of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Opinions on the weight to be given Communist of the Armed Forces and to particular articles published in it, vary.² The journals did publish articles on military theoretical problems but this was only one of its many functions. Others

¹ Such boards controlled the expression of all political arguments in print (Jerry Hough The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options Brookings, Washington DC, 1986, p14).
² For example, William T. Lee and Richard F. Starr Soviet Military Policy since World War II Hoover Institution, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1986, pp30-31, 38 noted that throughout the 1960s, "informative discussions of USSR military doctrine and strategy" appeared in its pages but after 1972, "articles in this publication have said little or nothing about these subjects". Lee and Starr claimed that until 1972, Soviet open sources had been "remarkably candid in setting forth the principles and objectives of military doctrine and strategy". More importantly, Lee and Starr observed that members of the MPA who wrote for Communist of the Armed Forces were charged with propagandising a Party line. The journal was published under that title after September 1960, as the direct successor to a number of different titles in publication since 1920. See O L Sarin and M Iu Chachuk Sputnik voennogo zhurnalista [Military Correspondent's Companion] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1990, p159. These titles included Propagandist i agitator [Propagandist and Militant] and Partiino-politicheskaia rabota v Sovetskoi Armii i Voenno-Morskom Flote [Party-Political Work in the Soviet Army and Navy] from 1947 to 1960.
included publicising Marxist-Leninist theory on defence of the Fatherland, the
leading role of the Communist Party in direction of the armed forces, and current
problems of party-political work in the armed forces.¹

The journal cannot be ascribed any independent authoritativeness as
a source of evidence of General Staff views. Those parts of it which reflected
views of military professionals were published elsewhere, especially in Military
Thought, without as many of the propagandistic twists or embellishments
characteristic of the ideologues in Communist of the Armed Forces.

The issue of whether some articles appearing in General Staff
journals also appeared in the MPA journal without serious modification is only one
side of the coin. The related question to pose is whether all articles purporting to
address questions of military strategy and doctrine in the MPA journal appeared
without modification in the General Staff journals.

Even if they did, this would not make all articles automatically
authoritative as scientific evidence of the dominant General Staff view of the
military issues involved. Even the less propagandistic Military History Journal had
a dual role, because Soviet military history had a clearly stated propaganda
function.²

Another aspect to articles on military strategy or doctrine which
appeared in other journals as well as Communist of the Armed Forces is that
editors of the MPA journal were able to choose from a range of articles submitted
to the other journals. Even when the editors selected articles from the more serious
journals, such as Military Thought, Military History Journal or Naval Digest

¹ Sarin and Chachuk op cit p159
² M Mitrofanov "XXV S'ezd KPSS i zadachi voennoi istorii" [25th Congress of the CPSU and Tasks of Military History] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1977 (2) pp81-82
[Morskoï sbornik],\(^1\) it would have only been natural to prefer articles which conformed closely to Communist Party objectives.

In Soviet "military literature", as in all Soviet official literature, there was an important distinction to be made between scientific and popularising work.\(^2\) Thus, an article which might have appeared to present a new nuance of meaning, may in fact have been little more than an attempt to simplify an issue for popular consumption. This observation is particularly applicable to Communist of the Armed Forces and military journals such as Military Herald [Voennyi vestnik] or Soviet Warrior [Sovetskii voïn], with Military Thought and the Military History Journal being the exceptions.

Worse still, some Soviet "military writing" may simply have been "mere polemical affirmation"\(^3\) or "obligatory polemical banalities"\(^4\) since Soviet ideology proscribed silence.\(^5\) Thus, the frequency with which particular ideas were canvassed was not necessarily a reliable guide to the importance the military leaders attached to them. The frequency with which an issue was canvassed was indicative only of its place in Soviet political ideology.

The problem of exclusive reliance on published Soviet sources was compounded in the case of scholars who had to rely largely on those works

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\(^1\) Naval Digest is one of the oldest exiting journals in Russia, having been in publication since 1848. It proudly boasts one of its main purposes to be publication of articles on naval theory and it was in the period after 1956 the least propagandistic journal - hence more useful to scholars of Soviet military doctrine - of all the single service journals.

\(^2\) Roderic D M Pitty Recent Soviet Development Debates: the 'Third World' and the USSR, Ph D dissertation, Australian National University, Canberra, 1989, p14

\(^3\) ibid p14


translated by the US Government.\(^1\)

Another important, though often neglected, consideration regarding
Soviet open sources was that Soviet publicists had their own publish-or-perish
syndrome driven by career needs which deprived their work in many cases of
originality.\(^2\)

Public statements of Soviet leaders were not independently reliable
sources, if only because they regularly "said different things to different audiences
at the same time".\(^3\) Close attention to satisfying target groups to the detriment of
conveying policy positions accurately has been identified as a possible cause of
softening of the tone of military doctrine in the 1980s, compared with the strident
tone of earlier statements.\(^4\)

Pitty, who has given an excellent review of the complexities of
relying on published Soviet sources, quoted Hoffman:

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\text{a rudimentary but important piece of advice would be to infer carefully the meaning of communications, and not to take the stated meaning or contents literally.}^{5}
\]

Or as another writer put it:

\[
\text{The central task of the interpreter is to find the question to which a text presents the answer; to understand a text is to understand the question.}^{6}
\]

One particular point of interpretation often overlooked in assessing

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\(^1\) Benjamin S Lambeth *The State of Western Research on Soviet Military Strategy and Policy* Rand, Santa Monica CA, 1984, p32. Lambeth observed that this meant "at best, ... missing a great deal of material .... At worst, ... looking for one's keys where the light is best".

\(^2\) *ibid* pp47-49


\(^4\) *ibid* p53


the meaning of open source material was the authoritativeness of differences in formulation of similar views. Much effort was spent offering elaborate explanations for changes in emphasis when the only reason for change may well have been an author’s personal need to find an original way of expressing an officially sanctioned view. After all, one of the hardest skills for any Soviet publicist to master was that of appearing to say something new, when in fact permitted only to repeat tired, accepted formulas.

Nevertheless, Soviet open sources and the memoirs of some Soviet public figures remain important sources, albeit incomplete, anecdotal, and subject to predictable biases.

Memoir literature published in the 1980s revealed new insights into certain aspects of Soviet military policy. For example, a 1980 book on Soviet volunteer pilots in China recounted air attacks on Japanese targets there and in Taiwan between 1937 and 1939 in which over 200 Soviet pilots were killed.¹

New evidence on Soviet military planning also emerged. For example, an early 1941 General Staff plan for a Soviet invasion of Iran, discovered in German archives in 1981, suggests an active Soviet military interest in local wars in the pre-war period.² In 1989, the General Staff’s Military History Institute published a post-war plan for military operations in Germany.³

Sources still remain problematic. Even recent Soviet books on the

³ 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 1948. It was published in the public domain in the February 1989 issue of Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal pp26-29.
Soviet armed forces give few historical facts pertinent to documentation of the general pattern of organisation of Soviet forces in the formative post-war years. These works could hardly be described as giving a complete picture. Even less so could one rely on contemporary Western accounts of Soviet military planning between 1945 and 1991 as historically accurate. At best, they should be seen as informed speculation about the events and processes in question. Until the new Russian Government allows access to the archives of the Soviet Ministry of Defence and those archives of the Communist party that touch on the key decisions of military policy, sources will be inadequate. Memoirs from key participants, like Zhukov or Gromyko, published before 1991 shed almost no light on key questions.

Conclusion

The English speaking scholarly community studying Soviet military doctrine still has none of the more formal or direct sources normally associated with the study of US military doctrine, such as documents recording decisions of the political leadership or command elements of the armed forces. The two main sources of evidence for Soviet military doctrine were US intelligence information on the one hand, and books, articles and newspaper articles published in the controlled press on the other. Both were imperfect and diluted sources for study of the Soviet armed forces.

The quality of the sources was not an obstacle to good analysis but it did need to be reflected in the confidence levels scholars had in key judgements. In

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1 The principal archives include: the Central State Archives of the Soviet Army, the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR, the Central Party Archives of the Institute of the Theory and History of Socialism, the Central State Archives of the October Revolution, and the Central Museum of the Revolution of the USSR, and the KGB archives.
particular, care needed to be taken in interpreting the authoritativeness of informal sources.

The manner in which US intelligence information, especially readiness assessments, was made public imposed severe constraints on scholars trying to interpret it. The mixed record of US intelligence assessments of Soviet military policy imposed additional constraints on scholars who relied heavily on them. The focus of the US intelligence community on general war to the near total exclusion of limited war probably also had a limiting effect on the scope of information available to scholars, and on scholars’ decisions as to what aspects of Soviet military policy they should take as important.
CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOLARSHIP ON SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE

This chapter assesses scholarship on Soviet military strategy and doctrine, with two important criteria in mind: what did the works say about the sources of Soviet military strategy, such as institutional pressures, ideological constraints, or political imperatives; and what did they say about the place of Soviet local war doctrine in Soviet military strategy as a whole.

The literature is reviewed in three sections: works on Soviet military doctrine in general; works on Soviet local war doctrine; and works on civil-military relations. The last topic is included because of the central place it plays in doctrine formulation and dissemination.

The review pays some attention to the chronology of scholarship on Soviet military doctrine because it may reveal trends in terms of focus of attention (general war and/or local war) synchronised more with US policy interests than with Soviet doctrine.

On Soviet Military Doctrine and General War

In a famous 1943 collection of articles on strategy, Edwin Mead Earle published an article on Soviet concepts of war under Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Earle outlined briefly the political battles between Trotsky and Stalin in which questions of military doctrine were used in part as issues of dispute but also in part as excuses for dispute. In particular, Trotsky and Svechin were opposed by Stalin and Voroshilov for advocating a variegated military doctrine which saw each
war as different and requiring a unique strategic line, while Stalin and Voroshilov wanted a single or unified \textit{edinaiia} military doctrine.\textsuperscript{1}

That dispute, this thesis argues later, was one of the biggest single influences on subsequent public presentation of Soviet military doctrine, but its role as a determinant of the form of Soviet military doctrine after Stalin’s death has been ignored by most scholars.

Raymond Garthoff, in \textit{Soviet Military Doctrine} in 1953,\textsuperscript{2} was the first to elucidate contemporary Soviet concepts of the conduct of war (still pre-nuclear at that time).\textsuperscript{3} The preface to the 1954 UK edition of his book acknowledged the importance to Soviet military strategy formulation of issues such as the revolutionary origins of the Soviet state, Communist party history, and questions of control in Soviet society and in the satellite countries.\textsuperscript{4}

The preface to Garthoff’s book, written by a history professor, set out a warning to subsequent students of Soviet military doctrine that was largely ignored:

As Lord Kitchener once said, "One makes war as one must - not as one would like to." The task of the student of military affairs is to determine how much of Soviet military doctrine is \textit{real} and how much is political window dressing ...\textsuperscript{5}


\textsuperscript{3} Lambeth \textit{The State of Western Research on Soviet Military Strategy and Policy} p6

\textsuperscript{4} H A De Weerd in the preface to Garthoff \textit{How Russia Makes War - Soviet Military Doctrine} v

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{ibid} (De Weerd’s preface) vi-vii
Garthoff made a distinction between formal and actual Soviet military doctrine, and described his study as trying "not merely to determine manifest Soviet doctrine, but also to formulate and to make explicit those tenets which are themselves not recognized by the Soviets as part of their formal doctrine, but which nonetheless actually play a substantial role in it".¹

No book published since 1954 achieved Garthoff's breadth of coverage in this work.² Given the nature of Soviet sources in the early 1950s, Garthoff's treatment of all of these aspects had to be speculative, especially in respect of limited war. An important feature of his work was that he did not take Soviet doctrinal statements at face value, especially those in propagandistic sources.³

Garthoff also wrote the first full academic exposition of Soviet military strategy for the nuclear era.⁴ His central conclusion in that work was that Soviet doctrine took account of the need to be able to fight general nuclear war and

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¹ Garthoff How Russia Makes War pp1,2
² Garthoff has 23 separate chapters: three on political, institutional and international influences on Soviet military doctrine; 15 chapters on Soviet principles of war, including the offensive, manoeuvre, concentration of force, annihilation, retreat, morale, intelligence, and deception; and five chapters on the operational and tactical employment of forces, including recognition of special combat conditions for a variety of geographical locations, and the role of partisan forces.
³ In his analysis of the principles of Soviet doctrine, Garthoff does not rely on the journals Propagandist i agitator [Propagandist and Militant] and Partitno-politicheskata rabota v Soverskoi Armii i Voenno-Morskom Flote [Party-Political Work in the Soviet Army and Navy] which in 1960 became Communist of the Armed Forces - nor does he include them in his discussion of the documentary sources of Soviet military doctrine.
⁴ Raymond L Garthoff Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age Atlantic Books, Stevenson & Sons, London UK, 1958 (first published by Praeger, New York NY, 1958). Like Garthoff's 1953 book, this work set a standard for breadth and complexity of treatment of Soviet strategy in the nuclear era that has rarely, if ever, been matched. Garthoff set Soviet military strategy in a foreign policy context (Chapter 1) and described the relationship between the armed forces and their political masters (Chapter 2). The book set down the institutional relationships between the services and the structure of the armed forces (Chapter 3). Garthoff outlined doctrinal views on nuclear war (Chapter 4) and limited war (Chapter 5), and related the various components of military power (land, air, sea and strategic missiles) to Soviet strategy (Chapters 7 to 10). Garthoff reviewed Soviet images of the enemy (Chapter 6) and made a prediction for the 1970s and beyond (Chapter 11). Equally importantly, Garthoff had a separate discussion of source materials and how to interpret them (Chapter 12).
limited war, conventional or nuclear:

The Soviet preparation - doctrinal and other - for general nuclear war does in no way commit them to this form of warfare. They retain diversified capabilities for nuclear and non-nuclear limited and local wars. ... Soviet modernization of doctrine, weapons, and organization is distinguished not by replacement of the capacities for conventional war, but by the addition to them of capacities for either limited or total nuclear war.¹

Garthoff's view of Soviet strategy at that time was rooted in the notion that the USSR believed that it needed to prepare its armed forces for a variety of types of war:

military demonstrations, little wars by proxy (as in Korea) or by internal dissidents (as in Malaya), local or peripheral wars (as with Japan in 1938-39), limited wars (with out the use of nuclear weapons, for example), preventive wars, wars of conquest, and wars of annihilation.²

Garthoff underlined what he saw as the Soviet preference to rely on political strategies rather than "resort to arms, even in local wars"³ and noted a central fact about Soviet military doctrine as it related to local war:

Soviet views on [limited and local] wars ... are rarely explicit. ...

... Specific tactical prescriptions are usually stated in terms of the contingency of nuclear warfare, while basic strategic thinking continues to be pitched in an overall structure of military doctrine which the Soviets apparently consider applicable for nuclear and non-nuclear warfare. In practice, significant differences would, of course, characterize the strategy ... The Soviets do not, however, believe these differences require separate "doctrines". Instead, they believe that these require particular applications of their military doctrine to the concrete contingencies of nuclear or non-nuclear, general or local, wars.⁴

In an eighteen page chapter on "Perspectives on Limited War",

Garthoff posed a question addressed only infrequently in subsequent scholarship:

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¹ ibid xii
² ibid p6
³ ibid p7
⁴ ibid pp14, 16
it is possible and indeed most necessary to consider the probable calculations on limited war in Soviet policy-making.¹

Garthoff asserted, contrary to subsequent conventional wisdom about the Khrushchev period, that "the available evidence suggests that the Soviets may believe it will be to their advantage to strive for the non-employment of nuclear weapons in a future war".² He quoted Zhukov in early 1957 as saying that it was impossible to say whether nuclear weapons would or would not be used in future wars:

"Neither I nor anyone else can answer completely all these questions now because all wars, major and small, arise, are waged and end under specific political, geographical, and economic conditions."³

Garthoff believed that the USSR planned for the possibility of a major non-nuclear war in Europe. He referred to consistent Soviet statements about the lack of any distinction between tactical and strategic use of nuclear weapons, and Soviet assertions that any use of nuclear weapons would mean general nuclear war. He saw some plausible military explanations for this position, but specifically acknowledged that Soviet political propaganda for nuclear disarmament would be seriously undermined if the military theorists took any other position.⁴

In particular, Garthoff rejected literal interpretation of Soviet statements that local wars would inevitably develop into general war. He noted that the USSR had in the past fought a number of such wars and that they represented "the classic Soviet type of limited military action, for limited objectives, and at

¹ *ibid* p97
² *ibid* p98
³ *ibid* p103 citing Marshal G Zhukov, then Defence Minister, *Krasnoia zvezda* 23 March 1957
⁴ *ibid* pp105-109. Garthoff mentions the lack of accuracy of nuclear weapons, and the Soviet preference to keep any major war in Europe conventional by threat of massive retaliation if nuclear weapons were used at all.
limited risk".¹

He observed that "Local wars waged with Soviet forces would employ standard military capabilities and doctrine". It seemed improbable, he said, that the USSR would initiate use of nuclear weapons in a local war. He also suggested that the USSR would respond to US resort to nuclear weapons in only one theatre with theatre use of nuclear weapons, not escalation to general war.²

Garthoff’s analysis of Soviet strategic doctrine for general nuclear war was never significantly revised in subsequent scholarship, although there were conflicting views on the degree of menace inherent in the explicit doctrine. This is how Garthoff saw the strategy:

the Soviets recognize as absolutely essential the acquisition of tremendous inter-continental striking power, and its corollary of home defense to weaken the enemy’s long-range attack. It is also clear that they consider as equally important the maintenance of large, modern "theater" land armies, with supporting air, missile and naval forces. ... balanced forces - strong theater armies, as well as intercontinental offensive and defensive capabilities - are needed.³

The main features of Soviet doctrine for general nuclear war were the need to cripple enemy offensive forces; the rejection of "ultimate weapons" strategies; the need for balanced forces conducting "combined arms" operations; recognition of the decisive factors of war; the importance of surprise; rejection of "blitzkrieg"; and expectation of protracted war.

The fact that Garthoff’s conclusions, written before the end of 1957, remained applicable to Soviet military strategy into the 1980s⁴ is at least one piece

¹ *ibid* p113
² *ibid* pp114-115
³ *ibid* xiii, pp71-89
⁴ Soviet views about the likely duration of general nuclear war and the place of pre-emption did undergo some modification, as Garthoff himself points out in subsequent works, but the basic parameters of Soviet strategy did not.
of evidence that the essential elements of Soviet military strategy for the entire Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods may have been in place by the end of 1957, and were not substantially affected by Khrushchev's rhetoric about missile war in 1960 and after.

Garthoff expected changes to Soviet doctrine for general war, like the need to plan for reduced manpower, as the result of the pressure of increasing cost of new technology weapons, but he expected the counter-force principle (destroying the enemy's forces as the primary goal) to remain the principal characteristic.1 His work acknowledged a variety of political or institutional influences on the formation of military doctrine. For example, he saw a conscious link between the offensive character of Soviet doctrine for general war and the ideological tenets of communism.2 An essential element of his appreciation was his recognition of the effect on doctrinal writings of the cycle of "thaw" and "freezing" in intellectual life generally. More importantly, he made the link between an offensive Soviet posture debunking Western concepts of mutual deterrence and the Soviet regime's ability to mobilise Soviet budgetary resources to military expenditure.3

Garthoff's conclusions on Soviet planning for limited nuclear war or local war, and their place in Soviet strategy, were rejected by the Armageddon school in the study of Soviet military doctrine. For example, another of the earliest studies, Dinerstein's War and the Soviet Union, took as its central proposition that

1 ibid p91
2 ibid p73
3 ibid pp12, 23. Garthoff saw this as an important explanation of military disenchantment with Malenkov. Similarly, he saw Khrushchev's disagreement with Malenkov's view that a world war would mean the end of civilisation (mutual deterrence) as an important part of the political alliance between Khrushchev and the military leaders in the mid-1950s.
"the major mission of the Soviet armed forces was to fight a full-scale [nuclear] war if the need arose". Dinerstein drew this conclusion in the face of his contradictory assertion that, by the mid-1950s, the Soviet leadership was confident that a war instigated by the USA had become less likely.¹

That Dinerstein did not canvas military doctrine for wars other than general war is all the more surprising given his acknowledgment that "The Soviet Union, like all other great powers, undoubtedly requires her Ministry of War to maintain an up-to-date series of war plans to meet various contingencies".² Dinerstein’s neglect of limited war is also unusual considering his excellent if brief account of Soviet reliance on a limited war strategy in the period prior to the German attack in 1941,³ which he was one of the few scholars of Soviet military doctrine even to mention.⁴ He went so far as to postulate a generalised Soviet view of limited war policy right up to Stalin’s death:

In all the wars so far initiated by the Soviet Union the objective has been limited, both in the planning and the aftermath. The temptation to expand the conflict when the resources needed to attain the original objective turned out to be excessive has always been resisted.⁵

The book’s main contribution to scholarship was the view that official Soviet military doctrine after 1955 had become a "pre-emptive strategy"

¹ H S Dinerstein War and the Soviet Union - Nuclear Weapons and the Revolution in Soviet Military and Political Thinking Frederick A Praeger, New York NY, 1959. This work was also published under the auspices of the Rand Corporation.
² ibid p215
³ ibid pp27-31
⁴ David J Dallin The New Soviet Empire Hollis & Carter, London UK, 1951 has a short chapter on "The Six Wars of the Soviet Union" between 1920 and 1940; Malcolm Mackintosh Juggernaut - A History of the Soviet Armed Forces Macmillan, New York NY, 1967 has a chapter on "The Lessons of Finland:1939-41" and sections on other localised conflicts, such as the battles of Lake Khasan in 1938 and Khalkin Gol with Japan in 1939; Raymond L Garthoff Soviet Military Policy - A Historical Analysis Faber and Faber, London UK, 1966, begins that work with a chapter on Russian and then Soviet use of the armed forces in conflicts apart from general war or world war.
⁵ ibid p29
based on readiness to strike a pre-emptive blow if faced by a threat of general nuclear war.\textsuperscript{1} While some of his argumentation concerned forestalling an imminent enemy attack only on receipt of timely and reliable warning, he offered a political view of the pre-emptive doctrine that canvassed other circumstances:

The [Soviet] leaders have only to be convinced of the correctness of aggressive policy; it requires no popular mandate. This basic characteristic of Soviet politics makes it legitimate to inquire whether the Soviet leaders are employing the phrase "pre-emptive blows" as a euphemism for preventive war.\textsuperscript{2}

He did not answer this question directly, but implied that the inclusion in the explicit doctrine of the principle of timely and reliable warning may have been merely a propaganda device,\textsuperscript{3} and implied that the aim of the Soviet military build-up may have been to achieve the capabilities for preventive war, even though he acknowledged that the USSR was unlikely ever to achieve the necessary military superiority over the USA.\textsuperscript{4}

Dinerstein alluded in various places to political, bureaucratic, technological and international influences on Soviet military doctrine, but his study was based primarily on published Soviet statements. He showed considerable awareness of the stifling relationship between the rigidity of official Soviet military doctrine and any subsequent analysis by Soviet military officers. He also recognised the way in which officially endorsed military doctrine forced the revision of historical appreciation.\textsuperscript{5}

Yet Dinerstein’s work, for all its elaboration of distorting influences

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} ibid p188
\item \textsuperscript{2} ibid p205
\item \textsuperscript{3} ibid p209
\item \textsuperscript{4} ibid p207
\item \textsuperscript{5} ibid pp194, 196. Dinerstein notes that when the offensive element became dominant in military doctrine, historical accounts of operations in the Second World War which had praised active defence were attacked.
\end{itemize}
on open source statements, was inclined to elevate a number of Soviet statements of doctrine to the status of gospel truth, and accept them at face value.¹

A note by retired US Army General, James Gavin, introducing a 1959 work by Garthoff, offered an important reminder about the origins of the concept of "limited war":

"Limited war" is an expression of our creation. To the Soviets war is war, and is as all-out or not as the needs of policy require. In fact, limited and discreet application of power is the classic communist method and the Soviets are prepared to wage limited war anywhere along its periphery.²

Garthoff's review of Soviet doctrine debunked the confusion between pre-emption and preventive war.³ He reiterated the place of local war in Soviet strategy despite the USSR's public rejection at the time of both local and limited wars.⁴ Apart from Soviet strategy for general war, he also addressed Soviet views of probable strategy for major conventional war and local war, nuclear or conventional even though by that time these had not been canvassed widely in Soviet open sources.⁵

The emergence of a Soviet military strategy, and associated military

¹ ibid For example, on the key issue of defensive versus offensive posture, Dinerstein briefly mentioned the political battle between Malenkov and Khrushchev about the nuclear era. Dinerstein said Malenkov and his group argued that possession by both superpowers of nuclear weapons created a situation of mutual deterrence which would preclude an attack by the USA on the USSR. By contrast, Khrushchev challenged this view as complacent and defeatist (ostensibly because it implied the USSR would not survive a nuclear war). Khrushchev won this "theoretical and political victory" with instant effects on Soviet military expenditure and force structure. Dinerstein did not canvas the possibility that the theoretical formulation by Khrushchev may have had the political intent of weakening Malenkov's general political power. Yet Dinerstein was prepared to admit that Khrushchev was more than willing to beat the drums of war in 1957 for no other reason than to mobilise military support to defeat the anti-Party group in an exclusively political struggle (p162).
² Raymond L Garthoff The Soviet Image of Future War Public Affairs Press, Washington DC, 1959, viii
³ Garthoff The Soviet Image of Future War p14:
A Soviet preemptive attack is contemplated for a situation which is not a time of their own choosing or the result of a deliberate planned buildup for optimum Soviet position for war. It represents a time when they believe they must act or forfeit the strategic initiative to us. In essence it is a desperate last-minute effort to seize the initiative from the enemy who is about to attack or is in the process of doing so.
⁴ ibid pp14-15
⁵ ibid pp18-19
Doctrine, for local wars was accepted in some scholarly work of the early 1960s. For example, in 1961 Hoag wrote a short paper entitled On Local War Doctrine, which was largely theoretical.¹ In Halperin's landmark work, Limited War in the Nuclear Age, he concluded that "the Soviets themselves seem to be ready for local wars and have maintained ground forces capable of fighting both conventional and nuclear ground wars".²

A 1963 essay written by a specialist in Chinese politics and foreign policy expressed doubt that statements by Soviet and Chinese leaders in their mutual polemic about the nature of war, the likelihood of escalation of local conflicts, and national liberation war could be taken literally.³ The author suggested there might only be small differences between the two countries in practice in their views of risks and the political purposes to be served by war. She suggested the polemic may owe more to political objectives and posturing than to convictions about war in practice. The author speculated that Soviet talk of inevitable escalation of local conflicts might be not a genuine belief but a propaganda device to justify in quasi-theoretical terms Soviet reluctance to provoke direct US military response in regional conflicts.⁴ She advanced a range of political explanations for the

¹ Malcolm W Hoag "On Local War Doctrine" Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 1961
² Morton Halperin Limited War in the Nuclear Age John Wiley and Sons, New York NY, 1963, p16. He offered (p17) an interpretation of a 1960 speech by Khrushchev which many later scholars rejected but which this thesis accepts:

when the Soviets proclaim that "limited war" is impossible, they mean that Western-inspired local wars are impossible and that the West should not intervene in local wars. ....

The Soviets have always been willing to use limited force to gain limited objectives which suggests their appreciation of the fact that there is no inherent reason for war to be expanded indefinitely once it occurs.

It is of some note that although Halperin uses the term "limited war" in his title, he prefers the term "local war" throughout most of his book, suggesting a degree of affinity with the Soviet conception. In the work, Halperin contrasts "local war" with "central war".


⁴ ibid p158
polemic that rejected acceptance of most of the key statements as genuine belief. In this way, the article anticipated what this thesis regards as an essentially objective and critical approach to public statements.

Another early study of the interaction of political and economic influences and military doctrine, by Wolfe in 1964, suggested that Soviet leaders were "still confronted with a number of unresolved issues in seeking a military posture suitable to Soviet needs". Wolfe examined what he saw as seven "unresolved issues in the Soviet military policy debate":

- the size of the armed forces and prospects for mobilisation;
- the kind of war - short or protracted - for which Soviet forces should prepare;
- the possibility of fighting limited wars without escalation to general nuclear war;
- the relative importance of strategic nuclear operations and combined arms theatre operations in a general war;
- the prospects of survival under conditions of nuclear attack;
- the appropriate balance between a deterrent posture and actual war fighting capabilities; and
- whether there was a military strategy which could offer the prospect of victory in general war with the USA.

Wolfe examined Soviet strategy and doctrine from a number of non-military perspectives, especially the economic pressures on the USSR, strains in civil-military relations, the political liabilities of doctrine, and the relationship between Soviet military doctrine and Soviet disarmament initiatives. The study was mainly concerned with the period from the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962) to 1964 and drew heavily on important changes of emphasis from the 1962 to the

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2 ibid pp7-9. It is no coincidence that the uncertainties about Soviet military doctrine expressed by Wolfe were similar to those articulated by the Director of the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the 1982 Estimate referred to in Chapter Three.
1963 edition of Sokolovskii’s *Military Strategy*. 1

Wolfe accepted that a consensus on basic matters still held in the Soviet leadership: on the primacy of nuclear weapons; the critical importance of the initial period of a war; the need for a high level of combat readiness; targeting of both civil and military targets; rejection of the notion of controlled response; and recognition of the economic burden of large forces in peacetime. 2

At the same time, Wolfe noted some new trends: more attention to limited war; increased confidence in early warning and hence greater expectation to be able to blunt a surprise attack; importance for deterrence of hardening and mobility of strategic weapons; upgrading of the role of strategic missile submarines; downgrading that of the strategic bomber; more emphasis on anti-submarine and amphibious operations; and anti-missile and antisatellite capabilities. 3 He did not link developments in Soviet doctrine on conventional forces, such as amphibious operations, to the alleged new interest in limited war.

Wolfe devoted an eleven page chapter to the question of limited war in Soviet doctrine, reaching the central conclusion that the "relatively meager treatment customarily given in Soviet military literature to the question of conducting limited wars is in marked contrast to the attention bestowed on general nuclear war". Wolfe said that this reflected concern for the contingency they feared most, but found signs that Soviet doctrine on local and limited war had been undergoing some change:

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1 *ibid* pp3, 51-52. Wolfe relied on revisions in the second edition of the Sokolovskii work to support his view that "doctrines is still in flux on many points" (p10). Two other explanations are possible. Doctrine may have been settled before the first edition in 1962 and the revisions may have been corrections which were missed in the publication of the first edition. Alternatively, the doctrine may have been settled between the publication of the two editions. Neither of these interpretations would allow the view that doctrine was in 1963 still in flux.

2 *ibid* pp10-11

3 *ibid* p11
There is still a good deal of ambiguity and inconsistency in the Soviet treatment of the subject, and no unified doctrine of limited war applying to Soviet forces has by any means emerged in the open literature.\(^1\)

Wolfe mentioned the possibility that the declared doctrine (emphasising the violent, global character of any future war and the inevitability of escalation of local wars) might have a political purpose separate from its military application. Possible explanations included the support such a doctrine gives to a Soviet deterrence posture and reliance on it as a stratagem to deter Western use of military power against national liberation movements.\(^2\)

At the same time, he identified possible political reasons for what he saw as a doctrinal shift toward greater interest in local wars in the two years he examined. These included a need to counter Chinese criticism of Soviet failure to give vigorous support to national liberation struggles; and to correct any impression that the West enjoyed greater freedom to act in local conflicts because of apparent Soviet hyper-sensitivity over escalation.\(^3\)

Wolfe based his analysis on open media sources and readily linked the timing of the appearance of an idea in public print to the timing of its emergence in the General Staff. For example, he cited a Soviet statement to the effect that lack of attention to local wars was a deficiency in Soviet military theory that "began to be corrected only recently",\(^4\) without considering possible variant meanings of "recently".

In his references for the chapter on limited war, Wolfe relied on the

\(^1\) ibid pp118-119
\(^2\) ibid
\(^3\) ibid p13
second edition of Military Strategy for almost half of his citations (15 out of 35). Most of the other sources were the more propagandistic organs of the Soviet press - Red Star, Pravda, Communist [Kommunist] or Communist of the Armed Forces. He made only two references to the less propagandistic journal Military History Journal,¹ both of which support the argument of this thesis that study of local wars was by then already an important and entrenched subject of Soviet military theory behind closed doors, not something that emerged for the first time in the period Wolfe studied.

A 1965 study by Horelick and Rush of the relationship between Soviet military power and foreign policy was based on an unusual though convincing appreciation of the propagandistic purposes of Soviet statements of military doctrine:

Soviet strategic threats and claims are meant to serve a variety of purposes and to influence the beliefs and behaviour of a whole range of audiences. In general, the target of such Soviet assertions is world opinion at large, including certain groups in the Soviet Union itself.²

At the same time, the authors noted the need for Soviet positions to have a degree of internal consistency, and rightly observed that this requirement put severe limitations on Soviet "freedom to tailor claims to achieve such diversified

¹ Wolfe Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads p288n
² Arnold L Horelick and Myron Rush Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy University of Chicago Press, Chicago MI, 1966, pp37-38. The authors (pp29, 35, 39) painted many of Khrushchev's key statements on nuclear strategy between 1957 and 1961 as politically expedient and not as considered statements of an enduring military doctrine. In particular, they saw many of the key statements as part of an elaborate plan to deceive the West about Soviet military capability, especially by building on Western fears. They suggested that this is one reason why statements of the Soviet leadership (political and military) as early as 1956 gave greater emphasis to nuclear missiles than to nuclear bombers. Horelick and Rush dealt with Soviet military strategy at a fairly generalised level - that level where the precepts of the military strategy relate to foreign policy. Thus, strictly speaking, their comments about the propagandistic purposes of various Soviet formulations on nuclear war and Soviet plans for massive retaliation cannot be seen as addressing the more detailed elaboration of Soviet military doctrine.
The authors described a confident Khrushchev who by 1956 had concluded that "the West meant to employ its strategic superiority only defensively and not as a basis for serious political offensive against the Soviet camp". They suggested that Khrushchev did not develop a "unitary" concept of strategy, but reacted in accordance with events.\(^2\)

The authors suggested that key changes in emphasis between particular statements on nuclear war could be attempts to compensate for having given one target group unwanted impressions by exaggerated claims intended for another. An example which they cited related to the change in mid-1960 in the Soviet position on Soviet casualties in a nuclear war away from the view that it was only the imperialist countries which would be devastated. The authors suggested two causes: the need to bolster the Soviet position against China on the question of appropriate Communist bloc strategy;\(^3\) and a desire to tone down propaganda aimed at the USA, away from an emphasis on superiority to a theme of parity.\(^4\) They also attributed some of the excesses of Soviet statements between 1958 and 1962 on nuclear capability and nuclear war to the need to back up their campaign against Berlin in the same period. In particular, they linked an

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1 *ibid* p38  
2 *ibid* pp211-212  
3 *ibid* p112. According to Horelick and Rush, the disagreement with China was in large part over the amount of pressure that could be exerted by Communist initiatives and retaliatory actions without unduly increasing the risk of nuclear war. The authors assessed the Chinese position as follows:  

> Revolutionary wars do not create sparks that can ignite a world conflagration but strengthen "the forces which prevent the imperialists from launching a world war." In contrast to the Russian belief that deterrence of the West depends upon the avoidance of severe political and military shocks, the Chinese leaders assert that the present strategic balance is proof against shocks administered by the Communists. The way to lessen the risk of world war, the Chinese Communists imply, is to accept the risk of lesser wars.

4 *ibid* pp38, 79-80
intensification of the missile gap deception in early 1959 to the opening of their Berlin campaign in late 1958.¹

Garthoff, in a 1966 work on Soviet military policy, focusing more on the military aspects of foreign policy than on military doctrine, reiterated the view that the USSR accepted that any war it became involved in might take a number of forms, and continued to reject a literal reading of official Soviet statements about general war and local war.²

While Garthoff acknowledged that "Limited conflicts represent the classic form of Communist military action", his central conclusion was that the USSR is very cautious about becoming embroiled in local wars, including revolutionary wars involving only indirect Soviet support.³

In a 1967 history of the Soviet armed forces from 1917 to 1966, Malcolm Mackintosh, a British intelligence analyst, devoted some space to the main doctrinal developments in Soviet strategy after the death of Stalin, noting in a brief comment that the issue of local war had become visible in 1964:

some interest was shown in 1964 in forms of warfare which had hitherto been neglected by the Soviet armed forces. In the early summer, the marine corps was re-established in the main fleet areas, and marines took part in Warsaw Pact exercises for the first time. The use of forces on secondary theatres in a non-nuclear role was also dealt with, as were airborne and special forces operations, all possible indications that an all-out nuclear clash was no longer the only type of war which the Soviet military leaders thought could break out between East and West.⁴

Mackintosh stated in his conclusion that one of the three most important questions the Soviet armed forces would have to deal with in subsequent

¹ ibid p119
² Garthoff Soviet Military Policy p198
³ ibid pp198, 212
⁴ Mackintosh Juggernaut pp301, 303
years would be the role of non-nuclear and non-strategic forces. He suggested that
the answer to this question would depend on the USSR’s willingness to copy the
pattern of American and British sea and airborne mobility on a global scale. He
predicted that if the USSR so desired, he following decade would give a "new lease
on life to the surface fleet, marines, airborne units, and other specialized non-
nuclear forces".¹

By contrast with the mid-1960s majority view, a school of thought
emerged later that the USSR did not have a military doctrine for limited war. The
period after the mid-1960s also saw a growth in the contentiousness of Western
commentary, the development of public acrimony over scholarly disagreements,
and what has been called a "flood of dilettantism and superficiality".² Much of this
research was personal opinion and special pleading disguised as expert analysis.

The principal dispute was over the balance in Soviet doctrine
between deterrence and the "war fighting", with the two main schools of thought
represented by Richard Pipes and Raymond Garthoff.³ The Pipes school argued that
the USSR believed it could fight and win a nuclear war, while Garthoff argued that
it accepted the principle of assured destruction that underpinned the American
concept of deterrence.

¹ ibid p311
² Lambeth The State of Western Research on Soviet Military Strategy and Policy p11. He saw the
period of scholarship up to the mid-1960s as one of the most professional:
Among the distinctive features of this generation of Soviet military analysts ...
were their abiding professionalism and attention to detail. All were bona fide
Soviet specialists with solid Russian language skills. ... Although their writings
were scarcely free of opinion, they remained marked by a notable absence of cant
(p8).
Lambeth identified a new stage in Soviet military studies after the mid-1960s which was marked by
"a significant growth in the scope of the inquiry": Party-military relations; force planning and
defence policy processes; research and development for weapons acquisition; and international crisis
behaviour (p9).
³ ibid p14. See Richard Pipes "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Can Fight and Win a Nuclear War"
Commentary July 1977 and Raymond L Garthoff "Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation
While it has been suggested that these differences were not too great, with the two contenders actually describing different levels of policy - Pipes on the military requirements should deterrence fail, and Garthoff on the political component of military doctrine - a school very firmly in the Pipes mould had emerged by the mid-1970s. This school not only rejected possible Soviet interest in deterrence, but also refused to accept Soviet recognition of lesser contingencies, such as limited war. Soviet military doctrine was deemed to consist exclusively of an all-or-nothing concept of general war. This school of thought, the "Armageddon" school, did not give any credit to the views advanced by Garthoff about Soviet acceptance of deterrence or their planning for lesser contingencies - local war, limited theatre war or controlled general war.

For example, a study by Snyder in 1977 of Soviet policy on limited nuclear options in general war concluded:

It would be dangerous to assume that Soviet crisis decisionmakers will be willing to tailor their behaviour to American notions of strategic rationality. ... Soviet criticism of limited strategic war and intra-war deterrence is consistent with embedded patterns of Soviet strategic thought.2

He did not attempt to explain the significance for Soviet doctrine of his observation that the "Soviets do not specify in their doctrinal writings how they would react to a US limited nuclear strike"?3

Douglass held a similar view:

little evidence has been found in the Soviet literature to suggest any interest in limiting objectives or in restraining employment [of

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1 Lambeth The State of Western Research on Soviet Military Strategy and Policy p14
2 Jack L. Snyder The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options Rand Corporation, Santa Monica CA, 1977, p39. Some authors did not directly canvas the prospect of limited nuclear war (theatre war) but preferred to discuss Soviet views of limited war in connection with strategic (intercontinental) warfare in which they were probably on safer ground.
3 ibid p20
nuclear weapons] within (rather than to) the theater of operations once the war goes nuclear ... To the Soviets war is war; it is combined nuclear and conventional war and not either disjunctively a conventional or a nuclear war or something in-between.\(^1\)

In an important work by Douglass and Hoeber published in 1981, Soviet interest in conventional force operations in Europe and situations other than major war was acknowledged. Yet the focus of the work was on "major war" in Europe or against the USA anywhere, for which they concluded that the primary goal of the USSR would always be nuclear warfare, and that it would see any opening conventional phase of the major war as part of the planned transition to nuclear weapons.\(^2\) The authors rejected out of hand any suggestion that Soviet doctrine might have shifted in the 1970s to interest in fighting a conventional war in Europe,\(^3\) and saw the improvements in Soviet conventional forces as contributing to operations in nuclear war.

Douglass and Hoeber did however give some brief insights into Soviet thinking about local war:

"The Soviets have clearly and continuously recognised the need to be able to conduct non-nuclear war, but primarily for fighting specific types of wars which are expected to remain non-nuclear ...\(^4\)"

But they offered only the slightest elaboration on what these wars might be: wars against counter-revolutionary movements, such as in Hungary in 1956 or

\(^3\) Douglass and Hoeber Conventional War and Escalation p6
\(^4\) ibid
Czechoslovakia in 1968; and wars of national revolution, as in Afghanistan in 1981, or possibly in the future in the Middle East or "selected European NATO countries".¹

They noted that "at least as early as January 1964" the possibility of a conventional phase of major war was recognised. They remarked that "at least by the mid-1960s, the Soviets had realised they were becoming too dependent on nuclear weapons" and "nuclear weapons were a scarce commodity in the 1960s, and simply were not available in large quantities at the battlefield level". They also noted that by 1966 training patterns in the Warsaw Pact reflected non-nuclear scenarios.²

The authors, like so many in the Armageddon school, attempted no analysis of the possible lag between actual changes in Soviet doctrine and between Western realisation of them through published Soviet statements or US intelligence reports. They did not acknowledge any possible mismatch between what the USSR was prepared to publish about its military doctrine and what might have occurred behind closed doors. Moreover, they berated other scholars for ignoring what Soviet sources said, in reminding their readers of the differences between Soviet and US doctrinal concepts and suggesting that Soviet doctrinal concepts "appear to be simply overlooked, not addressed, or discounted as mere rhetoric by the West".³

It is interesting that Douglass and Hoeber could so easily dismiss in a footnote the following statement, which raises the question addressed in this thesis:

A former senior East European officer has stated that provision for a

¹ ibid pp13-14
² ibid pp9, 12
³ ibid p8
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.¹

Between the two schools of thought (the Garthoff school and the Armageddon school), the literature is characterised by descriptive works which pay little attention to the many levels of analysis of military doctrine - bureaucratic, political, cultural, or individual motivations. These works were characterised by frequently unsupported assertions interspersed in exegesis of published Soviet works, or in chronological exposition of international political events or presumed force structure decisions.²

Where questions of development and dissemination of doctrine were considered in detail, some authors presumed a perfect, "unbureaucratic" model - a direct one to one correspondence between published doctrine and the timing and nature of decisions, a 100 per cent record for the Soviet armed forces and Soviet defence industry in respect of highly developed, totally rational, detailed, Government-authorised doctrine.³

When scholars did grapple with references in open Soviet sources to conventional operations, these were usually discussed only cursorily and as part of a general war scenario, notwithstanding the practical experience of Soviet

¹ ibid p9n
² For example, Harriet Fast Scott and William F Scott Soviet Military Doctrine - Continuity, Formulation, Dissemination Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1988. It was not uncommon for scholars to list the range of influences and then not treat them at any length. For example, one author offered the following set:
   the country's location, demographics, level of economic development, history and the nature of the political system, ... the nature of its involvement in alliance systems, as well as the perception and evaluation of the opponent's capabilities and intentions.
³ For example, Douglass and Hoeber Conventional War and Escalation: The Soviet View
preparation for local armed conflicts with Czechoslovakia and China, and the existence of an explicit political doctrine for local war - the Brezhnev doctrine.\(^1\)

Little thought was given to what weight of literature in Soviet open sources might have reflected General Staff doctrinal positions on local war. As an American scholar observed in respect of his country’s study of limited war: "After all, how many basic elaborations of deterrence, limited war, and arms control theory are needed?"\(^2\)

Scholars who went outside Soviet official sources and thought more deeply about what was involved generally reached different conclusions from the Armageddon School. For example, Freedman in a 1981 study of the evolution of nuclear doctrine by the five nuclear powers, suggested a domestic political motive in the USA for assessments of Soviet military doctrine.\(^3\) He challenged the dominant view in the West of Soviet strategic doctrine:

> while it is true that a careful reading of Soviet military writings left a clear impression of an expectation of the ultimate triumph of socialism, even through a victory in a nuclear war, this was so far removed from actual capabilities that it was difficult to believe the Russians themselves took it seriously. In fact, despite the proud bellicosity and ideological certainty of official pronouncements,

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\(^1\) William T Lee and Richard F Staar *Soviet Military Policy since World War II* Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1986, like so many works on Soviet military policy and doctrine, devoted only one page to the question of limited war. The authors suggest that until 1964, the USSR expected a war with the NATO coalition to be nuclear from the outset (pp39-40). After 1967, the authors said, the USSR changed its doctrine to allow for a conventional phase but this did not equate to western concepts of limited war because the Western alliance could not stop the Soviets in Europe by limited nuclear war. In other words, the authors were offering as evidence of their assertion that the USSR did not have a concept of limited war, the inability of the USA and NATO to fight one.


\(^3\) Lawrence Freedman *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* Macmillan, London UK, 1981, pp258-259: The growth of Soviet military capabilities during the late 1960s and 1970s encouraged people in the West to look once again, with a less critical eye, at Soviet doctrine. ... As the indictment against McNamara was being drawn up by the conservatives in the 1970s, the most serious item on the charge sheet was that of a failure to appreciate the distinctiveness of the Soviet approach to strategic issues.
attitudes and behaviour displayed in the context of actual international affairs were exceedingly cautious.\(^1\)

Freedman was one of the few scholars to suggest the seminal work *Military Strategy* may have been a bureaucratic compromise between the Central Committee and the General Staff, or between contending views in the General Staff:

The work avoided controversy and read like a compromise document. It offered no clear priorities for the design of Soviet forces while providing support for claims for every type of force. Nor was there even an unambiguous view on the likely character of a future war.\(^2\)

In particular, Freedman noted the book’s ambiguity on questions of limited war:

At times the hypothesis of the inevitability of the expansion of limited war into a global nuclear war was given vigorous support; elsewhere there were indications that some limits might hold.\(^3\)

A number of respected scholars who took a broad view of Soviet military strategy, such as MccGwire, were adamant that the USSR did have a doctrine for local war, although MccGwire believed this only happened after 1966, his postulated turning point for Soviet general war doctrine:

The 1970s hierarchy of objectives required that the Soviet Union take active steps to keep a future war limited ...  
... the Soviets had a two-pronged military strategy, designed to defeat NATO forces in Europe while inhibiting the

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\(^1\) *ibid* p258. The debates about victory in war in the Soviet press, which formed the basis of the views of many American scholars about Soviet doctrine, had their equivalent in the USA, albeit most evident in the period of the doctrine of massive retaliation:  
We believe that a policy of victory must be announced to the American people in order to restore unity and confidence. It is too much too expect that our people will accept a limited war. Our policy must be to win. Our strategy must be devised to bring about decisive victory.  

\(^2\) *ibid* p264

\(^3\) *ibid*
resort to nuclear weapons. To implement this strategy the Soviets depended mainly on the new concept of operations, which their new conventional capability enabled.¹

At the same time, MccGwire noted that if NATO blocked Soviet conventional operations, the USSR would have had to "consider the selective use of nuclear weapons".² Beyond these propositions, there is little trace in his account of more detailed Soviet consideration of limited war roles in their force structure development.

MccGwire based his view of a major change in Soviet military doctrine after 1966 on a number of amendments in the 1968 edition of Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy which "taken together ... implied a fundamental shift in underlying military doctrine".³ While MccGwire was able to find other evidence, including supposed decision years for naval ship-building, to support his view, most of his sources were textual.⁴

² ibid p134
³ MccGwire Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy p387. MccGwire did not postulate any significant time lag between the publication of the materials in Sokolovskii’s book and their time of writing. It is arguable that the first two editions were based on work completed by 1957 or 1958, and the third on refinements to this earlier work undertaken after 1960, and possibly including changes agreed before the second edition was even published in 1963.
⁴ MccGwire noted that a time lag that can exist between a decision and any manifestation of it (p382). Yet his periodisation for major changes in Soviet doctrine relies on near simultaneous public events. For example, he talked of the "so-called revolution in military affairs" brought about by the advent of nuclear warheads and missile means of delivery, a revolution arising in his opinion from a defence review in 1959-60, which resulted in the establishment of the Strategic Rocket Forces (p384). Yet as Garthoff’s work reviewed in this Chapter shows, the USSR had already made the necessary adjustments in its published concepts of war-fighting by the late 1950s. Although the Strategic Rocket Troops did not come into being as a separate service until December 1959, training with medium range missiles began in 1953 or 1954, press reports of 1957 suggested the creation of the SRF as an independent service, and test firing of the first inter-continental missile to full range took place in 1957 (John Prados The Soviet Estimate -US Intelligence Analysis and Russian Military Strength Dial Press, New York NY, 1982, pp56, 77, 79). Moreover, the decision to develop a nuclear missile technology was taken by Stalin as early as 1945 or 1946, and the program began in April 1947 (Honoré M Catudal Soviet Nuclear Strategy from Stalin to Gorbachev - A Revolution in Soviet Military and Political Thinking Berlin Verlag Arno Spitz, Berlin 1988, p37; Lawrence Freedman US Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat 2nd edition, Macmillan, London UK, 1986, p68).
His comments on the supposed important changes in the view of limited war between 1963 and 1968 are instructive:

The third edition described the US concept as envisaging a war in which both Russia and America would be spared nuclear strikes and in which the conflict would be geographically restricted but would include Europe. Other changes shifted the emphasis from the inevitability of escalation to an intercontinental exchange to the possibility of avoiding it.¹

Like MccGwire's summary of supposed changes to "Soviet Positions on World War" before and after 1966, the above quotation ignored views in pre-1966 sources similar to those quoted, as Chapter Five of this thesis demonstrates.

MccGwire's view that greater Soviet emphasis on conventional forces by the USSR was just part of their general nuclear war strategy became the accepted view amongst scholars,² though, oddly, other scholars found different starting points from MccGwire's. For example, Sherr suggests that it occurred in 1964, with Soviet open sources having even suggested the possibility earlier than that:

the effort put into traditional arms after 1964 was designed in the main to achieve what was stipulated but in fact highly questionable before 1964: the support of the operations of the Strategic Rocket Forces, and the exploitation of missile strikes ...³

By 1989, flaws in Western scholarship on Soviet military doctrine were being recognised more widely. For example, Vigor wrote:

The period [mid-1970s and early 1980s] was characterised by sharp controversy about the nature of the problem faced by the West; but it is a myth that this controversy was a sort of 'great debate' about various aspects of Soviet military thinking. ... None of the protagonists proceeds by examining the differing interpretations of

¹ ibid p389  
³ ibid p131
any given data, and few acknowledge the weakness of that data.¹

Vigor goes on to note the dangerous consequences of the poor scholarship:

true enhancement of our knowledge has suffered. More dangerously, people in authority, believing that the data support their analyst’s conclusions, may actually feel themselves better informed and more capable of making decisions. These pseudo-debates of the past decade have put the credibility of the entire community of analysts at stake, as well as the policy conclusions drawn on the basis of much of that work.²

At the same time, scholarly work on Soviet military strategy and doctrine began to manifest a degree of emancipation from the previously dominant concepts and fears. There was less preoccupation with general war, less concern about the aggressive intent of (past) Soviet military doctrine, and greater recognition of the intrusion of political factors into formulation of elaborate doctrinal concepts. This trend, almost certainly related to the rapid moves by Mikhail Gorbachev in the area of military policy and strategic doctrine, seemed to vindicate a 1973 view of the record of the scholarship until that time:

the troubling circumstance that one finds an empirically observable congruence between the temper of the times and the general thrust of dominant interpretations by specialists of the USSR.³

For example, a 1990 study by Kaldor saw Soviet strategy as more realistic than US strategy, because the Soviets were more interested in real wars than the Americans, particularly in Eastern Europe.⁴ She identified three factors important in explaining Soviet strategy: the occupation role in Eastern Europe, the

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² ibid pp90-91
³ Alexander Dallin "Biases and Blunders in American Studies on the USSR" Slavic Review Sep 1973 p565
⁴ Mary Kaldor The Imaginary War: Understanding the East-West Conflict Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford UK, 1990, p197
heritage of the Second World War, and institutional or ideological pressures. She suggested that Khrushchev’s emphasis on nuclear weapons in the late 1950s was often misinterpreted in the West as a minimum deterrence posture, and argued that conventional forces had a much greater place in Soviet strategy than those interpretations suggested.

Kaldor saw the Warsaw Pact as first and foremost a device for political, military and psychological control. Eastern Europe was always unstable after the war, and it was this very instability which led to the build-up of the police and military apparatus of the USSR, for continued Soviet preparation for and actual recourse to war.

Arguments made all along by the Garthoff school took on new significance as ‘glasnost’ freed Soviet discussion of military policy from past political dogmas, and allowed the rational strands of Soviet strategic thought to emerge more clearly, without propagandistic embellishments. The Soviet military establishment was not necessarily willing to abandon pre-existing doctrinal formulations, but as Chapter Two suggests in the case of the USA, resort to doctrinal precepts does not necessarily imply faith in them. In particular, Gorbachev’s determination to reduce Soviet military spending and force levels under a policy of reasonable sufficiency threatened the institutional interests of the armed forces, and opened up a vigorous debate on Soviet military doctrine.

1 ibid. Kaldor cited as an example of the shifting American perceptions of these enduring realities a change in assessments by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Soviet capabilities in 1948 compared with their 1946 assessment (p195). In 1946, according to Kaldor, the JCS assessed the USSR would need nearly all of its 66 divisions in eastern Europe for occupation duty there and for defensive requirements. In 1948, after the USA scaled down its assessment of actual Soviet troop numbers, and after political circumstances changed, the JCS estimated that the USSR only need 6 of 31 divisions in Eastern Europe for occupation duties and that the other 25 were available for an attack on Western Europe.

2 ibid p199

3 ibid pp67-69
That the changes in military policy under Gorbachev did represent in part a stripping away of the propagandistic "window dressing" of Soviet military doctrine, not wholesale repudiation of all its precepts, was demonstrated fairly well in the publication in 1990 of a work by Garthoff on deterrence in Soviet military policy. While this work aimed to study new developments relating to war prevention, deterrence and reasonable sufficiency, it did not pass up the opportunity to review (and confirm previous judgements about) the historical development, however uneven and contradictory, of deterrence and war prevention in Soviet doctrine.¹

Garthoff reminded his readers that "there were parallels in Soviet and American thinking about limited war and flexible response reflecting the fact that both sides faced essentially the same problems". He suggested that the similarities were obscured because neither side took the other's expressed views seriously enough, preferring to impute more hostile intentions to it.²

The stripping away of the window dressing allowed Snyder, writing in 1991 on the links between national strategy and domestic politics, to criticise much of post-war American strategic analysis, make a plea for more attention to domestic sources of strategy, and conclude that the Soviet armed forces did have a concept for limited, conventional war, even in Europe:

the [Soviet] military adopted arguments reminiscent of the logic of offensive detente, extended to provide a theory of escalation control in limited conflicts. Thus Soviet military capabilities would constrain American escalation even while a Soviet client used Soviet supplied arms to achieve "victory" over an American client. This logic was also applied in preparing for a limited conventional war in Europe. The Soviet army would strive for a decisive victory using

² ibid p55
conventional forces only, and realists in NATO would be deterred from retaliating with nuclear arms by the threat of Soviet escalation.¹

On Soviet Local War Doctrine

Attempts to find a general pattern (evidence of a doctrine) in Soviet military policy for local wars did not really begin seriously until the late 1970s,² though a number of earlier studies had addressed the growing capability of Soviet forces for intervention.³ Even with the new interest, there was almost exclusive concentration on the international aspects, and in looking at the international aspects, the emphasis was on the political dimension rather than the military.⁴

In 1978, Haselkorn published a study interpreting Soviet political, economic and military moves along the USSR’s periphery between 1965 and 1975 as part of a coherent military strategy to establish a collective security system, designed to deter the USA from resisting militarily the gradual expansion of Soviet


Realism must be recaptured from those who look only at politics between societies, ignoring what goes on within societies ...

My own work finds that, among the great powers, domestic pressures often outweigh international ones in the calculations of national leaders.

² It would be of some interest to establish the cause of the new interest. Was it concern about Soviet moves, such as the resupply of Egypt in 1973, Soviet and Cuban support of the Angolan communists in their civil war in 1975, the Soviet involvement in the Ethiopian war against Somalia in 1978, and the general expansion of Soviet military relationships with Third World countries? Or was it linked to renewed US interest in the late 1970s in the security of Middle East oil and interventionary capability in the Persian Gulf region?

³ For example, T W Wolfe The Soviet Quest for More Globally Mobile Military Power Rand, Santa Monica CA, 1967

domination based on conventional military forces. He devoted more than half of the short book to development of Soviet military capabilities, deployment patterns and strategic relationships to support power projection, but did not address doctrine for wars that might arise.

Jacobsen in a 1979 work reviewed the role of interventionary doctrine in overall strategic doctrine and in the context of the global balance of power. In examining the mechanics of Soviet intervention, he looked at the published Soviet view of concrete military issues, such as the need to guarantee military lines of communication, the requirements of combined operations, and the operational tasks of particular services, but did not give a comprehensive analysis of these issues. The work focused mainly on geopolitical inputs, and other types of motivation (such as internal political or bureaucratic) were not canvassed in any depth.

The most comprehensive study to date of the implementation phase of Soviet strategy for local war has been Diplomacy of Power, a Brookings project involving several scholars on the use of the Soviet armed forces as a political instrument. The aims of the book were: to present a historical record of discrete Soviet politico-military operations since World War II, that focused on the political context; to examine Soviet readiness to use military power abroad and its willingness to accept risks in doing so; to evaluate the effectiveness and implications of Soviet coercive diplomacy.

The work presented an encyclopedic record of Soviet coercive

2 Jacobsen op cit pp15, 37-47
3 Kaplan et al op cit p2
diplomacy but did not assess military doctrine for local war, asserting that such a task might be impossible.¹

A 1983 work by Hosmer and Wolfe reviewed the broad international objectives of Soviet involvement in Third World conflicts and the political, economic and military means used in support of those objectives. It concluded with a description of the pattern of Soviet military involvements since 1946 in the following terms:

largely reactive but assertively opportunistic;
low risk in terms of possible military confrontation with the USA;
hedged commitments and tailored involvement where risks are uncertain;
intervention with combat forces in situations of dire necessity;
preference for local forces to do the fighting;
good success rate in terms of Soviet objectives;
effective military support for conventional operations by clients but not too much comfort for clients in ant-insurgency campaigns (Ethiopia, Angola); and
relatively low cost to the USSR.²

There were occasional references to changes in Soviet military doctrine giving new emphasis to intervention,³ but analysis of these changes was brief, and did not consider alternative explanations for the "evidence" presented. The book did not examine the civil-military interface in any detail, and made very few references to published Soviet military views.

The book noted a "visible improvement in Soviet military

¹ ibid p642. The editor of the work and principal author, Kaplan, concluded that it is "probably impossible" to discern the "identity and lines of authority" in the political and military leadership during the incidents reviewed or to know what motivated these leaders in their actions or which of their operational objectives were satisfied. Using a contentious definition of failure and success, Kaplan concludes that the "Soviet armed forces when used as a political instrument were an uncertain means for achieving specific objectives abroad", and that the realisation of broader Soviet objectives by these actions "was problematic". Kaplan also concluded that "invariably Moscow used military power with great deliberation" (pp646-647, 667).

² Hosmer and Wolfe op cit Chapter 12
³ For example, ibid pp34-38
capabilities applicable to intervention ... particularly growth in naval forces and airlift potential". This improvement, it claimed, "paralleled the emergence in the later 1960s of more doctrinal emphasis on a Soviet military presence abroad".  

A 1984 work on The USSR in Third World Conflicts - Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local wars 1945-1980 by Porter sought to "illuminate certain of the tactical and operational aspects of the USSR’s policy in local conflicts" - a relatively neglected area in Western studies. He purported to look at tactical and operational aspects not only of military policy but also of diplomacy.  

His subject is really the latter - operational aspects of Soviet diplomacy, of which the Soviet armed forces are one instrument. He did not discuss Soviet approaches to combat operations and took no view on military questions:  

The role of Soviet advisers in servicing and training was doubtless also a critical factor, but their actual influence on tactical planning in most cases is not known.  

A short chapter on Soviet power projection capabilities dealt with military capability as little more than the sum of the equipment used. The book made passing mention of organisational structure for local war operations, but no significant treatment of doctrine and training.  

A 1985 doctoral thesis on Soviet power projection in the Third World and the role of the USSR’s strategically mobile forces gave a fairly generalised treatment of the relationship between use of force and Soviet foreign policy objectives. The author purported to review open source discussions of the

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1 ibid p35  
2 Porter op cit pp2-3. Porter’s work may have been the first book-length work on Soviet military policy to use the term "local war" in the title.  
3 ibid p237  
"nuts and bolts of conducting local wars" but provided no analysis beyond a discussion of general missions, force assets, and examples of use of force, and used very few Soviet military sources.

A 1986 study by Hough concentrated on the strategic purposes (foreign policy goals) of Soviet military actions in the Third World. He analysed the foreign policy motivations of Soviet Third World policy and how, after Stalin's death, the sources of Soviet foreign policy became more diverse.

Apart from studies which sought to generalise, there were a number of works on Soviet military planning for particular local wars in Eastern Europe and the Third World which, taken together, offer a rich literature of case studies on the international and domestic political rationale for the decision phase of certain Soviet actions.

Only a handful of works touch on Soviet military thinking - that is the ideas of the Soviet General Staff - with respect to doctrine for fighting local wars. In a brief 1981 review of Soviet approaches to limited war, Kolkowicz noted the difficulty of defining limited war, observed ambiguous and contradictory trends in the USSR, and said it historically embraced the concept of limited war, but in the post-war period strongly objected to Western notions of it. He observed that while the USA with nuclear superiority adopted a flexible response (limited war) doctrine, the USSR with massive conventional forces and minimal strategic forces could not have been assumed before the fact.

1 Jerry Hough The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options Brookings, Washington DC, 1986
2 For example, Galia Golan Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1977; and Jiri Valenta Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia: Anatomy of a Decision Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1979. In the event, there was no war. The scale of the Soviet intervention was such as to deter any resistance, but this could not have been assumed before the fact.
adopted a doctrine of finite deterrence and massive retaliation - a logical position because the USSR could not risk escalation of a local, limited war with the superior US forces.¹

He argued that in the 1970s and 1980s, this position reversed itself and the USSR became more capable of accepting the concept of controlled limited war because its limited war forces, with or without nuclear weapons, provided additional deterrent and war-fighting capabilities on the primary flanks of the USSR.² But he did not elaborate much on these limited war doctrines and forces. Echoing Garthoff, he noted that limited war was the "natural" and "rational" doctrine for a quasi-revolutionary, expansionist political system like the USSR in an international system controlled by the balance of terror.³

He observed that the USSR distinguished between three types of war: world war; limited war not involving the territories of the superpowers but fought with their support, with or without nuclear weapons; and local war or wars of national liberation in the Third World, which would remain non-nuclear, and contained in scope, targets, weapons and objectives.⁴ He viewed Soviet strategy as a "commissar strategy" - confrontation avoidance under conditions of low Soviet control, a process influenced more by goals than the means available.⁵

Kolkowicz recalled Wolfe's view that Soviet military doctrine paid less attention to local than to general war but noted big changes in discussion of the relative roles of nuclear and conventional forces in future war and the loosening

¹ ibid
² ibid p77
³ ibid
⁴ ibid p80
⁵ ibid p81
of strictures against theatre warfare with or without nuclear weapons.\(^1\) He postulated that the Soviet political and military leaders were troubled by the contradiction in limited war of achieving the goal by decisive military operations at the same time as preventing escalation.\(^2\)

Katz, in *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought*, concentrated largely on the international relations level of analysis and his extensive quotations from Soviet sources are for the most part commentaries on broad politico-military issues rather than on operational military considerations. He identified six different aspects of Soviet military thinking about conflict in the Third World:

- the relationship of local wars to world war;
- the nature and types of war in the Third World;
- the relationship of peaceful coexistence to local wars;
- the Soviet view of indigenous forces in the Third World;
- the Soviet view of US ideas about actions in the Third World; and
- the role of the USSR in Third World conflicts.\(^3\)

Katz documented changes in Soviet thinking on these six aspects through reference to Soviet political and military literature and to Soviet actions on the international plane. His study covered the Brezhnev era to 1981, and he looked at differences of opinion between Party leaders and the professional military on questions of local wars.

In many respects, Katz' work was ground-breaking, perhaps the first wide-ranging review of Soviet official literature on the subject of local wars. However, it reflected Soviet propaganda and terminology too closely. For example, his discussions of Soviet military thinking used published statements almost exclusively.

\(^1\) *ibid* p83
\(^2\) *ibid* p78. The one quote Kolkowicz advances in support of the view that the Soviet leaders were "troubled" by this contradiction is not convincing.
\(^3\) Katz *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* p10
Moreover, Katz failed to recognise that the Soviet term "lokal'naia voina" [local war] embraced other types of war and other issues apart from Third World conflicts. He did not discuss the nexus between Soviet strategic and operational precepts, and addressed the issue of local wars (in the Third World) in Soviet global political strategy rather than Soviet military strategy for local wars. Katz discussed the civil-military relationship only briefly.

Katz' work nominally covered the period to 1981, but was in fact not comprehensive past 1979, and therefore did not cover the Soviet experience of Afghanistan.¹

Fukuyama's study, Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the Power Projection Mission, was more credible in that it went beyond the rhetoric to a more realistic analysis. Fukuyama did look in some detail at Soviet strategy in Afghanistan and its impact on civil-military relations, but for the most part he, like Katz, presented a study of local wars in Soviet global strategy rather than of Soviet strategy for local wars. His analysis of civil-military relations on the question of local wars provides a useful starting point for the treatment of bureaucratic and political aspects in this thesis, but his interpretations of Soviet statements were, like those of Katz, "face value" interpretations.²

Golan's 1988 study, The Soviet Union and National Liberation Movements in the Third World, was an important contribution to study of this aspect of Soviet foreign policy, especially in its comparison of Soviet and Chinese

¹ Katz edited a related work The USSR and Marxist Revolutions in the Third World Cambridge University Press, New York NY, 1990 and published a paper under the same title in 1987 under the auspices of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies.
positions on national liberation peaceful co-existence, but contains only a brief
treatment of the Soviet military and local war.¹

While Golan aimed to reflect the "complexity and multidimensionality" of a range of Soviet views on the issue of national liberation movements,² she admitted almost no propagandistic content in Soviet military commentaries cited, unwisely took Katz at face value, and like him failed to define adequately a distinction between "military theorists" and "civilian theorists".

A 1991 work by MccGwire, Perestroika and Soviet National Security hypothesised that sometime between 1979 and 1982 the USSR concluded that a regional (local) conflict involving the USA and USSR would not inevitably escalate to world war. MccGwire saw the creation of theatre commands for the Western, South-Western and Southern theatres in 1984 as an explicit manifestation of this shift in Soviet strategy.³ He stated categorically that until then, Soviet military requirements were "in practice determined by the worst case of world war", and in a statement typical of the scholarship, postulated a Soviet belief that if the contingency of world war "could be handled", "so could any lesser conflict".⁴

MccGwire noted that by the end of the 1950s, the USSR had largely discounted the cold-blooded premeditated US attack it had feared in the early

¹ Galia Golan The Soviet Union and National Liberation Movements in the Third World Unwin Hyman, Winchester UK, 1988
² ibid p1
⁴ ibid p14. MccGwire (pp16-17) claimed that all Soviet strategy was determined by the superiority of the West in overall military capability and that for this reason, the Soviets had to accept the constraints imposed by the strengths of Western forces. While the second part of MccGwire's statement is axiomatic, the first part is open to serious challenge. The notion, as he put it, that the USSR was a "strategy taker" (like a "price taker" in economic terminology), ignores the important geopolitical consequences of developments outside the sphere of military technology, such as the alliance with China from 1949 to 1962, the success of Eurocommunism in the 1970s, or the loss of US influence in Iran in 1978. The view that the Soviet leadership, political or military, divined their military strategy merely as a reaction to Western military predominance is to say the least monochromatic.
1950s. He repeated the traditional US view that at the end of the 1950s, the USSR believed that a major conflict between the USSR and the USA would inevitably develop into a full-scale intercontinental nuclear exchange. He saw Soviet military moves in the Third World in the 1960s as efforts to gain the "operational infrastructure needed to support Soviet strategy in the event of world war".1

McCwire, citing Katz, observed that the USSR's fear in the 1960s that armed confrontation with US forces would escalate into global nuclear war was a major constraint on the use of Soviet force in the Third World. He claimed that by 1969, "the consensus on the dangers of escalation from local war began to break and a debate ensued, which in mid-1974 was set aside rather than resolved. He supported this interpretation by reference to Katz's interpretation of one 1974 article and his own interpretation of one earlier article by the then Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Gorshkov.2

McCwire noted the presumed transition after 1966 to a doctrinal view that world war would not necessarily be nuclear or involve massive strikes on the USSR,3 and claimed that in 1967-68, the USSR began to restructure its forces to carry out conventional offensive operations.4 As evidence for this view, he cited the Soviet hope for non-nuclear conflict with China if one erupted at the same time as a war in Europe.5 He claimed that Soviet military interest in the Third World even up to 1984 was largely related to the global strategic balance, and that acquisition of basing rights was secondary to acquisition of political influence. He went on to say:

1 ibid pp20-21, 133
2 ibid p135
3 ibid p24
4 ibid p27
5 ibid p32
It was therefore not surprising that through 1984 the Soviet Union had not used actual or latent military force to coerce a state that lay outside its national security zone ...\(^1\)

McCgwire suggested that the debate was put aside in the early 1970s because Soviet military thought was still largely conditioned by the ideas and attitudes that underlay the 1960s strategy, including the belief in inevitable escalation, and that these persisted until 1983-1984.\(^2\)

McCgwire conceded that "Hard evidence of debate and decisions in the 1983-84 period on the role of a Soviet military presence in the Third World is scarce" but nonetheless concluded that a "decision to that effect is supported by what evidence there is".\(^3\)

The most detailed work on particular aspects of Soviet military strategy for local wars has appeared in journal articles in the last decade, particularly with reference to Soviet operations in Afghanistan\(^4\) but also about Soviet reactions to the Falklands conflict\(^5\) and the Israel/Syria air war over Lebanon in 1982.\(^6\) These provided a useful basis for study of selected aspects of Soviet operational thinking about local wars, but their scope was far from comprehensive and their quality variable.

The nine year involvement of Soviet forces in Afghanistan prompted

\(^1\) *ibid* p134  
\(^2\) *ibid* pp136-137  
\(^3\) *ibid* p147  
\(^5\) For example, Richard N Papworth, "Soviet Naval Reactions to the Falkland Islands Conflict" *Naval War College Review* 1985 (March/April) vol. XXXVIII, no. 2, pp53-72  
the first detailed analysis of how Soviet military doctrine coped with fighting a
local war. Much of the book was devoted to a description of Soviet military actions
and how the armed forces had to adapt to fight the war, but it is premised on "an
ideological [doctrinal] blindness to the requirements of counter-insurgency war".1
The author demonstrated unfamiliarity with key Soviet works on the military
aspects of insurgency and did not consider the possibility that the General Staff
understood counter-guerilla warfare well, but simply - for political reasons - did not
prepare its forces to fight such wars.

On Bureaucratic Processes for Military Doctrine

A major review published in 1975 of the study of Soviet foreign
policy using decision theory related approaches concluded that the prerequisite
documentary and explanatory study of Soviet organisational behaviour "in its own
terms" - had yet to be undertaken.2

This was certainly the case for study of the bureaucratic processes
involved in formulation of Soviet military policy until the mid-1970s. The
scholarship on this subject fell into two general schools of analysis. The earlier
school could be called "historicist";3 its main feature was chronological description
of key events in civil-military relations on broad issues, such as the emphasis given
to a conventional navy built around a large surface fleet, or a strategic strike navy
built around nuclear missile submarines and attack submarines.

1 Scott R McMichael Stumbling Bear - Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan Brassey's,
2 Arnold Horelick et al The Study of Soviet Foreign Policy: a Review of Decision Theory Related
3 For example, D Fedotoff-White The Growth of the Red Army Princeton University Press,
Princeton NJ, 1944 (dealing with the period to 1941) and John Erickson The Soviet High
The other school, which developed later, used for the most part functional analysis: that is, it attempted to determine which institution held nominal responsibility for different aspects of the military decision process.¹ A representative work of the functional school was a 1977 study by Warner which used a bureaucratic politics model to analyse the institutional setting and policy formulation processes of the Soviet Armed Forces. It offered useful descriptions of the main institutions, and provided what Warner saw as merely informed speculation about Soviet military policy processes.²

Warner analysed the "institutional ideology" of the Soviet armed forces in a functionalist manner, borrowing from Huntington the basic framework of the "military mind" and single service allegiances.³ The remainder of his analysis of the institutional ideology drew almost entirely on official Soviet statements, ignored analysis of the motivational and cognitive aspects of institutional ideology, and made almost no mention of the effects on contemporary doctrine formulation of the repression in the Stalin era or the unacceptability of doctrinal concepts advocated first by Trotsky.⁴

Warner concluded that without better sources of information on the Soviet military bureaucracy's internal processes, the application of the bureaucratic politics model has serious limitations.⁵ He appears to have assumed that the

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⁴ In a section on the historical development of Soviet doctrine, Warner begins in the mid-1930s, therefore avoiding mention of Trotsky or the execution of high-ranking military officers who challenged the Stalin and Frunze line.
⁵ Warner op cit p 271
processes were much the same as those in a pluralistic society like the USA. His analysis was highly formalist and almost apolitical, producing as it did an account of functions not too different from those described in official Soviet sources. For example, it would be difficult to accept his conclusion:

Although three of the Departments of the Central Committee - Administrative Organs, Defense Industries, and the Main Political Administration - deal with military matters, none of these appears to play a significant role in such key areas as the drafting of defense budgetary plans, [or] the development of ... doctrine ...

This conclusion probably arose because Warner made little effort to analyse the step by step process by which Soviet military policy or doctrine was formulated and authorised.

Apart from the historicist and functional schools, there was considerable study of the political relationship between the Soviet leadership and armed forces. This work examined macro-political questions (civil-military relations) rather than questions of strategy formulation and implementation within the military establishment. Of course, civil-military relationships have a potentially important influence on the development of a country’s military doctrine but those relationships are but one aspect of the processes of doctrine development.

The study of civil-military relations in the USSR falls into three general schools of thought, which coalesce around the views of Kolkowicz, Odom and Colton.

In 1967, Roman Kolkowicz published a landmark study of the relations between the Communist Party leadership and the Soviet armed forces. The work investigated the "pressures and demands ... brought to bear upon the Party leadership by one institution striving for greater autonomy". Kolkowicz assumed a

\[1\text{ ibid p270}\]
basic conflict between the "desire for hegemony within the state" and the "need to maintain a strong military-political posture before the rest of the world".¹ He asserted baldly that although - "objectively speaking" - the Party's political hegemony and the military's professional autonomy were not mutually exclusive, the Party apparently saw them as such", and he postulated a "conflict prone" Soviet military which presented a "perennial threat to the political stability of the Soviet state". The Party's fear of the military - "because of the instruments of violence which it commands" - prompted the political leaders to irrational efforts to suppress military professionalism that might otherwise have supported the state's external security requirements.²

Studying the period 1953 to 1963, Kolkowicz saw the armed forces as guild-like, exclusive, conservative, and wanting to maintain its own strong identity.³

He postulated a cyclical pattern of recurring crises between the Party and the military leadership:

> When the Party is strong and untroubled, the military's voice and institutional role in the state are minor; when the Party is threatened from within or without, the military rises above its subordinate role and enters the public political stage.⁴

Kolkowicz overlooked shared institutional interests between Party and military leaders which may have placed them more in harmony than in conflict, although he did come close to this on occasion:

> The Party also coopts a certain number of prominent military leaders into the highest Party councils ... thereby bringing them close to the

² ibid p12, pp104-105
³ ibid p104
⁴ ibid p33
decision-making centers where, theoretically, they may present the
military’s point of view and look out for the military’s interests. In
practice, however, most of those chosen for such representation are
ideologically close to the Party’s point of view and tend to give
priority to political considerations over the purely institutional
military interests.\(^1\)

Kolkowicz identified a variety of political, institutional and personal
influences on the formation of policy, but presented his analysis of their effect
through the very narrow prism of anti-military or pro-military.

Kolkowicz touched on doctrinal issues, such as military
dissatisfaction in 1961 and 1962 with Khrushchev’s January 1960 statements on the
primacy of nuclear weapons, but was mainly concerned with the issue of political
control of the armed forces, such as Marshal Zhukov’s dismissal from his post as
Defence Minister, and the place of the MPA in the armed forces. His study remains
the standard text on the turbulent period in civil-military relations, the principal
feature of which was the reassertion of Party control over the armed forces.

The views of the other two contending schools of thought on civil-
military relations in the USSR were summed up well in a collection of review
essays.\(^2\)

Odom disagreed with Kolkowicz about the nature of the Party-
military relationship, but agreed on some points as to the current status of the
military. He advanced five main assumptions about the relationship: that the army
was an administrative arm of the Party, not separate from or competing with it; that
the relationship was symbiotic; that the military was first and foremost a political
institution; that the military’s political life was bureaucratic, not lobbyist; and that

\(^1\) *ibid* p29

\(^2\) William E Odom "The Party-Military Connection - A Critique" and Timothy J Colton "The Party-
Military Connection - A Participatory Model" in Dale R Herspring and Ivan Volyges (eds) *Civil-
the military leadership was resistant to innovation. His overarching conclusion was that the senior military officers became executants, not policy makers, and were not in a position even to frame the issues.  

Colton, in rejecting the extreme positions taken by Kolkowicz and Odom, saw the military as disaggregated in different ways, depending on circumstances, in its interaction with civil authorities. He believed that in any political system, military participation will vary in two continuous dimensions - the scope of the issues, and the political means employed for interaction:

In contrast to the institutional congruence model I have read into Odom’s work, I find it necessary to retain a notion of a civil-military boundary - a boundary that is permeable, to be sure, but that has a definite shape and location. But unlike Kolkowicz and other adherents of the institutional conflict model, I do not find outright conflict across the boundary to be a characteristic feature of Soviet military politics. Military participation in Soviet politics constitutes a complex set of reciprocal interactions, between institutions and across institutional boundaries, which merit study in their own right.  

These works by Kolkowicz, Odom and Colton were important studies of the organisational behaviour of the Soviet military establishment but cast little light on the civil-military relationship on questions of military doctrine.

There have also been a number of works on decision making for specific aspects of Soviet military policy which provided detailed and, for the most part, convincing analyses of the specific aspect of military policy they covered.

1 Odom “The Party-Military Connection - A Critique” loc cit pp41-44
2 Colton “The Party-Military Connection - A Participatory Model” loc cit pp63, 73
Leites' book on *Soviet Style in War* was one of the few in-depth studies of the influence of behavioural dispositions of Soviet military personnel (as identified by the Soviets themselves) on Soviet strategy and doctrine. Leites wrote about Soviet concerns over likely personal shortcomings of military personnel during war, and about institutional predispositions to strategies or tactics to overcome these shortcomings - such as "warding off inaction"; "warding off slowness"; "fighting the neglect of obstacles"; "warding off passivity"; "enhancing one's cohesion and reducing the enemy's"; and "enhancing one's capacity to calculate and reducing the enemy's". Leites' book was one of the few studies of Soviet strategy that focuses on the individual level of analysis.

It was not until 1990 that the first work comprehensively analysing the relationship between the Soviet Defence Minister, the Chief of General Staff and their political masters on military issues was published. The author, Herspring, followed Colton's model of the Soviet military leadership as participants in political bargaining on military issues.

Herspring looked at four key issues in military policy in two decades (1967-1989): two military-technical issues (warfighting strategy and military management); and two socio-political issues (the budgetary process for defence and arms control). The issues are treated with differing emphasis according to the different views of key players at various times. Under war-fighting strategy, the

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1 Nathan Leites *Soviet Style in War* Crane Russak and Co, New York, 1982
2 Dale R Herspring *The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Personalities and Politics* Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1990, p4 was able to write in 1990 that his study of the Soviet High Command was the first in twenty years. The predecessor works he had in mind were, in different respects, Kolkowicz's 1967 study of civil-military relations (*The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*) and Erickson's 1962 work on the Soviet High Command (*The Soviet High Command*). But as Herspring points out, these works throw little light on General Staff views of Soviet military strategy.
3 *ibid* p16
question of the right mix between nuclear and conventional forces is a recurrent theme, with implications for limited war.¹

Herspring addressed these questions in the context of personal and institutional attributes or constraints on the key players.² He relied mainly on published Soviet sources, drawing without much distinction between the evidentiary value of Pravda, Red Star, Communist of the Armed Forces, and issues of Military Thought as available.³

Herspring made the very good point that in interpreting Soviet military writing, a distinction should be made between the political (propaganda) genesis of articles and a military technical genesis. He said that failure to appreciate the distinction has given rise to confusion in analysis.⁴ His assertion that Soviet military professionals did not begin talking about the need to be able to fight conventional wars until 1965 or 1966⁵ is typical of US studies of the subject.

Herspring followed Katz and a misreading of McCGwire in dating Soviet interest in preparing its armed forces for involvement in local wars principally to the period 1967 to 1969, and assumed that it was in this period that authoritative Soviet sources, such as Sokolovskii, said for the first time that local wars might not escalate into nuclear war.⁶

Herspring concluded that in the mid-1960s, the Soviet High Command (that is, General staff) had a "far from complete" diagnosis of the problems facing the armed forces, including integration of conventional and nuclear

¹ ibid pp20-21
² ibid pp25-26
³ ibid p30
⁴ ibid pp41-43
⁵ ibid pp42-43
⁶ ibid pp57-59
weapons in both strategy and operations.¹

A later work, Engaging the Enemy - Organizational Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955-1991, developed the Colton model of civil-military interaction on questions of military policy by applying the concept of "policy community":

civilian intervention into doctrinal decision-making does not have to be characterized by pure conflict of bureaucratic interest groups. ... bureaucratic conflict is detrimental to civilian policy-makers. Only by building coalitions within the organization can such civilians obtain the information they need to make policy and verify its implementation.²

Zisk analysed Soviet reactions to US doctrinal innovations (flexible response, the Schlesinger doctrine, and deep strike doctrines) from the perspective that Soviet military leaders did not choose to operate exclusively on an international or domestic political level, but were influenced by both orientations, and by personal motivations.³

Using a model of "doctrine race" (a corollary of arms race), Zisk concluded that the USSR developed a doctrinal response to the US doctrine of flexible response, reflected in the USSR’s greater interest in limited war in the 1960s and its conventional force build-up in Europe after 1967.⁴

Zisk’s theoretical approach to the study of Soviet doctrine formulation was original, and gave some reminders about time lag between doctrine and implementation, about the commonality of disagreements about doctrine amongst military officers, and about the imperfect processes by which any doctrine

¹ ibid p47
³ ibid p6
⁴ ibid p75
is implemented. Nevertheless, her application of the model to the case of Soviet interest in limited war follows MccGwire’s interpretation almost exactly.¹

Conclusion

Scholarship on Soviet military policy in the English speaking world has had a chequered history. It did not produce a consistent, integrated view of the various sources of military strategy - motivations of key players, process, and outcomes.

The scholars who studied Soviet foreign policy and Soviet domestic politics had little difficulty in understanding the full range of constraints on Soviet military strategy and doctrine. With few exceptions, those who confined themselves to the narrower field of study of military doctrine proved unable to make a reliable assessment, let alone demonstrate an understanding of the complex nature of their subject or of the severe limitations of their sources.

The Armageddon school remained hide-bound in the early assessments and misconceptions of the US intelligence community, particularly an abiding preoccupation with general war to the exclusion of lesser, more likely contingencies.

While many of these scholars sought to represent their work as acknowledging a broad diversity of influences on Soviet military thinking, most failed to present a thorough analysis of Soviet strategy which investigated these influences. The failing was almost certainly compounded or facilitated by lack of

¹ Another recent work on civil-military relations which is not dissimilar to Zisk’s book in that it takes a fresh look at debates about military doctrine and places them in a well developed context of civil-military relations but does not bring much new by way of explanation to the subject is Thomas M Nichols The Sacred Cause - Civil-Military Conflict over Soviet National Security, 1917-1992 Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1993.
willingness to concede the limitations of open source material.

Where the scholarship addressed Soviet force structure changes relevant to local wars, the perspective was one of increasing Soviet power projection capabilities. A number of studies saw certain developments in military capabilities, especially the growth in strategic reach through air-lift capacity and naval strength, as clear evidence of a new Soviet preparedness to fight small wars. The assumption of these studies appears to have been that it was easy for a superpower to pick and choose particular elements of its armed services that were developed for general war, and adapt them for use in a small war.

The most common type of work on Soviet strategy for involvement in local wars was one which drew a conclusion about Soviet preference not to become actively involved in local wars, and which offered some detail on how the USSR provided arms or military advisers to its clients in the Third World.

For the most part, scholars followed the lead of official Soviet propaganda to the effect that there was no Soviet doctrine for local war. Western scholars undoubtedly felt comfortable with this presumption, because published Soviet military writing devoted almost all of its attention to problems of general war.

Few scholars analysed the contradiction between the clear geopolitical requirement for the USSR to be ready to fight local wars (recognised in the USA as demanding a unique doctrine and specially tailored armed forces) and the presumed lack of a doctrine.
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 1904-1905 and the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935-1936. In the following four years, several more works on local wars appeared, including works on the Japanese campaign in Manchuria and the Spanish Civil War. The Chinese Civil war was also studied.

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 Opyt Italo-Abissinskoi voiny [Experience of the Italo-Abyssinian War] Moscow, 1937
4 I S Bushmanov Boevye deistvii iaponskoj armii v Man'chzhurii i Shankhae 1931-1933 [Combat Actions of the Japanese Army in Manchuria and Shanghai] Moscow, 1940
5 S Liubarskii Nekotorye operativno-takticheskie vyvody iz opyta 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. 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.

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

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.

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

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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.

2 ibid p7

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

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 [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.

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.

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

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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 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 "Novye formy bor’by" [New Forms of Combat] (1940) in A B Kadoshev (Chief Editor) 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
2 Korotkov op cit p104
3 ibid p108; Isserson loc cit p423
4 Isserson loc cit pp422-423
5 A A Svechin Strategii [Strategy] 2nd ed, Moscow, 1927, excerpts in Kadoshev (ed) 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 mys'* was published under that title after 1937, having previously been *Voina i revoliutsiia* [War and Revolution] (1925-1936), *Voennaia mys' 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{2}

Two days after US marines landed in Lebanon in 1958, the USSR asserted that the move could lead to world war.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{4} A few books were published prior to 1957 on the Korean War but these were largely of a political nature.\textsuperscript{5}

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

\textsuperscript{1} Y Kang "The Kinds of War in Communist Military Doctrine and their Relationship to Deterrence" The Korean Journal of International Studies 1978, vol. IX, no. 3, p47. I A Shavrov (ed) \textit{Lokal'nye voiny - istoriya i sovremennost'} [Local Wars - History and Contemporary Significance] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1981, p35n referenced an entry in a Russian military encyclopedia of 1913-1914 on "Small War" [\textit{Malaia voina}] in which one work in Russian of 1811 \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{2} Maj.-Gen. M Talenskii \textit{Voennaia strategiia i mESHniaia politika} [Military Strategy and Foreign Policy] \textit{Mezhunarodnaia zhizn'} [International Life] Moscow, 1958, no. 3, p40

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


\textsuperscript{5} For example, I Kravtsov \textit{Agresssia amerikanskogo imperializma v Koree (1945-1951 gg)} [The Aggression of American Imperialism in Korea: 1945-1951] Moscow, 1951, 439 pp
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 Army⁶ and a

¹ Talenskii "Voennaiia stratigia i vneshniaia politika" Mezhdunarodnaia 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 "Sukhoputnye voiska v ogranichionnoy 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'no i peresmatrivaiutsia 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 sostoyanii i tendentsiakh razvitiia 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 "Krizis amerikanskoi strategii ‘massirovannogo vozmezdiiia’" [Crisis in the American Strategy of Massive Retaliation] Voennaia mysl', 1960 (5) 71-76, p76
⁴ R Ozgud Ogranichionnaia voina Voenizdat, Moscow, 1960
E. Efremov.¹

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.² 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.³ 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.⁴

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";⁵ 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.⁶

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

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. 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.

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. 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

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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

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\(^1\) *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

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.¹ 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.²

A new book on Soviet military science was published in the same year.³

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.⁴ 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.⁵

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 Voennaia 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 Kurochkin "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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 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. Several translations of foreign works relating to small wars were published, including Che Guevara on partisan war, and Brodie and Taylor on new US limited war strategies. 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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War.  

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.\(^2\) 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.\(^3\)

### 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.\(^4\) 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.\(^5\)

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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 dvizheniiia" *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

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 ibid 2nd ed p99. For the first edition reference see Sokolovsky Military Strategy - Soviet Doctrine and Concepts p71
² ibid p209
³ Sokolovskii op cit 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.

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.\(^1\)

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.\(^2\)

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.\(^3\)

The view that escalation was not automatic was reflected in an important change in the second edition, where the word "may" \([mozhet]\) 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 may take on the character of a world war, with most countries of the world participating.\(^4\)

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:

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\(^1\) ibid 1st ed p325, 2nd ed p362

\(^2\) ibid

\(^3\) ibid 1st ed p77

\(^4\) ibid 1st ed p237, 2nd ed p258
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"

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 [*mestnyi*] but "regional" is used to distinguish between [*mestnyi*] and [*lokal’nyi*].

2 R Ia Malinovskii *Bditel’no stoit’ na strazhe 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 *Voenno-morskie sily v lokal’nykh voinakh. Ukazatel’ otechestvennoi i zarubezhnoi literatury za 1961-september 1966gg* [Naval Forces in Local Wars. Index of Fatherland and Foreign Literature from 1961 to September 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.¹ 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.²

One cannot but see a constant danger of the USSR and its armed forces being drawn into local wars.³

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.⁴

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

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.

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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

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¹ ibid p6
³ Colonel L Belousov "Konferentsiia o sovetskoi voennoi doktrine" Voenno-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] Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1964 (4) p48
⁵ N Mil'gram, "O sovremennykh 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 ponimании Pentagona" [Types of Wars in the Understanding of the Pentagon] Voennaia mysl' 1964 (9) 70-78
amphibious operations on local wars.¹

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".²

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.³

By 1965, a collection of translated articles on the navy included several articles on limited war,⁴ 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.⁵ 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

² Mochalov "Vidy voyn v ponimaniy Pentagaona" loc cit p77. See Sokolovskii (ed) op cit 1st ed, pp77, 325 and Lial’ko et al op cit p29
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.
⁵ Col. V V Mochalov Bol’shaia lozh’ o malykh voinakh: O burzhuazoi teorii ograniyionnykh voin Voenizdat, Moscow, 1965
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

\(^1\) *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

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\(^1\) 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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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). The section on local war, the only one with any analysis of

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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,\(^1\) with the USA disposed to resort to nuclear weapons to ensure its objectives as quickly as possible.\(^2\) 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.\(^3\) 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,\(^4\) and that such wars may grow into a global nuclear war - "especially if tactical nuclear weapons are used".\(^5\)

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."\(^6\) 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.

\(^1\) 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 lozhi’ 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:

\begin{quote}
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
\end{quote}

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\(^1\) 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

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\(^1\) 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.

\(^2\) I Ia Mints and I V Timoshenko *Voennno-morskie sily v lokal’nykh voinakh: Ukazatel’ otechestvennoi i zarubezhnoi literatury za 1961-avgust 1966 gg* [Naval Forces in Local Wars: Index of Fatherland and Foreign Literature from to August 1966] 1961 Central Naval Library, Leningrad, 1966

\(^3\) 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.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.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.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.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
depth within enemy territory may not be used at all or only on a limited scale, and

¹ ibid 3rd ed p312
² ibid 2nd ed pp320, 322
³ ibid 3rd ed p334
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. 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). 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".

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. 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. 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.

1 ibid 1st ed p335
2 ibid 3rd ed p312
3 ibid 3rd ed p20
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.
5 ibid pp91, 96
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

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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

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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: Istoriia 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". In the same year, a short but classified General Staff study on guerilla warfare was completed.

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 Bogatyry 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 Latinskoi 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

1 ibid pp49-51
2 ibid p58
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 vnedenei politike SSHA" Voennaia mysl' 1971 (4) pp115-116
² B F Li Strategia i politika neokolonializma SSHA [The Strategy and Policy of Neo-Colonialism of the USA] referenced in I E Shavrov et al. Lokal’nye voiny: istoriia i sovreennost' - 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) *Mezhdunarodnye 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.¹

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.²

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.³

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.⁴

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

¹ ibid pp57, 66
² ibid p67
³ ibid pp42, 55
⁴ ibid pp65-66
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

\(^{1}\) *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

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\(^1\) *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.

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" [osoby], 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 Aviannosty i vertoliotonosty [Aircraft Carriers and Helicopter Carriers] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1972
⁵ "V Institute Voennoi Istorii" [In the Institute of Military History] Voenno-istoricheski 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-istoricheskii 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.\(^1\) 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 *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".\(^2\)

"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.\(^3\)

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

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\(^1\) G Malinovskii "*Lokal’nye voiny v zone natsional’no-osvoboditel’nogo dvizheniia*" [Local Wars in the National Liberation Zone] *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 1974 (5) pp91-92

\(^2\) *ibid* p92. Malinovskii quotes as authorities the 1961 Program of the CPSU and *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 1968 (9) p36

\(^3\) *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

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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. 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.

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.¹ 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.²

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.³ 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.⁴ 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  Lokal'nye voiny (600pp)
1965 Mochalov  Bol'shaia lozh' o malykh voyn
1960 Efremov  Za shirnoi ogranicionnykh voin.⁵

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.

¹ I E Shavrov et al Lokal’nye voiny: istoria i sovremennost’ - istoriko-teoreticheskoe issledovanie
Chair of the History of Wars and Military History, Voroshilov General Staff Academy, Moscow, 1975
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.\(^1\) 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\(^2\) (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 \textit{Military Strategy}.

A collection of 39 maps and tables was published separately.\(^3\) The work included an extensive bibliography of over 200 Soviet and foreign works. This bibliography, discussed in some detail in the Introduction,\(^4\) included only a small number of major Soviet works.

Over 100 citations from Soviet journals and newspapers included not one article from \textit{Communist of the Armed Forces}, a situation offering some support for the view that the propagandistic \textit{Communist of the Armed Forces} was not taken seriously, or at least as an original source, by military theorists. Single service journals apart from \textit{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.\(^1\)

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".\(^2\)

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.\(^3\)

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.\(^4\)

\(^1\) *ibid* p13

\(^2\) *ibid* pp8-9

\(^3\) *ibid* pp559-562

\(^4\) *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:

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

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.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'turnye 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).²

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

The 1975 book and the 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,⁴ or the

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¹ ibid p96
² ibid pp96-97
³ ibid
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

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1 Nekotorye vvyody iz opyta boevykh 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 emphasise 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,

¹ ibid p78
³ See also D Muriev and M Dolgii "V. I. Lenin i partizanskoie 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'nomu 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\(^1\) (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.\(^2\)

**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,

\(^1\) *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, Matsulenko, 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, Matsulenko 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 Shavrov\(^1\) 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: istoriia 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".1 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

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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".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.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.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.⁴ Local war was placed in a hierarchy of concepts (world war, local war, military clashes),⁵ reflecting the pretensions of the 1975 book to be appropriately scientific.

¹ ibid pp240-241, 243, 246
² ibid
³ ibid p6
⁴ ibid pp8-9
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.¹ 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

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 Uchebnaja programma kursa istorii voennogo iskusstva [Study Program for the Course in the History of Military Art] Faculty 6, Lenin Military Political Academy, Moscow, 1987; Tematicheskii plan [Thematic Plan] Faculties 1, 2 and 6, Lenin Military Political Academy, Moscow, 1989; Planey 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 Voenno-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
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

¹ ibid p339
² B D Dotsenko Opyt ispol'zovanie sil flota v lokal'nykh voinakh posle vtoroi mirovoi voiny (anglo-argentinskii 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 Sociophilosophical 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

¹ Voennoe iskusstvo vo vtoroi mirovoi voine i v poslevoennyi period (strategiia 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
services, such as A. K. Babich's work on the air force in local wars.¹ Like many earlier studies of local war, it purported to be based on "foreign, open-source material".² 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.³

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.⁴ That year saw a full monograph - the first known to this author - devoted to the 1929 conflict with China over the Manchurian railway.⁵

**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.

¹ A K Babich *Aviatsiia v lokal'nykh voinakh* [Aviation in Local Wars] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988, 207pp
² *ibid* p2
³ *ibid* p4
⁴ Hyland *op cit* (1991) p191
⁵ V P Zimonin (ed) *Konflikt na KYZhD* [Conflict on the Chinese Eastern Railway] Khabarovskskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, Khabarovsk, 1989, 176pp
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-
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 Brassey'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.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 1985.²

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.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".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,⁵ while others looked at policies of the Afghan Government,⁶ the Afghan Opposition,⁷ or the USA.⁸ Two

¹ Varennikov Interview loc cit p2
² ibid p4
³ Опыт применимости советских войск в Республике Афганистан [Experience of the Adaptation of Soviet Troops in the Republic of Afghanistan] Institute of Military History, Moscow, 1990
⁴ ibid p2
⁵ I F Iurkovets "Onи защищали революцию" [They Defended the Revolution] pp185-220
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. 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.

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 E G Nikitenko "Sovershensstvovanie sistem upravleniya i sposobov vedeniya boevykh deistvii chastei i soedinenii OSVF" [Improvements in the System of Command and Combat Methods in the Formations and Units of the Limited Contingent of Soviet Troops] p150

3 Iu. N. Shvedov "Fiziko-geograficheskie i prirodnoklimaticheskie usloviya i ikh vliianie na boesposobnost' voisk" pp131-135
Defence Working Group on the lessons of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{1} 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.\textsuperscript{2}

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.\textsuperscript{3}

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.\textsuperscript{4}

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;

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{2} Nikitenko \textit{loc cit} pp137-138

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{ibid} p137

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{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.

In 1987, the rebels organised so-called fronts under the command of small cells (25-30 men) controlled by a local Islamic Committee. These groups relied on very rudimentary communications (fires, smoke, mirrors, horses) as well as normal radio. 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". 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. 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.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme Soviet in December,

1 ibid pp136-137
2 ibid p137
3 ibid
4 "Kak eta bylo" [How it Was] Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal 1990 (5) pp66-71
5 "Kak prinimalos' reshenie" [How the Decision Was Taken] Voennno-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, 383. 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.

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.

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. 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). 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.

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).

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.

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".

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1 ibid p247
2 ibid pp383-389
4 ibid p52
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 tikhoi 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
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.\footnote{B G Putilin "SSSR i ogranichionnye voiny i vooruzhionnye konfliktv poslevoennyi period" [The USSR and Limited Wars and Armed Conflicts in the Post-War Period] unpublished, Moscow, 1990, p1} 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.\footnote{ibid}

In the second category, the author included participation of Soviet personnel in formed military units in limited wars - in Korea between 1950 and 1953, GDR and Hungary in 1956, Vietnam between 1960 and 1975, Egypt in 1967, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan between 1979 and 1988.\footnote{ibid pp1-2}

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 \textit{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.\footnote{Gen. V Lobov "Voennye sily otechestva segodnia i zavtra" [The Armed Forces of the Fatherland Today and Tomorrow] \textit{Krasnaia zvezda} 29 November 1991 p2}
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

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.¹ 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. 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.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".³

These considerations are discussed further in Chapter Ten.

**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

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¹ Scott and Scott *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"
² Gallagher *op cit* p56
³ *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

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

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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 vooruzhionnye sily: istoriya stroitel'stva [Soviet Armed Forces: History of their Construction] Voenizdat, 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 Vooruzhionnye sily SSSR posle voiny (1945-1986) [Armed Forces of the USSR after the War 1945-1986] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1987:

- 1945-1953: first post-War years
- 1954-1961: fundamental restructuring in the military technological revolution
- 1962-1972: in the conditions of achieving strategic parity
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. 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.

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 hegemonic 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 revoliutsiia* (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 *Morskaja mosheh' 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 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

\(^2\) The Air Forces were reduced from 20,000 aircraft in 1945 to about 14,000 or 15,000 in 1946 (Kilmarx 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).
\(^5\) 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.

Through 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

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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

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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. In the same year, the Ministry of the Armed Forces was split into new Ministries of War and of the Navy, and an increase of 10 billion rubles in the official defence budget - more than one third - was announced. 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.

The new buildup probably brought Soviet forces to more than 5.5 million by 1952, 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. 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

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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 50s 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. The order of battle of the
Air Forces was increased from an estimated 14,000 to 18,000 or 19,000 aircraft, largely by bringing aircraft out of reserve, but aircraft production surged in 1950 and 1951.

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. 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.

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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 Kilmarx 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
They suggested the decisions to reduce were probably made in late 1951 or early 1952, pointing to an absolute drop in airframe output in 1952 for the first year since 1945, and offering a number of international developments which the USSR would have regarded as favourable to its own security.

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. 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.

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. For 1951, 1952, and 1953, actual expenditures were, according to contemporary Soviet statements, about 4 per cent lower than budgeted. Since

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1 May, Steinbrunner and Wolfe 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 (Pravda 13 August 1955 and 15 May 1956 cited in Raymond L Garthoff 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 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 (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.


3 Mackintosh Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy pp30n, 57. Mackintosh 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 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.

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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget (bn rubles)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>73.6</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. 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. 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. In July 1956, in response to
unrest in Poland and Hungary, the Soviet leadership asserted that the unity of the

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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 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".

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.

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. In February 1956, Khrushchev declared, as had Stalin in 1951 and Malenkov in 1954, that nuclear war between the superpowers was not fatally inevitable. 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, formation of the Warsaw Pact, and reasonable progress toward deployment of theatre nuclear weapons.

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. 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

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 shirmoi ograničionnykh voin [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 Transcaucusus 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 Transcaucusus 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 pobedy mirovogo komunisticheskogo 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

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1 Zafar Imam "Soviet 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


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" [vysshai], 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. 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.

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.

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 *Voennaia 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. 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".

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, 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.

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

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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 McGwire *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”.

³ Khrushchev Speech to the Supreme Soviet on 14 January 1960 *Pravda* 15 January 1960 p3
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

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

\begin{flushleft}
\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.
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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" (Marksizm-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,\textsuperscript{1} 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.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Tiushkevich et al \textit{op cit} p393

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{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.1 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,2 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.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".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.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".⁴

By December 1961, the Defence Minister had expressed his priorities

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¹ Tiushkevich et al op cit p412
² Garthoff 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.
⁴ Gorshkov 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,¹ 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.²

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 forces³ - 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

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, except for five divisions deployed permanently in Czechoslovakia after 1968. 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. 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.

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. 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; and according to a 1983 scholarly study, some 22 divisions. 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.

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, 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

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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.

2 CIA Soviet Capabilities and Intentions NIE 3 15 November 1950 p5

3 Gibson op cit p212

4 Mackintosh Juggernaut pp271-273

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

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

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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 Amoretta 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,

¹ Jerold L Schecter and Peter S Deriabin 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 Valenta "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. In the Polish case, they included a command exercise involving 150,000 troops, among them the 30,000 stationed in Poland. 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. In both instances, several hundred thousand troops were mobilised.

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. 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 the opposing ground forces in central Europe had been in rough parity all along. 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.

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

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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

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. Some of
them exercised operational control of SAM sites in North Vietnam during 1965 and
1966, and perhaps until the halt of US bombing in 1968. While some scholars
tend to play down the participation of Soviet forces, 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". 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.

1 Schultz op cit pp68, 73
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 Krasnaia zvezda).
3 Kaplan et al op cit p347
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.
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 1969,¹ in response to widespread conflict along the border between March and September.² By 1969, forces numbering about 400,000 had been deployed against the China threat.³ 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 27.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶ 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.⁷

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 650,000.¹ 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.²

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.³ 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.⁴ In November 1969, a new command, the Central Asian Military District, was created (Kazakhstan, Kirghizia and Tadzhikistan).⁵ 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.⁶

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.⁷ They accounted for 50 per cent of the total increase in Soviet armed forces manpower between 1969 and

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¹ US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1978 p89
² 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".
³ MccGwire Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy p121
⁴ Haselkorn op cit p39
⁵ ibid p41; Scott and Scott Soviet Military Doctrine p52
⁶ Dzirkals op cit p24
1978.\(^1\) 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.\(^2\)

There were few serious border incidents after 1969,\(^3\) 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.\(^4\)

**Southern Borders**\(^5\) 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.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.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

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 Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy pp228-229).
² IISS 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 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'anana "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’anan "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. 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. 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

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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).

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). 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. 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.

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 Sorochenko "Proshchiy 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 vozduzhno-desantnye - voenno-istoricheskii ocherk [Soviet Airborne - A Military Historical Work] Voenizdat, 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 (Sorochenko "Proshchiy planirovanii" loc cit pp78-79). From 1936 to 1941, the airborne troops were part of a "Force of Special Designation" [armii osobogo naznachenii] (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

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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 Babakov op cit p105
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

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.¹ In 1969, the Ground Forces created a number of air assault brigades, comprising three rifle battalions with heavy troop-carrying and attack helicopters.² By 1982, there were 8 such brigades.³

VDV troops were specially selected for political reliability.⁴

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".⁵ Similar assessments fill the subsequent literature⁶ but with little discussion of how the assessment was made or how readiness was defined.⁷

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

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.

\(^2\) David M Glantz The Soviet Airborne Experience Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth KS, 1984, p136. According to Glantz, Stalin's sceptical view of airborne operations, combined with the lack of an adequate technical base to sustain airborne operations, relegated large airborne forces to the realm of theory rather than practice.

\(^3\) Sovetskie vozdushno-desantnye pp263-267

\(^4\) Tiushkevich et al *op cit* p418

\(^5\) Viktor Suvorov Inside Soviet Military Intelligence Macmillan, New York NY, 1984, p8

\(^6\) Walter G Krivitsky *In Stalin's Secret Service* Harper Brothers, New York NY, 1939 p8

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 Kholkov 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

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
⁷ David C Isby "The Spetsnaz in Afghanistan" Military Technology 1985 (10) p138
was manned entirely by professional soldiers.¹

Marshal Akhromeev told the US congressional committee in 1989 that Western reports that the USSR had as many as 100,000 special forces were "pure fantasy",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.³

Soviet special forces did not have specialised infiltration aircraft, like the US Air Force’s modified Hercules aircraft (MC-130E Combat Talon),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.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.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

¹ Kohler 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.
³ This is discussed in a footnote in Chapter Two (p75n).
⁴ Kohler op cit p54
⁵ C F Carnes "Soviet Naval Intelligence Gathering Operations - Part 1" Naval Forces 1987 (6) p63
⁶ Suvorov The Liberators p153
World War were either small-scale or against negligible opposition.¹

The naval infantry appear to have survived after the Second World War only as a small part of naval coastal defence units,² and was not assigned the mission of amphibious assaults.³

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.⁴ 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.⁵ Wolfe suggested the naval infantry may have been deactivated sometime in the 1950s when it "dropped out of the picture".⁶

The naval infantry began to develop its capacity for use in local wars

¹ Garthoff Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age p206
³ 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 Morskaia pekhota: kratkii 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
⁵ IISS Military Balance 1964-65 p7
⁶ Wolfe Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 p192n. Thomas W Wolfe Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads Harvard University Press, Cambridge MASS, 1964, p187 noted that the second edition of Sokolovskii's 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 op cit p106).
from the late 1950s or early 1960s.\footnote{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 reinstituted 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.} 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.\footnote{Tiushkevich et al \textit{op cit} pp416, 422} The same view was expressed in Babakov’s history, but without supporting detail.\footnote{Babakov \textit{op cit} pp58, 107}

The naval infantry increased from about 3,000 in the early 1960s, to 6,000 in 1966, and to 12,000 in 1969.\footnote{Wolfe \textit{Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970} pp192n, 450} 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.\footnote{James Hansen "Soviet Vanguard Forces - Naval Infantry" \textit{National Defense} 1986 (May-June) pp55, 57; Haselkorn \textit{op cit} p44} 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.\footnote{IISS \textit{The Military Balance} 1967-68 p8} 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
first Soviet naval infantry landings in those areas.\footnote{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.\footnote{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.\footnote{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.\footnote{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.\footnote{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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\begin{itemize}
    \item[1] Hansen "Soviet Vanguard Forces - Naval Infantry" loc cit p57; Haselkorn op cit p45
    \item[2] Hansen "Soviet Vanguard Forces - Naval Infantry" loc cit pp52-53
    \item[4] Suvorov Inside the Soviet Army p138
    \item[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
\end{itemize}
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.


³ Khrushchev Khrushchev Remembers - The Last Testament pp49-65

⁴ cited in Mackintosh Juggernaut p308

⁵ Sokolovskii (ed) *Voennaya strategia* 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.

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.
PART THREE

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS
Apart from documenting development of Soviet doctrinal views on the military aspects of local war, this thesis offers an explanation of why these views developed as they did. To do this, Part Three of the thesis tests the applicability to the study of military doctrine of an approach put forward by Jack Snyder and outlined in Chapter One.

While the focus of Snyder’s work was an actual choice about strategy in a particular armed conflict, he saw the medium through which the choices were made as the doctrinal perceptions of the military leadership. He saw these perceptions as the result of some combination of rational incentive, motivational bias, and doctrinal oversimplification, with one or other of these determinants dominating a decision makers’ strategic choice.¹

Rational incentive means an influence promoting a close match between the disposition and capabilities of the armed forces and nominated military outcomes of a war or conflict; motivated bias means a tendency to shape this matching process for group or personal purposes not related directly to those outcomes; and doctrinal oversimplification means a tendency to shape presentation of the preferred solution for purposes related more to the ideological framework in which the armed forces operate than to the military outcomes.

Snyder suggested a dynamic interaction between these factors, with the two sources of bias not merely being alongside each other, but enhancing or reducing each other’s effect:

doctrinal simplification and motivated bias inevitably interact. When motivated bias is strong, doctrinal simplifications will sooner or later tend to reinforce that bias. Conversely, doctrines spawn plans, force postures, and institutional structures, which generate a vested interest

in self-perpetuation. ... unless the environment provides major disruptions, motivational bias and doctrinal predispositions tend to converge.¹

Chapter One suggested that it did seem possible to assess "rational incentive" for a particular conflict whose objectives, outcome and political context were well documented. This was contrasted with the difficulty of assessing "rational incentive" as convincingly for contemporaneous or near contemporaneous analysis of a country's military doctrine (its military strategy in anticipation of conflict). This complication is particularly relevant to the study of Soviet military doctrine after 1945 since it was never subject to the test of actual combat beyond the tactical level, and experts have continually disagreed on assessments of what was rational in Soviet military doctrine.

An elaboration by Snyder on the definition of rational incentive to overcome this problem was mentioned in Chapter One. He appeared to be suggesting that the test of rational incentive can be existence of a match between doctrine or strategy and the foreign policy goals posited as their aims.²

Thus the step this thesis takes to apply Snyder's model to the study of Soviet military doctrine is to accept the concept of "rational incentive" as that sort of reference point, and exclusively as a reference point. Instead of attempting to divine what would represent a close match between posture and nominated war outcomes the thesis seeks to address more defensible propositions concerning

¹ ibid p201
² Jack Snyder Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambitions Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1991, pp216, 229, 237. A question to pose here is why should foreign policy goals have some sort of primacy? As suggested in Chapter One, the scholar's choice of level of analysis can have an important impact on the conclusions. Thus, Snyder's model may appear - at first glance - little different from the approach taken by Huntington and referred to in the Introduction, which saw strategy as having an international dimension and a domestic political dimension, with the former encompassing Snyder's rational incentive, and the latter, the two sources of bias. This proposition is discussed further in the Conclusion of the thesis.
unambiguous deviation from rational incentive. Instances of the two sources of bias are not established by proof of deviation from a fully elaborated rational match between doctrine and nominated war outcomes, but established only where there is unambiguous deviation between doctrine and nominated foreign policy outcomes of the doctrine.

The key elements of the General Staff's doctrinal response to the requirements of local war were described in Part Two, and are listed below. Some of these are suggestive of a close match between General Staff responses and nominated foreign policy outcomes, while others are more suggestive of ulterior influences at play. The latter type are marked in the list with an asterisk. The reasons for selection will be given.

- reliance on a multi-variant posture;
- expressed need to have a doctrine for fighting local wars;
- good elaboration of the nature of local wars;
- rejection of limited nuclear war;*
- well established political doctrines for involvement in local wars (with defensive objectives);
- no substantive elaboration of the way in which the Soviet armed forces should be shaped to accommodate local wars;*
- considerable deliberation in committing forces;
- not elaborate in military actions but highly responsive to political control and political strategies;
- heavy reliance on deterrent posture and massive force to intimidate;
- clear evidence of planning for local war scenarios but little evidence of it in exercises;*
- determination to respond flexibly and energetically (if deliberately) to a variety of local war scenarios, especially in the early stages;
weak commitment to developing specialist interventionary capability in the armed forces;*

consistent pleas within a key organ of the General Staff for more work on doctrine for local wars;* and

restraints on dissemination of local war doctrine, compared with general nuclear war doctrine, up to 1979.*

To summarise, there were some strengths (rational matches to foreign policy) in these doctrinal responses, as the record outlined in Chapter Eight shows. In particular, the Soviet foreign policy goals directly related to the purpose of the use of force in the cases of Czechoslovakia, and Poland were well served by the use of massive force and intimidation, with both countries remaining firmly under loyal Communist governments. Similarly, the use of force against China, including intimidation, seems to have achieved its purpose. By contrast, the rejection of the principle of massive force and intimidation in Afghanistan led to failure to achieve the Soviet objective, principally through failure to stop Pakistan from providing a base to the guerillas through which US weaponry was supplied.

General Staff appreciation of the nature of local wars, especially the greater intrusion of political influences and their protracted nature, may have conditioned Soviet reluctance to commit forces only after considerable deliberation. In the case of Afghanistan, the General Staff’s disposition (based perhaps on their doctrinal analysis of local wars) was not to become involved, and even when forced, to hope - unrealistically - to limit their involvement to a garrison role.

The USSR’s multi-variant military posture served it well for handling local war crises in the key theatres of Eastern Europe and the Far East, in that it achieved its immediate political goals.

Yet, despite the rational elements of the General Staff’s doctrinal
responses to local war requirements, there were clearly deficiencies. As suggested in Chapter One, the test of a military doctrine is not whether the forces relying on it are able to cope with a particular military problem, but rather whether they cope as effectively as they might have with a different, better doctrine. The existence of military doctrine is supposed to serve the military objective of maximising the effectiveness of the forces. This is particularly so in the Soviet system where military doctrine was the *sine qua non* of combat effectiveness.

The list above suggests four general areas where Soviet local war doctrine was deficient: rejection of limited nuclear war; lack of specific discussion of Soviet force structure; weak interest in specialist interventionary forces; and poor dissemination of even the inchoate local war doctrine.

Rejection of the concept of limited nuclear war was *a priori* irrational if we apply the test of rational incentive from Snyder’s model. No foreign policy goal related to the war outcome would have been served by resorting to immediate general nuclear war involving massive attacks on the entire territory and armed forces of the enemy war ("Armageddon") in response to a limited attack confined to one theatre, even if nuclear weapons were used.

It is not difficult to suggest circumstances when the use of nuclear weapons on a limited scale in a local war would have been a rational response by the USSR. These might include threats to vital security goals (such as control of East Germany and the Warsaw Pact or defence of territory around Vladivostok against Chinese invasion). Moreover, to reject out of hand one option for war-fighting before any international crisis or war in which it might be used does
appear to be irrational.¹

In these respects, the Armageddon scholars were correct. Rejection of limited nuclear war was an irrational doctrine. But what does this mean? It can mean one of two things: either the Soviet leaders were irrational (the view of the Armageddon school); or there were influences other than war outcomes resulting from application of the doctrine which affected the doctrinal view. This would be Snyder's conclusion: the rejection of limited war was irrational, and therefore the scholar should automatically look for other influences unrelated to war outcomes.

Alternative strategic explanations of Soviet rejection of limited war have been canvassed well in the scholarship. For example, Garthoff saw possible motivations for rejecting the concept of limited nuclear war as including the desire to make the USA calculate on the full costs of general nuclear war if it sought to exploit its superior military strength in more limited conflicts.² Soviet leaders wanted to persuade western leaders that did not have "limited nuclear war" options.³

While there were good strategic reasons for the USSR to follow a public line of rejection of the concept of limited nuclear war, they do not explain comprehensively why in a highly secret society, there was only an inchoate local war doctrine. The General Staff was denying itself and the political leadership the most important tool for success in war: good preparation. The nature of this omission therefore is suggestive that there may have been other reasons why efforts

¹ This would only be true if rejecting it did not materially affect your capability to take up the option if circumstances dictated. It is unlikely that this was the case, because the doctrinal rejection by the USSR of limited nuclear war raised the belief in the USA that once a conflict involved tactical nuclear weapons, it would not be long before the USSR resorted to a full-scale strategic attack.
³ ibid p74
to develop a local war doctrine fell short of the test of rational calculation in Snyder's model.

Part Three of the thesis looks at other possible origins of the General Staff's doctrinal position with respect to local war by looking beyond this one main deficiency to some lesser ones: lack of specific discussion of Soviet force structure in relation to all local wars; weak interest in specialist interventionary forces; and poor dissemination of even the inchoate local war doctrine. Chapter Nine discusses motivational bias and Chapter ten reviews doctrinal oversimplification.

The time-frame in which development of doctrine occurs is important to such an analysis. Part Two showed there was some variation over time in the intensity of efforts to develop doctrine for local wars. The view that limited nuclear war had no place in Soviet doctrine was treated inconsistently in General Staff publications from 1963 onwards, with the second edition of Sokolovsky's Military Strategy saying it was possible, though perhaps not for long. In two distinct periods - 1960-1965 and 1970-1975 - there was a noticeable surge in General Staff interest in the doctrinal requirements for local wars, but at the same time a noticeable lack of interest in incorporating the results of analysis into the curricula of military academies or the ambit of officially sanctioned military doctrine for most of the period after 1960, although the constraints appear somewhat lessened in the 1980s.
CHAPTER NINE

MOTIVATIONAL BIAS

This chapter addresses one question: could the General Staff's failures in respect of local war doctrine have resulted from bias reflecting its parochial domestic interests?¹

Snyder identified two sources of parochial bias: the classic or enduring institutional interests of the military, such as a desire for big forces and big budgets; and interests arising from particular circumstances, such as the need to protect the military's position as an institution against domestic political threats.²

The first section of this Chapter addresses the possible effects on doctrine formulation for local war of enduring armed forces interests, including competitive interests of single services (army, navy, air force). The second section reviews the effects of domestic threats to the institutional integrity of the armed forces, including the ever present threat of severe penalties for dissent.

¹ The concept of interest groups presupposes two conditions: distinct sets of interests and values shared by groups; and existence of conflict in the system between the groups (Roman Kolkowicz "The Military" in H Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (eds) Interest Groups in Soviet Politics Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1971, p131). As work on interest groups in politics demonstrates, and as the very concept implies, the influences that stem from the pursuit of parochial interests are felt unevenly, according to the dynamic processes of political life in the country concerned. Thus, group cohesiveness can change (with sub-groups forming in opposition to each other), alliances between groups can come and go, the methods of political competition used by particular groups may vary, or the power of a particular group may wax and wane (H Gordon Skilling "Group Conflict in Soviet Politics - Some Conclusions" in Skilling and Griffiths op cit pp384-394).

² Jack Snyder The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision-Making and the Disasters of 1914 Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1984, pp25-26. Snyder postulated in his analysis of France, Germany and Russia before 1914 that bias in strategy and doctrine formulation would be greatest when three conditions prevailed: institutional interests were under a severe threat; the interests at stake were fundamental ones, such as self-image and organisational essence; and there was some contradiction between institutional interests and sound strategy (that is, the foreign policy requirements of the government).
Classic Institutional Interests

Among classic institutional interests of the Soviet armed forces, Kolkowicz postulated a desire for a wide range of military equipment at highest possible technological levels.¹ An associated goal would be continued modernisation, through deployment of new, higher technology systems.

Western scholars attributed to the Soviet military leadership a consistent tendency to press for a greater share of the national economic pie whenever the political leaders tried to divert resources to non-military, national development priorities.

For example, military disaffection with Malenkov’s spending priorities favouring consumer industry and reduction in the defence budget helped force his removal from the Premiership in 1955.² Similarly, after a temporary post-Malenkov surge in defence spending in 1955 and 1956, a return to lower expenditures from 1957 to 1960 gave rise to renewed military disaffection,³ and the

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¹ Roman Kolkowicz "The Military" in Skilling and Griffith (eds) op cit p141. The technological levels of the Soviet armed forces were consistently lower than those of US forces, with the gap being substantial until the late 1970s. As of 1991, the US Department of Defense concluded that the USSR was behind in all but one of 21 key military technologies and superior in only five of 31 deployed military systems - chemical and biological warfare, anti-satellite, anti-ballistic missile defence, and surface to air missiles. Department of Defense Military Forces in Transition USGPO, Washington DC, 1991, pp27-28. There was controversy about the relative standing of US and Soviet military technologies right throughout the Cold War but the assessment of a huge gap in 1991 was as valid for the preceding decades, although periods of surge and consolidation on both sides altered the relativities in the technological levels of deployed systems at particular points in time.


cuts of the late 1950s were reversed in 1961.\footnote{According to official Soviet defence budget figures, the turn-around occurred sometime in mid-1961, after the budget for 1961 had already been approved. The revised 1961 budget provided for an increase of about 30 per cent, although an increase of only 25 per cent was achieved (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1980 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, 96th Congress, second Session, 30 June and 25 September 1980, USGPO, Washington DC, 1980, p43). According to CIA estimates in 1981, 1960 or 1961 was the beginning of a turn upwards in defence spending that continued to grow for the next two decades, with the 1960 level of spending (in constant prices) being doubled by the early 1970s (US Congress 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, First Session, 8 July and 15 October 1981, USGPO, Washington DC, p281). A 1964 study suggested a peak in 1959 resulting from greater efforts in research and development, with a temporary lull in 1960, followed by a huge surge in 1961 (Abraham S Becker Soviet Military Outlays since 1955 Rand Corporation, Santa Monica CA, 1964, pp36, 70-71).} Scholars agree that between 1965 and 1975, "military spending grew rapidly, expanding its share of a national product that was still increasing vigorously",\footnote{Robert Campbell "Resource Stringency and Civil-Military Resource Allocation" in Colton and Gustafson (eds) Soldiers and the Soviet State Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1990, p127. Campbell's comment follows the conventional wisdom and charts the period of Brezhnev's leadership, when in fact the trend of increased spending after 1965 had been firmly established by then, having begun in mid-1961. Reductions in the announced Soviet defence budgets for 1964 and 1965 compared with 1963 appear to misrepresent the trend over those years, according to CIA estimates (US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1981 p281).} but the trend to higher defence spending began earlier, and signs of military disaffection with expenditure levels diminished from 1962, only to surface again in the late 1970s when, according to revised CIA estimates, annual defence expenditure growth rates dropped from about four per cent to about two per cent, and spending on procurement of equipment levelled off to no growth between 1976 and 1984.\footnote{Campbell suggests that the military disaffection probably did not surface until the early 1980s. By contrast, Dale H Herspring The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989 - Personalities and Politics Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 190, pp154, 162-164 suggests some growing reservations in about 1979-1980, suggesting that from 1977 until then the new Chief of the General Staff, Ogarkov, was prepared to accept the new budget restraints after 1976 and work within them as long as technological modernisation continued. Rose Gottemoeller "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces" in Bruce Parrott (ed) The Dynamics of Soviet Defense Policy The Wilson Center Press, Washington DC, 1990, p80 notes that by the second half of the 1970s, disaffection with defence spending resurfaced in open sources.}

After 1984, there was a return to higher growth in annual
expenditure, and spending on procurement rose by about three per cent per year.¹ This trend continued until Gorbachev began implementing his new doctrine of war prevention in 1988 by cutting military production and announcing the first manpower cuts since 1960.² These policies met with vigorous and open opposition from military leaders, reflected in the resignation of the Chief of General Staff, Marshal Akhromeev, on 7 December 1988, the day unilateral cuts of 500,000 were announced.³ Thus, the senior military did at times apply pressure to the political leadership in pursuit of higher defence budgets and larger forces. If this interest was a significant factor in formulation and dissemination of doctrine, it is reasonable to expect some correlation between doctrinal milestones with regard to local war and periods of pressure for more resources for defence.⁴

There is some apparent correlation, but not without seeming contradictions. The first surge in General Staff interest in local war doctrine did occur at the end of the 1950s, after several years of cuts in the defence budget and massive reductions in the manpower of the ground forces. The first Soviet open

¹ Campbell "Resource Stringency and Civil-Military Resource Allocation" loc cit p130 citing CIA estimates
² US Department of Defense Military Forces in Transition pp11-12
³ Fred Wehling "Old Soldiers Never Die: Marshal Akhromeev's Role in Soviet Defense Decision Making" in William C Green and Theodore Karasik (eds) Gorbachev and His Generals - The Reform of Soviet Military Doctrine Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1990, p68. While Akhromeev was appointed after his resignation as Gorbachev's adviser, this may have indicated merely an attempt by Gorbachev to allay military concerns about the cuts and soften the shock effects of the resignation.
⁴ This assumption would only be valid if the General Staff was not content with the ability of Soviet general war doctrine to deliver the levels of defence spending desired. The General Staff might have felt that it could make its arguments better if it relied exclusively on a general war doctrine and argued that such a war would require all the types of forces that might be needed in local war situations. Equally, it might have held the view expressed by US General Bradley in October 1950: We will refuse absolutely to allow local wars to divert us unduly from our central task. They must not be allowed to destroy our strength and imperil our victory in a world war.

General O N Bradley "US Military Policy: 1950" Combat Forces Journal 1950 (October) p7. But even Bradley in this statement was not refusing to contemplate local war - the USA was actually fighting a very serious one at the time. These two possibilities are excluded by virtue of the evidence presented in Chapters Five to Seven of General Staff interest in local war doctrine for its own sake.
source work on local wars was published in 1960.

Yet this interest appears to have intensified between 1961 and 1965, when defence spending was in fact increasing and political leadership adopted a new commitment to expanding Soviet military capability. Similarly, renewed interest in local war doctrine between 1970 and 1975 occurred at a time when there is little evidence of military dissatisfaction with steadily increasing and historically high peacetime defence allocations.

The period after 1976, when the rate of growth of defence spending was being trimmed, did see greater efforts within the General Staff to disseminate its inchoate local war doctrine, with its first serious public work on the subject since 1965 appearing in 1981, and standard texts on military history and military art incorporating reasonably detailed sections on local war for the first time in the early 1980s.

There are some credible explanations of the apparent contradictions. The military’s enduring interests did not revolve exclusively or even primarily around aggregate levels of defence spending. Questions of the types of forces, balance between them, and their readiness levels may have been equally or more important.

A view of how important this concept of balance was and what it implied can be found in the following typical statement:

All elements of the Armed Forces of the USSR have developed in a planned and balanced manner, and have constantly been in the most advantageous combination. The contemporary Soviet Armed Forces are technologically and organizationally capable of accomplishing tactical-operational and strategic missions on any scale and in any
combat situation.¹

The General Staff’s understanding of this balance as the basis of a multi-variant strategy was well described in a work compiled in mid-1963:

The decisive role in a war, an operation and in a battle now belongs to nuclear missile weapons, but the use of conventional weapons cannot be excluded. ... yes they will be used in nuclear war, not to mention conventional, non-nuclear war where they will have the primary role. .... it is obvious that aviation can play a big part in nuclear missile war. With regard to local wars, which are more often fought with conventional weapons, the role of aviation in them remains as before important [vysokaia].²

Conventional armed forces are necessary in nuclear missile war but are needed in particular for conduct of limited, local wars, in which nuclear weapons may not be used.³

In the US case, limited war doctrines were used during budgetary lobbying in the mid-1950s to advance the causes of single services, especially the army, whose roles and missions were threatened by doctrinal positions that gave primacy to weapons systems controlled by the air force and navy.⁴ The justification for increases in total budget allocations because of limited war functions only became widely accepted in the USA after 1961.

In the Soviet case, similar inter-service rivalries over spending priorities flared at various times,⁵ and were exacerbated between 1955 and 1965 by

³ ibid p298
⁵ Kolkowicz "The Military" in Skilling and Griffith (eds) op cit p146; Gottemoeller "Inramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces" loc cit pp86-106
serious divergence of opinions on military strategy within the General Staff, with the "radicals" advocating reliance on nuclear missiles and large reductions in conventional ground forces.

Official Soviet views claimed after 1965 that balance was restored to Soviet force structure development after Khrushchev was removed from power. These claims may have some merit, but Khrushchev's opposition to the General Staff's view of balanced forces had already been challenged and largely overcome by late 1961.

But even after 1965, when there was less conflict within the General Staff, and between it and the political leadership, on the need for a different balance between strategic nuclear and large conventional forces, there was still considerable pressure on the Ground and general purpose Naval Forces' share of the defence budget. These services had to compete with allocations to new strategic forces, including submarine launched missiles and new intercontinental missiles.

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1 Kolkowicz "The Military" in Skilling and Griffith (eds) op cit pp146-147
2 The primary exponent of this school of thought was Colonel-General Gastilovich, a member of staff at the General Staff Academy. His views were expressed in the first article in the first issue in 1960 of the Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" in an article, "The Theory of Military Art Needs Review". While Gastilovich contributed to the first and second editions of Sokolovskii's Military Strategy, the assertion in the chapter he was most closely associated with - that the "megaton nuclear-rocket weapons ... reduce expenditures for military preparations in peace-time since they permit a considerable decrease in production of other types of armament" - were omitted from the third edition (preamble to Chapter 7). The notes inside the cover of the third edition dropped Gastilovich's name from membership of the authors' collective, acknowledging merely that some of his material had been used.
3 A typical statement of this propaganda line is given in Tiushkevich et al op cit p471:
   After the October (1964) plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee, action was taken to correct certain views held in military research circles as a result of over-estimating the capabilities of nuclear weapons, their effect on the nature of warfare, and their role in the further organizational development of the armed forces. The Party directed the officer corps toward harmonious, balanced development of all services and branches, taking into account the actual distribution of forces on the world arena and the rapid advance of science and technology.
with greater accuracy and multiple warhead capability.¹

Thus, while increases in aggregate defence allocations after 1965 may have satisfied one enduring interest of the Soviet military leadership, and consequently lessened their interest in the budgetary value of a local war doctrine, the need to maintain a favourable balance of capabilities between the strategic nuclear forces and general purpose conventional forces would on the face of it have made greater elaboration of a local war doctrine an attractive proposition to the General Staff.

If renewed General Staff interest in local war doctrine between 1970 and 1975 was prompted by budgetary concerns, then the balance of allocations between strategic and conventional forces must have begun to shift back in favour of strategic forces at that time. This does appear to have been the case.

CIA estimates of the share of expenditure allocated to different Soviet defence functions between 1965 and 1979 suggest some gain for the ground forces at the expense of Strategic Rocket Troops and Air Forces by from 1965 to 1970. But by 1976 the Ground Forces’ share was the same as in 1965 - about 21 per cent. The Navy’s share declined between 1965 and 1979 from 21 to 19 per cent, while proportionately more went to strategic forces and national command and support functions (each increased by three per cent of total defence spending).²

² US Congress Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China - 1979 Hearings before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, 94th Congress, First Session, 18 June and 21 July 1975, USGPO, Washington DC, 1975, p45. With defence allocations of 20 to 30 billion roubles supporting armed forces of two to three million, changes of the order of three per cent in the allocation to two out of six of the higher technology defence sectors would account for much of an annual growth rate in defence allocations at the time. But it is impossible for this author to ascertain the margin of error in the CIA estimates. It is possible that it was greater than the three percent variation in single service allocations as estimated.
While the CIA concluded that these fluctuations were the result of the missile procurement cycle and growth of the border threat from China, the General Staff might still have concluded that the desired returns for general purpose forces from defeat of the radical, primarily nuclear, doctrine were not going to eventuate.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the Navy’s Commander in Chief, Admiral Gorshkov, went into print between February 1972 and February 1973 with a series of eleven articles in the Naval Anthology [Morskoi sbornik] extolling the Navy’s suitability for conventional roles in protracted general war and lower level international crises, as well as for the strategic strike role.¹

These articles have been interpreted as a bid by the Navy for more resources and greater respect as a component of the USSR’s global political and military power.² This interpretation saw Gorshkov challenging the political leadership and the soldier-dominated General Staff on questions of resource allocation.³ Gorshkov may have been doing just that, but while he lauded the USSR’s power to intervene in local wars on behalf of anti-imperialist forces, he - like the General Staff - seems to have abjured the possibility of exploiting any

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² ibid pp465-470
³ The General Staff, like the entire military hierarchy of the USSR, was "soldier-dominated" and was traditionally based on a classical continentalist strategy (John Erickson "Soviet Defense Policies and Naval Interests" in Michael MccGwire, Ken Booth and John McDonnell (eds) Soviet Naval Policy - Objectives and Constraints Praeger, New York NY, 1975, p62). The supposition that the influence of the Navy within the General Staff must have been tenuous seems reasonable. The Navy was the most purged of the three services and the most unstable in its higher command arrangements prior to the appointment of Admiral Gorshkov in 1956 (p63). The Black Sea Fleet made its first visit to a Mediterranean port since the 1930s when it visited Albania in 1954, under the command of Vice Admiral Gorshkov, then the fleet commander (George S Dragnich "The Soviet Union’s Quest for Access to Naval facilities in Egypt prior to the June War of 1967" in MccGwire, Booth and McDonnell op cit p240). The first visit to a non-Communist Mediterranean country, Syria, did not come until 1957, after Gorshkov’s appointment as Commander in Chief (p243).
doctrine for operations in local war as a tool in his argument.¹

In these articles, as in the book based on them published in 1976 and again in 1979, there is some reliance on the political use of the Soviet armed forces in distant conflicts as a valuable spin-off from the development of powerful, balanced naval forces. But the meagre discussion in the articles and the book of local wars was suggestive of either a large oversight or powerful constraint if one of Gorshkov's aims was to lobby for general purpose forces.

Armed forces' readiness was another important General Staff interest, regarded as an important standard of assessment of military posture, regardless of the international situation. A Soviet military historian observed that the threat of world war involving possible use of nuclear weapons reopened questions of combat readiness.² In this regard, high readiness levels were demanded of some Soviet forces, such as air defence forces in the mid-1950s.

But combat readiness [boegotovnost'] of the armed forces remained a catchword for the entire post-war period, largely because of bitter historical memory of Germany's surprise attack (much more devastating than the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor), in which Soviet ground and air forces were caught unprepared, and proved unable to respond adequately during or after the attack.³

A Soviet view of this experience, published in 1974, observed that notwithstanding reduction in the threat of nuclear war, the imperialist countries still

¹ The navy, under Gorshkov's influence, appeared to have carved out its own role in the development of local war studies and doctrine but it eventually succumbed to the central institutions. The most liberal discussions of local war doctrine were in the Navy's journal, Naval Digest, where there seemed to be some protection for such discussion from the highest levels.

² Tiushkevich et al op cit pp425-426

had forces capable of undertaking "military adventures", so that the armed forces of the socialist commonwealth must maintain a high state of combat readiness "to repel an enemy attack, regardless of where it comes from, and at any time of the day or night".\(^1\)

From at least the early 1960s, the Soviet view of readiness for general war in the nuclear era was that some forces must be kept in a high state of readiness, and the entire mobilisation system must be designed to operate much more quickly than in previous wars.\(^2\)

Thus the General Staff's interest in maintaining high readiness levels in the primary general war theatre of Eastern Europe did not need the support of a local war doctrine. The same cannot be said of any other theatre. On the China border, the force and readiness levels required could largely be justified by the general war doctrine because some of them, especially air and theatre nuclear forces, could easily switch over to theatre missions against US forces based in East Asia in the event of general war.

But the record suggests that the primary purpose of the Ground Forces deployed in the Soviet Far East was to counter the Chinese threat. The General Staff would therefore be concerned about the static or decreasing share of expenditure on Ground Forces between 1970 and 1979, when it was attempting to

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\(^1\) Ivanov *op cit* p353

\(^2\) Yurechko *op cit* pp90-91. In 1985, the view ascribed to Sokolovskii's Military Strategy (that most mobilisation measures had to be completed before the outbreak of war) was criticised as impractical by a former head of the General Staff's Military Science Directorate, Col.-Gen. Makhmut Gareev. He said that the idea that they could be carried out before a war broke out was about as sensible as expecting the "fire chief and his team to arrive at the fire an hour before it starts". He said full mobilisation was not only a complex task but one which by itself "has always been considered tantamount to a state of war" (Col.-Gen. Makhmut Gareev *M. V. Frunze - Voennyi teoretik* [M V Gareev - Military Theoretician] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1985 translated by JPRS, USGPO, Washington DC, 1985, p87). Yet Gareev was exaggerating the previous position. As suggested in Chapter Eight, Sokolovskii's Military Strategy only recommended that the forces required to achieve the initial aims of the war should be in place at its outset - a proposition open to wide interpretation.
increase the numbers of divisions and supply depots along the China border.¹

Thus, a specifically China-oriented local war doctrine would have been an extremely valuable tool in arguments for additional resources for the Ground Forces.

Apart from questions of force balance, the rate of reform and technological modernisation would also have been an enduring or classic institutional interest. The rate of change during periods of major reform or technological innovation is one of the most serious threats to the readiness of armed forces in any country. As the Soviet Defence Minister observed in 1962:

frequent changes in troop organisation do not always promote increased combat readiness, more likely, just the opposite; it weakens them because any change in troop organization is painfully experienced by the combat organism.²

In this respect, a highly developed local war doctrine would have been a good counter to pressures for technological modernisation arising from the general war doctrine and strategic arms competition with the USA. A local war doctrine would have provided an argument for forces that demonstrated a high degree of continuity in structure, armaments and tactics.

It is likely that the General Staff used this sort of argument in private. There is strong evidence that it consistently strove to maintain a multi-variant posture from 1946 to 1991, but for whatever reason did not exploit the

¹ Army weapons systems are comparatively cheaper than Navy or Air Force, not to mention strategic nuclear, weapons systems, so a decrease in the budget share going to the Ground Forces would in a time of increasing budgets not necessarily have meant a shortage of resources for expansion. It is likely though that the dimension of the China threat was such as to provoke a demand for more money in a General Staff dominated by Ground Forces officers.
opportunity a fully articulated local war doctrine would have provided for this.¹

On the other hand, a general war doctrine would have given greater urgency to modernisation, and the General Staff may have been satisfied with that, if it thought the USSR could cope with local wars with the forces developed for general war.

The institutional arrangements for Soviet defence industries ensured high levels of commitment to them, and therefore may have reduced the appeal of some of the considerations mentioned above. The Defence industrial sector was very powerful, and exercised considerable bureaucratic weight. In 1957 the Military Industrial Commission, which had existed before the war, was recreated under the Council of Ministers to supervise all defence production, and was mirrored by a Communist Party Central Committee Department for Defence Industry set up in 1958.² The Commission’s functions were to coordinate research and development, secure resources for defence production, and ensure first priority for defence industry in the total economy.³

The public importance of defence industry compared with consumer industries was elevated in late 1961, after the political leadership had approved large increases in defence spending, with the addition to the Party Statutes of a new duty for members: "to help in every way to strengthen the defence might of the Soviet Union". A related change was made to the Party Program, contrary to

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¹ According to Herspring The Soviet High Command p55, Grechko as Defence Minister made no effort to interrelate warfighting strategy, military management, arms control, and the budgetary process in diagnosing the military’s vital interests. His prime concern was with building up a balanced military force, not with the creation of a new conceptual approach.

² Thane F Gustafson "The Response to Technological Challenge" in Colton and Gustafson (eds) Soldiers and the Soviet State p221

Khrushchev's policy goals, stating that "a chief task of heavy industry is to ensure fully the needs of the country's defence production" as well as satisfying consumer needs. Khrushchev had publicly advocated a shift away from heavy industry to consumer industries.

There can be little doubt that there was a close identity of views between the General Staff and the Central Committee Department for Defence Industry (supervising the Military Industrial Commission) on the priority to be accorded defence over consumer industry. But there is equal room to argue that there were almost certainly disputes about the relative priority to be accorded research and development work and production for each of the five services. Even within the defence industries supplying a particular service, there would have been room for disputes about priorities, say between ground attack or interceptor aircraft, or tanks and self-propelled artillery, as there were in the late 1950s about the relative importance of producing nuclear artillery shells compared with nuclear warheads for missiles.

This author shares the view that the Soviet doctrinal debates of the 1960s had been settled by the end of the decade in a way which allowed all elements of the armed forces to press claims for resources. Yet that conclusion does not necessarily imply that the political leadership gave the General Staff a blank cheque, as suggested by some scholars.

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4 For example, Thomas M Nichols The Sacred Cause - Civil-Military Conflict over National Security, 1917-1992 Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 1993, p95 cites Georgii Arbatov, an important adviser on international affairs to Brezhnev, who concluded that "the generals and the military designers got used to being refused practically nothing".
There are several clear pointers to this. First, Soviet defence industry could not provide all units with major new equipments before successor items began to be produced.\(^1\) Second, Soviet defence technologies lagged consistently behind Western counterparts. Third, Soviet defence production began to falter as unit costs increased with the introduction of higher technology.\(^2\)

Moreover, the very fact of its separation from the General Staff and an independent budgetary status gave the Military Industrial Commission and its subordinate Ministries a technologically and organisationally deterministic character not readily susceptible to direction from the General Staff.

For example, in the mid-1980s the efforts of a reformist Chief of General Staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, to make Soviet defence industry more responsive to the armed forces' technological requirements met with failure. Ogarkov sought radical changes in Soviet military technology and organisation to prevent the armed forces falling further behind those of NATO, but was defeated by those content with a "business as usual" approach.\(^3\)

Thus, in spite of the high priority accorded to defence industry, the general war doctrine was not sufficient to deliver all that the General Staff thought necessary, including and especially for major conventional war. In fact, a succession of local wars in the 1970s and 1980s (especially the Israel-Syria air war

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\(^1\) 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, Second Session, 26 June and 14 July 1978, USGPO, Washington DC, 1978, p100. The Director of CIA noted that "new model T-64 tanks are being introduced in Eastern Europe very rapidly, and now the T-72, which is not yet deployed to Eastern Europe ... has come along in [the] Western Soviet Union". Thus, while some Soviet units were still receiving a replacement second generation of tanks, others were receiving the third generation model.

\(^2\) Gustafson "The Response to Technological Challenge" loc cit p231

over Lebanon in 1982), and the US-led war against Iraq in 1991, provided graphic evidence of the inferiority of Soviet conventional weapons systems.

An articulated local war doctrine would certainly have increased the pressure on Soviet defence industry to deliver technological innovations as rapidly as Ogarkov demanded. By contrast, in an environment where the political leaders and General Staff probably believed the prospect of general war to be remote, primacy of general war doctrine allowed the luxury of a slower pace and more evolutionary approach within defence industry.

Moreover, a doctrine which admitted the possibility of limited nuclear war would have boosted claims for tactical nuclear weapons, and for more spending on general purpose forces to achieve military objectives without resorting to escalation to the more serious level.

Another postulated institutional interest of the General Staff with some potential effect on military doctrine was a stake in international tension in order to provide the rationale for high budgets.¹ There is no shortage of statements by General Staff members about the need for increased vigilance as a result of increased international tension at various times between 1946 and 1991. These statements, most scholars conclude, were probably designed to stimulate defence spending in a competitive domestic environment. By contrast, there is little evidence that they were intended to raise levels of tension in localised military confrontations, or to indicate concern about the imminence of general war.

In fact the opposite is true of General Staff rhetoric in respect of localised crises. Statements by military leaders in moments of high tension in the post-war period were for the most part subdued, unlike some by Khrushchev, and

¹ Kolkowicz "The Military" in Skilling and Griffith (eds) op cit p141
expressed usually in the most general and non-committal terms of readiness to preserve the interests of the USSR. When not subdued, they warned of the threat of a Third World War, a position interpretable as saying that tension should be reduced, not increased.

In the Berlin crisis of 1961, while the Soviet armed forces actively carried out the tasks set by their political masters, their leaders warned of the threat to peace of the policies of the Western Allies. Typical statements included:

"The imperialists’ answer to the peaceful proposals of the Soviet Government ... has been to threaten the unleashing of a new world war" (Defence Minister Marshal Malinovskii 14 September 1961); and

"Today it is clear to every citizen, and even more to us military men: the aggressors have set their course towards the unleashing of a third world war" (Commander in Chief of the Soviet Air Forces, Marshal Vershinin).1

These statements never amounted to threats to fight NATO forces in a localised war. Soviet military officers talked of the threat of world war, towards which NATO’s course of action might allegedly lead, and stopped well short of any mobilisation of forces consistent with a real fear of imminent outbreak of general war.

The communique of the first publicly announced meeting of Warsaw Pact Defence Ministers on 8 and 9 September 1961 repeated the formula that NATO was threatening a new world war, but reported blandly that the participants "reviewed specific questions of strengthening the combat readiness of the troops that make up the combined armed forces of the Warsaw Pact countries".2 In outlining measures the USSR had undertaken in response to changes in 1961 in the

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1 Slusser op cit pp219-220. The Malinovskii speech was published in Pravda 14 September 1961 pp3-4. The Vershinin speech was published in Krasnaia zvezda 16 September 1961 p2
2 Izvestiia 12 September 1961 p3 cited in Slusser op cit p224
strategic situation, especially the US decision to increase its strategic nuclear forces, Defence Minister Malinovskii on 25 October 1961 mentioned the following: a "temporary" halt to troop cuts; increasing defence expenditures "somewhat"; retaining time-expired conscripts in service; and conducting nuclear weapons tests.¹

The import of these observations is not to revise history about the risk that war might have arisen over Berlin, but to note that General Staff rhetoric did not match in severity their menacing actions in the Berlin crisis, such as intimidatory manoeuvres, or threats to destroy military aircraft that penetrated East German air space and refused to land for inspection.²

During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and border clashes with China in 1969, Soviet mass media soft-pedalled the prospects of war compared to the Western press. This lack of sabre rattling contributed to a complacency about the prospects of war even in unofficial culture, such as samizdat publications.³

Valenta has suggested that the Soviet military leadership did not see the invasion of Czechoslovakia as necessary to defend vital Soviet security interests, but rather responded to what its political leaders saw as a clear and present danger to the Communist Party's control within the USSR.⁴ There were probably strong voices within the armed forces, such as the Ground Forces and the Warsaw Pact Commands in favour of intervention, but Valenta advanced little evidence for his claim. By contrast, he cited the second-in-command of the invasion force, former General Ivan Ershov, to the effect that personal

¹ *Pravda* 25 October 1961 cited in Slusser *op cit* p383
² For a description of these actions and threats, see Slusser *op cit* pp222-225
³ Vladimir Shlapentokh "Moscow's War Propaganda and Soviet Public Opinion" *Problems of Communism* 1984 (Sep-Oct) p91
⁴ Valenta *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* 2nd ed pp184-185
considerations such as advancement for fulfilling orders and punishment for not doing so overrode concerns about the wisdom of the invasion.

Valenta suggested some leadership concerns about the Soviet military’s commitment to the invasion, citing the decision to send a Politburo member, Mazurov, in uniform to Prague to control it. General Staff opposition to the invasion of Afghanistan was referred to in Chapter Seven.

In 1983 and 1984, a war scare in the Soviet media was fostered largely by the political leadership, though with some support from Marshal Ogarkov, Chief of General Staff. Yet even then the rhetoric was fairly generalised.

There is some evidence of General Staff interest in a more robust position in some situations where the political leadership backed down. For example, in the Berlin crisis, the General Staff probably believed that more could have been achieved because of Soviet local superiority around the city. There is certainly clear evidence of General Staff recognition of the opportunities local wars provide for testing weapons systems and troop training, but none that it favoured intervention in local wars merely for that purpose.

The security of borders and defence of the motherland were strong personal values for the Soviet officer corps while involvements beyond the Soviet

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1 ibid p185 citing interviews given by Mazurov and Pavlovskii in Izvestiia at unspecified dates
3 Shlapentokh op cit p92
4 According to Slusser op cit pp386, 441, there was a group in the Soviet political leadership in 1961 who believed that the Western Allies did not have the will to oppose the expansion of Communism if it meant a major war. Slusser says that in the Soviet leadership, like-minded men gravitated around Frol Kozlov, named as Second Secretary after the Twenty-Second Party Congress in October 1961. Slusser suggests that Kozlov had sufficient allies in the Soviet military leadership to arrange for the deployment of Soviet tanks into Berlin on 26 October as a way of escalating the tension in the crisis at a time when Khrushchev and others were inclined to back down.
5 As mentioned in Chapters Five to seven, this was a reason commonly cited for General Staff study of local wars.
periphery, such as those pursued by the Party leadership after 1955 in the Third World and demanding a local war doctrine, were not. The senior Ground Forces officers with Second World War experience who dominated the General Staff until at least the mid-1980s\(^1\) may have disposed the armed forces as an institution to lack of interest in war except where the country’s vital defence interests were threatened.

This interpretation would see questions of general war doctrine as such a serious preoccupation for the military professionals, given the capabilities of the USSR’s potential enemies, as to push any interest in local war into the background. The Soviet defence budget was struggling to match the forces arrayed against it for global war. The USSR simply could not afford to match United States interventionary capability, so few serious military analysts spent much time thinking about local wars.

This interpretation only holds though for areas not so strategically important to the global military posture of the USSR, and not to the main theatres of Eastern Europe and the Far East. Military leaders were happy to see a token Soviet military presence in distant parts of the globe, but when there was a risk of their involvement in combat in those areas they would have been sufficiently aware of their limitations for sustained combat to take a very conservative and cautious view.

In fact, if the Soviet General Staff did have a preoccupation with

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\(^1\) In 1985, all but one of the 14 senior Chiefs of Staff or branch of service had been born before 1925, almost half of them between 1910 and 1920. As late as 1989, half of the 15 senior military leaders had been born before 1925 (Herspring The Soviet High Command 1967-1985 p273). Thus, as late as 1985, direct memories of the devastating war on home territory would have probably been a powerful incentive not only to fight before the enemy reached Soviet territory but also to avoid over-commitments that undermined security of the defensive perimeter beyond the borders.
defence of the borders of the USSR, local wars should have been seen as part and parcel of a military posture designed to destroy and emerging threats while they still remained localised.

**Doctrine as Elite Preserve**

One interest that might have been served by exclusive reliance on a general war doctrine was that of ensuring that military doctrine remained the preserve of the military professionals. As shown in Chapter One, the concept of local war implies a greater intrusion of politics, compared with general (or total) war, where the questions of the conduct of operations would be closer to the "purely military" end of the spectrum.

In the USA, questions of conduct of local war were broader than the exclusively military prerogatives of the armed forces. They cut across the responsibilities of powerful civilian groups, especially the State Department. Moreover, the US concept of limited war was subject to extensive elaboration and comment by civilian scholars.¹

The view of the Soviet armed forces as a closed community of guild-like professionals² would suggest that their interests were better served by a

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¹ There were very few civilians in the Soviet Ministry of Defence. The doctrine making environment in the USSR differed significantly from that in the USA in that there was no significant civilian strategic studies industry. In Western countries, limited nuclear war was as much the preserve of civilian scholars as military men because, as there had never been one, the military could not claim superior knowledge. Substantial numbers of civilian scholars in nuclear physics and medicine could claim greater expertise than the military in assessing the effects of nuclear war. They could and often did contradict military claims. Similar expertise and informed dissent existed in the USSR, but whereas in the USA all the Government could do against knowledgeable dissidents, such as Oppenheimer or Linus Pauling, was harass and attempt to discredit them. In the USSR, dissidents, such as Sakharov, and their views could be and were kept from the domestic audience.

² Kolkowicz "The Military" in Skilling and Griffiths (eds) *op cit* p168
doctrinal framework which limited the scope of such outside interventions. But powerful civilian interests were engaged in local war doctrine in the USSR, especially the Ideology and International Departments of the CPSU, and this is likely to have conditioned the General Staff’s approach.

The International Department was the apex of Soviet foreign policy coordination along with the Department for Relations with Socialist Countries. The International Department performed some of the functions that in the USA come under the National Security Council, Congressional Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees, CIA or State Department, but concerned itself largely with political aspects. Military policy or other issues affecting security were the preserve of the Defence Council or Defence Ministry.

Senior staff of the International Department sat on editorial boards of major publications on international affairs, and scholars were used to disseminate the Party line to the Soviet populace as well as to foreigners.

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1 Opposition to interventions from outside the armed forces was a group interest aimed at preserving the authority of military men on military matters, and in this sense is discussed in this chapter. It could also be discussed in the next chapter as an oversimplification - soldiers know the art of war, and military doctrine is shaped to reflect what the soldiers know, but the discussion in both this chapter and the next suggests that this was not the case. In so far as there was any influence inclining the General Staff away from consideration of political aspects of war, it was probably the ideological watchdogs of the Communist Party rather than the military officers themselves.


3 R W Kitrinos "International Department of the CPSU" Problems of Communism 1984 (Sep-Oct) p50. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was probably not a group whose interests would have been directly engaged by questions of military doctrine formulation, although presentation of doctrine to foreign audiences would have been of some interest, especially where international agreements were concerned. This was the case with SALT negotiations where a joint working group was set up in the late 1960s between the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Defence Ministry "to study positions and draft positions for higher level review" (Raymond L Garthoff "The Soviet Military and SALT" in Jiri Valenta Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security Allen & Unwin, London UK, 1984, p155).

4 **ibid** p63
Intrusion of civilian interests into military doctrine would arouse institutional memories of poor relations between the Communist Party and the armed forces. The relationship, often turbulent and sometimes violent, was managed from the earliest days of Soviet power by the political commissar system.

In 1955, Minister of Defence Marshal Zhukov abolished political officer posts below battalion or equivalent level, apparently without reference to the Communist Party (which only that year had set up political directorates in each branch of the armed forces), and he cut the number of Political Officers by about one-third. Following Zhukov’s dismissal in 1957, a Central Committee resolution to restore the leading role of the Party in the armed forces ushered in a period of tighter supervision by the Party. Although the relationship became more relaxed over the next two decades, the coincidence between evolution of military doctrine and reassertion of Party control is sufficient reason to look at possible connections between the two processes as they might have affected local war doctrine.

1 In the purges of the armed forces, mostly in 1936, somewhere between 15,000 and 30,000 officers were executed, including three out of five Marshals, 11 Deputy Commissars of Defence, 13 out of 15 Army commanders, and 57 out of 85 corps commanders (Roman Kolkowicz The Soviet Military and the Communist Party Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1967, p60).

2 During the 1920s and 1930s, the commissars were organised as a rather untidy civilian body viewed by the military as a parasite on their backs (E S Williams The Soviet Military: Political Education, Training and Morale Macmillan, Basingstoke UK, 1987, p40). By 1935, the year the Staff of the Red Army became the General Staff, the armed forces had succeeded in ameliorating some of the worst excesses of the duality of control imposed in field regulations of 1929 (Kolkowicz The Soviet Military and the Communist Party p54). Stalin was forced to reimpose duality of control in the wake of his purges of 1937 which totally demoralised the officer corps, and led to its augmentation by emergency commissionings. After some slackening of political officer controls in 1940 and 1941, the shattering defeats forced Stalin to bring back the political officers in large numbers. This time round, they were trained in some military skills.


4 Williams op cit p41

5 Isakov et al op cit pp265-266. In late 1957 and early 1958, 84 political departments were restored and 150 newly created.

6 This included yet more resolutions of the Central Committee to achieve the Party’s goals. For example, a 1973 resolution gave “special attention to questions of implementation of the policies of the CPSU in military construction; the rallying of the personnel of the armed forces around the CPSU;” and training and education of military personnel (Isakov et al op cit pp264-269).
The function of the main political control body\(^1\) in the armed forces, the Main Political Directorate (GPU by its Russian initials),\(^2\) was to ensure Party influence over all aspects of military activity, especially by ensuring implementation of Party decisions. A Soviet source has described this role as follows:

The political organs strive daily to ... guard the Party’s uninterrupted influence on all the Armed Forces’ activities and affairs...

... The Party demands that all aspects of military life be systematically penetrated ... The political organs must extend their influence into all facets of the forces’ activities ... they must react to even the smallest deviation from Marxism-Leninism, to any opposition to the Party’s policies and directives.\(^3\)

The GPU also participated in the drafting of field regulations (a primary source of doctrine for field commanders), instructions and other Ministry of Defence directives.\(^4\) The headquarters of the GPU controlled all open source military publications, using its fortnightly journal *Communist of the Armed Forces*, to set the political line on any policy issue.\(^5\)

The GPU’s control of the armed forces was almost certainly heightened by the close connections Soviet leaders had with it: Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev had all served as high-ranking political commissars. Persistence of a conservative view of the roles and missions of the GPU was ensured by the appointment to head it of Aleksei Epishev in 1962, as part of a drive for closer political supervision of the officer corps.\(^6\) He held the post until 1985, and

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\(^1\) The KGB also maintained a control network by posting officers in military uniform to man special offices down to regimental level in the armed forces (DIA Political Control of the Soviet Armed Forces: the Committee of People’s Control Washington DC, April 1978, p16).

\(^2\) [Glavnoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie]


\(^5\) Williams *op cit* p43

\(^6\) Kolkowicz *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* p360
therefore was in a position to deliver constancy in public expression of military doctrine for those 23 years.

While the GPU served as a go-between for the military professionals and the civilian rulers, and may have been able to ameliorate some effects of that potentially conflictual relationship, and while many in the military leadership were Communists by conviction, neither of these two factors obviated in any way the Party's strict control, including day to day supervision, of public expressions of military doctrine.

If senior officers were disposed to guild-like behaviour in the process of formulating doctrine, this would have been shaped in part by lessons from the past. By 1960, the most important of these would have been recognition of a cyclical pattern - periods of political intrusion followed by military resurgence. The lesson of this would have been the long-term utility of remaining aloof from politics, giving primary loyalty to their own institution, and avoiding involvement with the ephemeral interests of particular cliques in the Party.

Thus, after 1960, the General Staff's interest in retaining control of military doctrine would have created pressures not to hazard what it had gained since 1955 in respect of general war doctrine by venturing into local war doctrine. Excessive elaboration on the relative likelihood of general and local war, or on how Soviet forces should be configured for local war, could have reopened important

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1 Volten *op cit* p148. A number of sources conclude that by the mid-1970s at least the relationship between the GPU and the command elements of the armed forces became more harmonious. However, the existence of a state of truce between the GPU and the General Staff, or between unit political officers as a class and professional military officers, did not necessarily mean that tension over questions of so-called professional military issues had been eliminated or that the ruthlessness of the CPSU against the General Staff and the officers corps as a whole had been erased from the collective memory.

2 Kolkowicz *op cit* p219
doctrinal issues which had only recently and with difficulty been settled.  

By the mid-1970s, inhibitions about discussing doctrinal views openly, for fear of displacing the by then firmly established doctrine for general nuclear war, were likely to have faded or disappeared. By then the Soviet General Staff was pushing the cause of local war doctrine and its relevance to the Soviet armed forces more strongly in public than before. As noted in Chapter Six, the Chief of General Staff was criticising the lack of application of lessons of local wars in the "building and preparation of the armed forces". Commentators writing on local wars at that time do not appear to have felt constrained from writing about the politico-military dimensions of the wars they studied, and the GPU’s interests were already seriously engaged in the Lenin Military-Political Academy’s studies of national liberation wars and guerilla warfare, represented by the works of Dolgopolov from as early as 1960. Almost all works on local wars, from 1960 on, had a substantial political and ideological content.

Threats to Institutional Integrity

Kolkowicz postulated for the period 1953 to 1964 a gradually escalating assault by the political leadership on the armed forces’ institutional integrity, although with some respite immediately after the most serious point of tension in 1957, until 1960, when the conflict worsened again.

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1 One angle of attack on the radical ideas of Colonel-General Gastilovich in the Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" was that he was opening up issues that had just been settled after a "long and complicated process". See Gen. P Kurochkin "The Nature of Modern Armed Combat and the Role of 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) p4


3 Kolkowicz The Soviet Military and the Communist Party pp370-371
Kolkowicz argued that the main point of contention was the military view that the Communist Party’s insistence on the authority of political organs and political officers seriously threatened the professional autonomy and self-image of the officer corps.\(^1\) This was exacerbated by military opposition to what Kolkowicz described as a policy "deprecating ... the conventional forces" which began to emerge in early 1959, and which saw the new power of nuclear weapons leading to savage cuts in traditional arms of the forces and, worse still, to the large reductions in officer corps numbers in 1960.\(^2\) Khrushchev also cut officers’ pay and privileges.

An assault of this scale on institutional integrity should, according to Snyder’s model, engender General Staff interest in a military doctrine that did not conform to Soviet foreign policy goals, one more oriented towards the offensive and overcommitment than to a sustainable defensive posture. The outcome should be a military doctrine emphasising offence and pre-emption, rather than gradualness and/or subtlety.\(^3\)

A corollary of this proposition would be that the political leadership favoured a defensive doctrine based on deterrence and sufficiency. This seems to have been the case up to 1961 or 1962,\(^4\) which implies that the new military

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\(^1\) *ibid* pp113-129

\(^2\) *ibid* p149. It should be noted that Khrushchev did not preside over any fundamental changes to the "basic integrity of the ground forces and their supporting tactical air armies" and that the "validity of the combined-arms concept under which they operated was emphatically endorsed" (Thomas W Wolfe *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970* Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore MD, 1970, p147).

\(^3\) As Kolkowicz recounts, the big doctrinal battles in the Soviet armed forces between 1957 and 1964 pitted the "moderates" against the "radicals" and the conservatives", with the "moderates" winning out after 1964. In this respect, Kolkowicz comes close to his critic, Colton, who did not see outright conflict across the civil-military divide but rather a complex set of interactions. The "radical" military doctrine defeated by the moderates was, as the Soviet appellation implied, an extremist vision of how to fight general war, relying largely on nuclear weapons to the exclusion of large conventional forces.

\(^4\) Ernest R May, John D Steinbrunner, Thomas W Wolfe *History of the Strategic arms Competition 1945-1972* Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, Washington DC, March 1981, pp332-333, 338. The authors point out that the decision to abandon strategic bombers in favour of ICBMs - the point of departure of Khrushchev’s discussion of the new role of nuclear weapons in his speech on 14 January 1960 - was made by the Party and military leadership in the mid-1950s.
doctrine formulated in the second half of the 1950s was a result rather than a cause of dispute between the Party and the General Staff.

This presumed General Staff response to preserve its institutional integrity could explain the lack of full account of the local or limited wars which the political leadership saw as more likely. But this proposition does not stand up. The period of greatest conflict in civil-military relations (1960-1964) was also a period when the General Staff showed more interest in local war. From 1962 on it explicitly endorsed the utility of developing a doctrine for local war. Thus the only possible influence of the assault on the institution would be that a local war doctrine could complement general war strategy to raise the importance of the armed forces and their relevance to achievement of national objectives.

This influence could therefore be important in explaining emergence of the local war issue in 1960, but would not explain the lack of attention to limited nuclear war, or lack of direct reference to the implications for the Soviet armed forces of local war issues described in the studies published between 1960 and 1964.

**Personal Interest**

One of the biggest interests affected by support for one particular military doctrine or another was personal interest or status, which past experience showed could be adversely affected by excessive plain-spokenness.

Some works on the Spanish Civil War and other small wars had
been permitted to appear 1939-40, but an analysis of the German campaign of 1939 in Poland, which refuted conclusions the Soviet military leadership had drawn from the Spanish Civil War, earned its author imprisonment from which he was not released until 1956. The first Spanish Civil War memoirs to appear after Stalin’s death were not published until 1957, despite considerable interest in the subject, and its relevance to questions of local war.

It is more than likely that after 1956, as fears eased, and the institutional weight of the armed forces became greater, military professionals felt it safe to express more independent views, including views on the doctrinal implications of local wars. Nevertheless, the fear of political retribution for

1 *Voina v Ispanii* [The War in Spain] Issues 1-17, Intelligence Directorate of the RKKA, 1937-38; G Dashevskii *Fashistskiaia pistaia kolomna v Ispanii* [The Fascist Fifth Column in Spain] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1938, 109pp; G Klots *Uroki grazhdanskoi voiny v Ispanii* [Lessons of the Civil War in Spain] translated from French, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1938, 86pp; *Boevye deistviia istrebitel’ noi aviatsii (Iz opyta voin v Ispanii i Kitae)* [Combat Operations of Fighter Aviation - From the Experience of the Wars in Spain and China] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1939, 91pp; S Liubarskii *Nekotorye operativno-takticheskie vyvody iz opyta voiny v Ispanii* [Several Operational-Tactical Conclusions from the Experience of the war in Spain] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1939, 72pp; A Samarin *Bor’ba za Madrid* [Battle for Madrid] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1940, 112pp; P I Samoilov *Gvadalakhara* [Guadalajara] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1940, 156pp; *Billeten’ boevoi podgotovki RKKA No. 2* [Bulletin of Combat Preparation of the RKKA No. 2] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1940, 134pp; A G Serebriakov *Brunetskiaia operatsiia respublikanskoii armii Ispanii* [The Brunets Operation of Spain’s Republican Army] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1941, 104pp; and Isserson *op cit* 2 Grigorenko pointed out that those who tried to interpret the military events in 1939 in Poland were subjected to persecution and reprisals:

Only one man had the courage, persistence, intellect and tact to analyse publicly the experience of Hitler’s Polish campaign. The former head of the faculty of the General Staff Academy, G. Isserson, published a book entitled *Novye formy bor’by* in which he not only dared to state that the conclusion drawn by our military leadership at the time from the experience of the war in Spain was basically incorrect, but demonstrated it powerfully.

The work was G S Isserson *Novye formy bor’by (Opyt issledovaniia sovremennykh voin)* [New Forms of Combat - Experience from Research on Contemporary Wars] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1940. See P G Grigorenko *The Grigorenko Papers* translation of *Mysli sumashhekshego* [Thoughts of a Madman] (1973) Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1976, pp29-30. Grigorenko was a general who first experienced political difficulties in 1961 by calling for election of officials, including the First Secretary of the Central Committee, and rotation of senior officials. For this he was officially reprimanded, suffered a reduction in rank, and was posted to the Far East. Three months after forming a political action group for the revival of Leninism in late 1963, he was arrested, declared insane, imprisoned and reduced to the ranks. He was released three months after the deposing of Khrushchev and declared cured. He was rearrested in Tashkent in 1969 (Introduction to the translation by Edward Crankshaw pp4-6, 12).

3 *Viva Republica! Vospominaniia uchastnikov antifashistskoi voiny v Ispanii* Latgosizdat, Riga, 1957
ideological heresy was a constant feature of Soviet military theoretical work.¹

This was evident in the tardiness after Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin in 1956 with which doctrinal interest came to be expressed in particular local wars the USSR had fought as long ago as 1929 or 1938.

The fact that up until 1981 the military leadership was calling for a local war doctrine and the research institutes were not following the call, suggests that the senior, more powerful military officers felt more confident to speak on this subject than their juniors.² For many, the potential risk inherent in saying anything new or controversial probably engendered reluctance to say anything, regardless of its likely current acceptability, for fear that a future change in climate would render it retrospectively unacceptable, with consequent loss of career prospects and perquisites, or worse.

Incrementalism in development of new ideas in public by senior military officers was typical of the approach taken by the professional class as a whole after the early 1960s.³ The danger of making a mistake produced a conservative approach, which usually involved leaving initiatives to higher authorities.

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¹ In Soviet society at large, the tendency to become a "company man" in order to get on, was reinforced with the first two decades of post-Khrushchev reform. The entrepreneurial style characteristic of both the Stalin and Khrushchev eras was replaced by greater emphasis on respect for the proper channels and lines of authority of professional organisations. There was greater systemic trust, more internalised discipline, greater homogeneity accompanied by greater adaptability and better motivation. The flexibility though tended towards an extreme of emptiness, which forced people to avoid negating anything. See Jeffrey Klugman The New Soviet Elite: How They Think and What They Want Praeger, New York NY, 1989, pp1-13

² Viktor Suvorov Inside Soviet Military Intelligence Macmillan, New York NY, 1984, pp4-5 suggested that the Communist party had learnt from the purges and tight control of the General Staff before the Second World War that it was dangerous to interfere closely in that organisation. Its determination at the same time to keep control of the armed forces at all other levels set up a different regime of thought policing in the General Staff than existed in the armed forces as a whole. This would appear to borne out by the General’s Staff’s failure to mobilise interest in local war doctrine before 1981.

³ Klugman op cit p119
While general war doctrine had the full imprimatur of the Communist Party, along with military historical work on the Second World War, local war as a unique phenomenon, and public military histories of Soviet participation in local wars did not. Direct evidence of individual authors’ reluctance to take up local war issues is lacking, but it is likely that the visible increase in the 1980s in open source treatment of local wars resulted from the signal of legitimacy provided by the publication in 1981 of the Shavrov book, and the inclusion of local wars as a subject of study in formal courses at military academies at about the same time.¹

Conclusion

There appears to be some merit in the argument that military interest in local war doctrine correlates with pressures on enduring institutional interests of the Soviet armed forces.

These included an interest in higher defence allocations (1960-1961), or in more balance in allocations between conventional forces and strategic nuclear forces (1961-1965 and 1970-1975).

At first glance, the requirements for readiness were not adversely affected by the lack of a local war doctrine. Soviet forces in Eastern Europe had high readiness levels in terms of manning and equipment standards without a local war doctrine, and one might therefore presume that the general war doctrine was adequate for local war. But two comments are necessary.

First, Soviet forces in Eastern Europe had consistently high levels of manning and modern equipment even before the general war doctrine became

¹ ibid p120. Klugman called these "code books".
elaborated in the mid-1950s. Second, they were better prepared for local war contingencies than for general war, as the CIA finally acknowledged in 1988.

Certainly interest in a local war doctrine would have served to support deployments and training of Soviet forces on the border with China after that became a source of conflict and tension from 1965. The General Staff's attention to local war doctrine in the period around 1975 may well have been related to the pressure it felt at that time in supplying sufficient forces to the Far East without degrading those in Eastern Europe.

Another interest potentially affected by the absence of a local war doctrine included the rate of technological modernisation. A local war doctrine would have provided a good counter to pressure from the general war doctrine for rapid technological modernisation, a factor recognised by the Minister for Defence in 1962 as detracting from combat readiness.

On the other hand, the general war doctrine might have been preferred by the General Staff at other times (particularly under Ogarkov, when interest in local war doctrine declined) as a means of increasing the pressure for rapid modernisation.

The lack of interest of General Staff organs in developing local war doctrine further, despite the call from their leaders to do so, could perhaps have been caused by a desire to avoid stimulating the interest of Party Central Committee bureaucracies such as the GPU and International Department, as the potentially higher political content of local war doctrine could have threatened the military professionals' hold over formulation of doctrine. This, however, does not appear to have been the case.

The hypothesis that threats to the armed forces' institutional integrity
predisposed them to offensive military doctrine is borne out in part in the Soviet

case by the consolidation between 1957 and 1967 of an offensive doctrine for
general war, but the moves to establish that doctrine were under way in 1955, when
the threat to the armed forces as an institution was the weakest since 1927.

While the emergence of the institutional assault on the armed forces
does not correlate with development of the general war doctrine, it does -
interestingly - correlate more closely with the emergence of the interest in a local
war doctrine. Thus, the hypothesis does hold out some value though if local war
document, as an adjunct to a general war doctrine (always portrayed as strategically
defensive), represented the offensive component of a combined military doctrine.
But this may be stretching credibility.

More basic, personal instincts of individual members of the armed
forces may have been at play. For many, the penalties for saying something
controversial may have retarded active development of local war doctrine.

On balance, however, it would appear that the classical institutional
interests of the armed forces did favour development of local war doctrine,
including detailed discussion of limited nuclear operations, its direct application to
Soviet force structure, and its widespread dissemination.
CHAPTER TEN

DOCTRINAL OVERSIMPLIFICATION

This chapter addresses one question: could General Staff choices or omissions in respect of local war doctrine have resulted from biases reflecting decisionmakers' attempts to simplify and impose a structure on their complex analytical task?

Snyder saw powerful forces for bias in the function of military doctrine (provision of a "simple, coherent, standardized structure both for strategic thought and military institutions") and in its form ("need for continuity, ease of recall, and a restricted scope of attention to information"). He summarised these forces as "doctrinal simplification".1

In his case studies, Snyder observed five sources of bias that involved some degree of oversimplification: the tendency for doctrine to be promoted as a number of inflexible dogmas; military leaders' preoccupation with war on a day to day basis even when war is not necessarily likely; reliance on past experience as a source of doctrine; a tendency to overlook the complexity of fighting a war, especially logistic requirements; and a predisposition to offensive operations as a way of resolving uncertainty.2

Adapting Snyder's model to the particular circumstances of the Soviet armed forces, this chapter concerns itself mainly with the first mentioned: doctrine as inflexible dogmas, in the particular circumstances of totalitarian

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2 ibid pp28-30
orthodoxy. The chapter concludes with brief comments on the effects of excessive secrecy and force of past experience on formulation of doctrine.

**Doctrine as Dogma in a Totalitarian Orthodoxy**

The Soviet concept of military doctrine saw it as the state’s officially endorsed views on the likely nature of future war, its attitude towards war, and its guidance on preparing the country and the armed forces for war. Since the military had to appear as fully integrated within a totalitarian system, there were strict political controls on all expressions of military doctrine, which became dogma subject to rigid control within a theoretical framework in which certain principles, such as a theory of class struggle, atheism and the historical mission of the proletariat, were immutable.

Control over expressions of ideas is a defining characteristic of a totalitarian system. Standardisation of discourse is an essential social goal in the service of "collective good", the concept by which the regime seeks legitimation; and intellectual exchange should not serve any lesser purpose, such as scientific enquiry or the right to know.

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1 See for example, the three editions of V D Sokolovskii (ed) *Voennaia strategiia* [Military Strategy] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1962, 1963, 1968, Chapter One, the section entitled "Strategy and Military Doctrine"

2 Roman Kolkowicz "The Military" in H Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffith (eds) *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1971, p135. A typical statement of the Communist Party’s policy on the place of any branch of knowledge in its totalitarian system is the following:


4 Thomas F Remington *The Truth of Authority: Ideology and Communication in the Soviet Union* University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh PA, 1988, p86
Other characteristics of totalitarian ideology include tendencies to categorise almost everything morally, to paint images in stark "black and white" terms, to "zero-sum" (my enemy's gain is my loss), and to equate reality with propaganda images.¹

Soviet military officers acknowledged the Communist Party's control of expression of ideas, but sometimes quite reluctantly, as a change made to Sokolovskii's *Military Strategy* suggests. One reference in the first edition did not acknowledge the Communist Party's controlling hand in military doctrine:

> Military doctrine is not thought up and codified by an individual or single group of people; it is formed on the basis of the entire life experience of a state and is the result of an extremely complex and protracted historical process ... ²

The second and third editions deleted the first sentence, adding a new one to the effect that:

> Military doctrine is formed on the basis of the entire life experience of a state and is the result of an extremely complex and protracted historical process ... The basic propositions of military doctrine are defined by the political leadership of the state.³

and a new following paragraph setting military doctrine very firmly in the ideological domain of the totalitarian state by asserting that the political aspect of Soviet military doctrine had been formulated by Lenin and that his propositions were still appropriate even today.

The *Officer's Handbook* summarised the political status of Soviet military doctrine very well:

2 Marshal V D Sokolovsky *Military Strategy - Soviet Doctrine and Concepts* With an introduction by Raymond L Garthoff, Pall Mall Press, London UK, 1963, p42. (The original Russian language edition of the work was not available in Australia when this reference was extracted for the thesis at a late stage of preparation).
3 Sokolovskii (ed) *Voennaia strategiia* 2nd ed p54; 3rd ed p55
The leading role in the creative development of our military thinking, as in all military development, is played by the Communist Party.

Soviet military doctrine expresses the views and directives of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government on all aspects of the vital activity of the state in wartime. Thus, present-day military doctrine is the political policy of the Party and the Soviet Government in the military field.¹

As a Deputy Chief of General Staff observed as late as 1985: "The provisions of military doctrine must be fulfilled".² While doctrine was supposedly for guidance, only the correct principles were chosen:

in military science, various views can and should exist on the methods of carrying out various missions. ... But at a certain stage doctrine selects the most effective views and reinforces them in official documents and manuals as guiding concepts which are obligatory for all.

... a military doctrine selects, as a rule, only the tested and reliable knowledge necessary for practical activities.³

Thus, institutionalisation of Soviet military doctrine involved elevating its precepts to political doctrine, thus transforming it from mere guidance issued for military purposes to political dogmas serving non-military goals of the totalitarian society.

Presentation of the doctrine had to conform not only to rigid, totalitarian influences, but also - simultaneously - to utopian or millenarian ideals, which the Communist Party used domestically to justify policy and internationally

³ ibid pp326-327
to claim leadership of the world communist movement.¹

The Communist Party demonstrated consistently between 1925 and 1985 that it would not tolerate any challenge to its authority in either domain from ideas or operating principles that might adversely affect important Party goals. No substantial exception was made for public expression of General Staff views, although after 1956 the armed forces did appear to enjoy, as did other groups like members of the Academy of Sciences, slightly wider scope to express mild professional dissent in private without fear of immediate retribution. For example, a joint Central Committee and Council of Ministers decree in 1958 on the Military Councils of the armed forces provided the right for a member who disagreed with a resolution adopted by a Council to report his dissent to the Party Central Committee, Government and Minister of Defence.²

The effect of the Party’s dominance was to impose on military thinkers a severe, if not totally stifling, constraint. For example, one tenet of the Party’s dogma - that Soviet military science concerned itself only with wars "in defence of the socialist Fatherland against imperialist aggression"³ - coloured all expressions of military doctrine.⁴ This orthodoxy, like many, was embellished as Soviet interests expanded or changed, but remained an important reference point.

¹ Vladimir Shlapentokh "Moscow’s War Propaganda and Soviet Public Opinion" Problems of Communism 1984 (Sep-Oct) p89 observed that Soviet public communications on foreign policy intentions often need to be made in direct terms; but often such communication is complicated by the need of Soviet leaders to justify policy in ideological terms, and by the necessity of speaking to foreign governments, international public opinion, and foreign communist parties at the same time.
² Gen. P F Isakov et al Politorgany sovetskikh vooruzhionnykh sil Voenizdat, Moscow, 1984, translated by JPRS, Political Bodies of the Soviet Armed Forces 1985, p266
⁴ For example, P A Zhilin Problemy voennoi istorii [Problems of Military History] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1975, p96 observed: Soviet military history is above all the history of the armed defence of the country of Soviets from sustained incursions by foreign interventionists.
For example, in 1985, a major work on the development of Soviet military theory observed:

our military doctrine is aimed solely at ensuring the reliable security of the Soviet Union and the nations of the socialist commonwealth. It has no other goals.

... we have repeatedly had to conduct military operations but each time these were defensive wars in the defense of the Soviet state or the carrying out of treaty obligations to allies in repelling attacks on them.¹

Local war doctrine, which would have had to cater for a variety of contingencies requiring adaptable force structure, flexibility and independence in command and control, and variety in training and specialisations, was by its nature difficult to reconcile with systemic pressure for a single dogma that could be laid down, propagandised and defended. The competition between the variety of possible responses to different local wars did not sit well in a system which required orthodoxy.

But not all the orthodoxies were mutually consistent, and the degree of control waxed and waned. Public and private expression of ideas on military doctrine, including local war issues, reflected much the same cycle of repression and thaw as the society at large, and the process of institutional rebuilding that followed Stalin’s death. Moreover, the Party’s need for an effective military was a constant restraining influence on the degree of its ideological intrusion.² But these ameliorating influences notwithstanding, the abiding situation was one of

¹ Gareev op cit p342

It is this periodic oscillation of ideological policy between alternative value sets (orthodoxy versus pragmatism) that one misses when one talks of Soviet ideology as a fixed doctrine.

Remington (p7) also observed that doctrine played an important part in supporting leadership efforts to draw elite groups in the society together in a coalition.
conformity to dogma. The periods of thaw merely allowed more ambiguity or inconsistency to creep into the prevailing orthodoxy.

There were several strands to the orthodoxy: an anti-Trotsky line, associated with the concept of a single military doctrine; an anti-China line; an anti-American line; a pro-liberation line; the needs to present Soviet military doctrine as defensive, and foreign policy as deeply humanitarian; the next war as the final clash of two opposing camps; and the Soviet armed forces as the defenders of socialism.

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, and during the power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, military doctrine had become a subject of major political controversy.¹ On winning the struggle, Stalin ended what had been in the 1920s a period of vigorous debate on military affairs, and established an orthodoxy at least for published Soviet military doctrine which had a lasting influence for the remainder of the Soviet period - the advent of nuclear weapons notwithstanding.

The primary element of the orthodoxy was the need for what Frunze called a unified or single military doctrine [edinaia voennaia doktrina]:

> The State should ahead of time [before a war] determine the nature of its military policy, both in general terms and in particular; it should set the possible objects of its military aspirations in accord with this policy; and it should establish a definite plan of state-wide activities taking into account the future clashes ...

> ... the moment of nationwide awareness of the inevitability and importance of the military tasks confronting the state is the first and most important element in the future unified military doctrine of the

RKKA.\(^1\)

Military doctrine was unique to the state’s social and political system, had a class nature, and could only be viable if it conformed to the political aims of the state and its economic and moral-political capabilities.\(^2\) Military aspects of the doctrine were subordinate to its political aspects, which were more enduring.

This proposition meant that Soviet military doctrine had to be presented as different from that of any other state. Simply put, if the USA had a doctrine of limited war, the USSR should not if it could be avoided.

Frunze’s arguments for mass warfare, total mobilisation of the state, and use of the offensive as the primary means of combat also became accepted norms of Soviet military doctrine.\(^3\) These concepts simply could not fit well within a single military doctrine alongside concepts associated with local war, such as graduated response and limits on use of force.

The biggest obstacle to development of a local war doctrine was probably the very thesis of a "single military doctrine". Insistence on this meant that Soviet military strategy could only concern itself with one type of war - and in the post-Stalin era this was to be large scale war against a coalition of imperialist powers. This had even been the official view up to 1945, according to Sokolovskii’s historical account: "future wars would be world-wide in scope", have a sharp class character, and allow no compromises.\(^4\) An elaborated military doctrine explicitly postulating local war functions for the Soviet armed forces would have

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1 M V Frunze "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaiia armii" [The Single Military Doctrine and the Red Army] (1921) quoted in Gareev op cit pp86, 89
2 ibid p89
undermined the ideological tenet that they had a single military doctrine.

The common translation of the term "edinaia voennaia doktrina" is "unified military doctrine". This author believes that "single military doctrine" is a better translation. The adjective "unified" implies that two or more doctrines were joined, or that the doctrine was internally consistent. This misses the connotation of exclusivity or uniqueness that was at the core of the concept.¹ Frunze was arguing against Trotsky's beliefs in a military doctrine common to armies irrespective of nationality, and in the need to prepare for a number of different kinds of war, advocating in contrast to Trotsky, a single "Red" doctrine. Like Trotsky's call for flexibility in military doctrine, another senior military officer, Svechin, whom Stalin later had shot, advocated a differentiated view of wars:

For each war we must develop a special line of strategic behaviour; each war represents a particular case, which calls for its own peculiar logic, instead of applying the same pattern, even a Red one ...²

The concept of edinaia voennaia doktrina in Frunze's understanding and subsequent Soviet use meant a dogma about war. Argument for a military doctrine which espoused flexibility and independence as principles dictated by possible different forms of war would not have been consistent with it.

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¹ A better translation of [edinaia voennaia doktrina] may be "single military doctrine". That many Russians who have learnt English would translate [edinaia voennaia doktrina] as "unified military doctrine" might be a statement on the limits of their knowledge of English. Ozhiogov Slovar' russkogo iazyka gives two listings for [edinyi]: [edin, obshchi, ob'edinionmyi] and [edin, tol'ko odin]. These words individually would most commonly be rendered in English as "one, common, united" and "one, only one". The nearest English word however to the common meaning of the word [edinyi] would in most cases be "single". If one looks at other uses of related words, as defined in Ozhiogov Slovar' russkogo iazyka: edinienie "unity"; edinita "the number one"; edinichnyi "only one"; edinobozhie "mono-theism"; edinoborstvo "single combat"; edinovlastie "all power concentrated in the hands of one person"; edinovremenmyi "occurring immediately, only once"; edinokrovnyi "coming from one father"; edinonachalie "single command"; edinorog "heraldic image in the form of a horse with one horn"; edinstvennyi "singular". This if any word close to "unified" might be used to translate "edinaia", it might be "unitary" - a rather bookish word in English, as "edinyi" is in Russian.

² Earle "Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin: Soviet Concepts of War" loc cit 344 citing Svechin
The concept of single military doctrine could not easily be jettisoned as long as Trotsky remained in Soviet historiography a non-person or enemy of the Soviet system. Many central tenets of Soviet ideology were modified after the late 1920s but modifications which might reflect Trotskyite positions were particularly sensitive. After Stalin became supreme, advocacy of views shared by Trotsky became definitive of heresy. He was consistently depicted as the personification of political error or heresy,¹ and even under Gorbachev, when the ideological taint was lifted from other victims of Stalin, such as Bukharin, Trotsky remained anathema.

Trotsky's opponents had taken issue with him on a great variety of military issues, including the employment of former Tsarist officers, methods of military discipline, the relative merits of offensive and defensive warfare, the degree of autonomy to be granted field commanders, and guerilla warfare.² The last two were important issues in the analysis of local wars after the Second World War.

The Trotsky-Frunze debate was not the only ideological factor skewing efforts to provide a local war doctrine. The crushing of debate in strategic studies under Stalin was no different from the fate of other intellectual disciplines,

¹ For example, A S Zhioltov et al Metodicheskie problemy voennoi teorii i praktiki 2nd ed, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1969, p15 wrote:
   In the opinion of Trotsky, it is not important to be a Marxist to study military affairs, it is sufficient only to be a specialist.

² Earle "Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin: Soviet Concepts of War" loc cit p341
except perhaps the physical sciences,\textsuperscript{1} and his extreme ardour in pursuing
suppression of creative strategic analysis caused the concept of military doctrine to
become pejoratively associated with dogmatism.\textsuperscript{2} In 1962 Sokolovskii claimed, with
only slight exaggeration, that no major Soviet work on military strategy had been
published since 1926\textsuperscript{3}. A project announced in 1931 for a new 10 to 15 volume
history of the Civil War was not completed until 1960.\textsuperscript{4}

In 1931, Stalin wrote a letter to the journal \textit{Proletarian Revolution}
setting out what he expected:

Critical analysis, on the basis of a Marxist world-view or any other,
was no longer required. Instead, confirmation of known "axioms"
and denunciation of deviations from them were now the prime tasks
of historians.\textsuperscript{5}

In the years after the war (1945-1952), Soviet discussions of military
strategy did little more than glorify Stalin's genius in devising the "permanently
operating factors of victory in war", which were merely variants of or elaboration
on what Western military circles regarded as the principles of war.\textsuperscript{6}

The extent of the deficiencies in strategic studies at this time was

\textsuperscript{1} Even in the physical sciences, there were important problems, as the Lysenko affair in biology
demonstrated. Lysenko was a biologist who caught Stalin's attention after the Second World War by
promising an anti-\textit{kulak} campaign in science. He subsequently put forward a pseudo-scientific theory
that genes did not exist, and the associated theory of hereditary development was invalid. This view
was approved by the Central Committee because it supported the concept that man could be shaped
entirely by social forces. The Lysenko approach to biology, which led to the banning of genetics in
the USSR, spread to other fields of science, where false theories supportive of a Marxist or Hegelian
approach to social progress. See Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich \textit{Utopia and Power - The
History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present} translated by Phyllis B Carlos, Summit Books,
New York NY, 1986, pp482-486
\textsuperscript{3} A Svechin \textit{Strategiia [Strategy]} Gosvoenizdat, Moscow, 1926
\textsuperscript{4} James McCann "Beyond the Bug: Soviet Historiography of the Soviet-Polish War of 1920" \textit{Soviet
Studies} 1984 (4) p486. It was not until 1930 that the first general history of the Russian Civil War
was published in Russia.
\textsuperscript{5} cited in McCann \textit{op cit} p486
\textsuperscript{6} Garthoff \textit{How Russia Makes War} pp34-35. There were articles in \textit{Military Thought} in these years
on strategy, military art, military history, US nuclear strategy, and US airborne forces, but many of
these had a heavy ideological content, and whole issues or large parts of them were devoted to
Stalin (for example, no. 12 in 1949, no. 1, 7 and 8 in 1950).
evident in a decision taken in 1953 by Marshal Zhukov, then a Deputy Defence Minister, to cancel courses in the history of military art in nearly all academies and to cut other courses by 75 per cent over the next five years. By 1956, the year of Khrushchev’s secret speech to the 20th Party Congress denouncing Stalin’s crimes, a resurgence in military science was under way. Between 1953 and 1957, several books on military art were published: a history of the military art of capitalist countries; one on Soviet military science a year later; a general history of military art; a second, revised edition of the political view of Soviet military science, Marxism Leninism on War and the Army; and three books on "bourgeois military science". Frunze’s collected works were also published.

The institutional resurgence came with the first post-war conference on military science in 1957, and in 1958, the creation of the Military History Institute; the General Staff’s decision to publish a Military History Journal from

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1 Lt.-Col. I Levchenko "Obruszhdenie uchebnika po istorii voennogo iskusstva" [Appraisal of the Textbook on Military History] Voennaia mysl’ 1958 (3) p94. The motivations for this order were not entirely clear from Levchenko’s account. Whether it was to cut out serious military history to pander to some rigid orthodoxy or to cut out rigidified courses because they were so bad - either motivation would testify to the sorry state of the field of study.

2 Voennoe iskusstvo kapitalisticheskogo obschestva (1789-1917) [Military Art of Capitalist Society 1789-1917] Voennaia Akademiia, Moscow, 1953

3 Istoriia voennogo iskusstva [The History of Military Art] Voennaia Akademiia, Moscow, 1956

4 Marxizm-Leninizm o voine i armii [Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army] 2nd ed (rev), Voenizdat, Moscow, 1956, 159pp


6 M V Frunze Izbrannye proizvedeniia 2 vols, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1957


8 This was presumably built on an existing military history branch in the Institute of History and on the Military Historical Directorate of the General Staff.
January 1959;¹ the introduction of a course on strategy at the General Staff Academy;² and the publication of books on the theory of military publishing,³ and on the Russian Civil War,⁴ and of a new dictionary of military terms.⁵

This period of flowering was still severely constrained, as evidenced by the restricted distribution accorded ideas that did not conform to the emerging orthodoxy. As the preface to the second Top Secret Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought" noted:

> The creation of a new Collection was dictated by the desire to ensure responsible authors of an opportunity to express their ideas, proposals and critical remarks on all immediate problems of military theory in a more restricted circle, which would be difficult to do in other published organs.⁶

A Secret level series, Collection of the Journal "Military Thought", was published at the same time. While security against foreign intelligence services may have been one reason why the highly classified series were instigated, the tone of the preface to the Top Secret series suggests that classification of the two series owed as much to a General Staff desire to encourage controlled controversy - the opposite of theoretical orthodoxy.⁷

In the period 1957-1962, the political commissars attempted to lay the foundation for an orthodox and consistent approach to the state's military

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¹ A journal called Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal General'nogo shtaba Krasnoi Armii [Military History Journal of the General Staff of the Red Army] had existed between 1939 and 1941. During the war, this journal combined with Voennaia mysl⁷ and did not reappear.
⁴ G V Kuzmin Grazhdanskaya voyna i voennaia interventsiia v SSSR [The Civil War and Military Intervention in the USSR] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1958
⁵ Kratkii slovar' operativno-takticheskikh i obstchestvennykh slov [Short Dictionary of Operational-Tactical and Organisational Words] Voennaia Akademiia, Moscow, 1958
⁶ Special Collection of the Journal "Military Thought" (CIA translation) 1st issue, 1960, p2
⁷ The preface to the first issue of the Special Collection asked for articles to be "sharp, controversial, and forcefully argued" (p2)
ideology. Three editions of Marxism Leninism on War and the Army,\(^1\) and three of Military Questions in the Decisions of the CPSU were published,\(^2\) and a book on Lenin’s military-theoretical legacy was released in 1960.\(^3\) These titles were to reappear several times in the subsequent thirty years\(^4\) often almost simultaneously.\(^5\)

Sokolovsky’s book on military strategy was finalised in March 1962 but was almost certainly the updated, edited and politically approved version of earlier writings by a collective of authors associated with the General Staff Academy and Military Thought. It is quite likely that most of it was written two or more years before publication, given the lengthy process of clearance to which it was subjected by the Central Committee.\(^6\)

Thus, the first Soviet works on local war, like those on military strategy, were published in the period of greatest thaw under Khrushchev, and while there was still a debate in the Soviet military press about the nature of Soviet military science and doctrine. The debate had many participants,\(^7\) and continued until 1963, when a conference endorsed in the main the views advanced in

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\(^1\) *Marksizm-Leninizm o voine i armii* 2nd ed, Moscow, 1957; 3rd ed 1958; 4th ed 1962

\(^2\) *Voennye voprosy v resheniakh KPSS* Moscow, 1957 (edited by M E Kireeva); 1960 (edited by N Tsvetaev); 1962

\(^3\) T A Belov *Voenno-teoreticheskoe nasledie V. I. Lenina* [The Theoretical Heritage of V. I. Lenin] Moscow, 1960

\(^4\) For example, *Marksizm-Leninizm o voine i armii* 5th ed, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1968. Other works - not updates of the original - were published under the same title


\(^6\) According to a Soviet military officer who spoke to this author in Moscow in 1991, the process was protracted and argumentative.

\(^7\) For example, the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Admiral S Gorshkov "K voprosu o kharaktere sovetskoi voennoi doktriny" [The Question of the Character of Soviet Military Doctrine] *Voennaia mysl* 1960 (5) 57-62; P Zhilin "Diskussii o edinoi voennoi doktrine" [Discussions on the Single Military Doctrine] *Voenno-istoricheski zhurnal* 1961 (5) p74
Sokolovskii’s Military Strategy.¹

Another complicating ingredient was added to this mix by 1960, when the ideological feud with China had begun to threaten the Soviet position as leader of the socialist camp. An important element of this dispute was disagreement over the use of war as an instrument to advance the socialist cause, especially through support of national liberation wars, and the right of socialist countries to follow their own path to communism without Soviet military intervention.

Strong personal and pragmatic issues underlay the dispute. For example, Khrushchev saw Mao as a "megalomaniac warmonger" and "lunatic on a throne" and in June 1959 reneged on his pledge to give China a sample nuclear bomb. At a secret conference in Bucharest in June 1960 the Chinese denounced Khrushchev, and in August he retaliated by withdrawing Soviet advisers.² Yet the dispute was conducted within a highly stylised framework, which saw the sides arguing over esoteric and sometimes seemingly unreal issues, including whether local wars, such as the Korean war, could still take place.³

The ideological dispute was over the policy of peaceful co-existence, which involved the correct political line not only toward global war, but also toward small wars involving two or three countries, and armed struggle as the most appropriate form of domestic revolution. As Penkovsky put it:

³ See for example, comments in an article on the anniversary of Lenin’s birth in the Chinese Communist Party’s theoretical journal, Red Flag, in April 1960:

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 world wars?
Quoted in David Floyd Mao against Khrushchev Praeger, New York, 1963, p267
Khrushchev hopes that the younger [Chinese] leaders will renounce Mao’s mistaken Trotskyite policy of world revolution and the inevitability of another war and instead respect the first socialist state in the world, the Soviet Union.¹

Penkovsky said that ninety per cent of the time of the June 1960 Conference of Workers’ and Communist Parties in Moscow was spent on Sino-Soviet differences over subjects such as peaceful coexistence, the inevitability of war, and the correctness of Soviet foreign policy.

China’s leaders contended that active involvement in national liberation wars was a means of defeating imperialism.² The Chinese position was expressed as follows in June 1960:

As for imperialist wars of suppression against colonies and semi-colonies, national liberation wars of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples against colonialism, wars of suppression against the people by the exploiting classes and people’s revolutionary wars in the capitalist countries, wars of such nature have always existed in history, and have never stopped in the capitalist world since the Second World War. The wars in Indo-China, in Algeria over the issue of the Suez Canal and in Cuba are all such wars. In the future, as long as imperialism and the exploiting system are still in existence, such wars of a different nature [different from world war] will still be unavoidable.

... such wars of a different nature will still be unavoidable. The belief that wars of the above-mentioned types can be avoided is entirely wrong and contrary to fact.³

The Soviet position since the mid-1950s had been that the era of local wars was over, so Communists need not take a position on them. This was linked to the view that global war would represent the final clash between the two systems, would devastate humankind, but could be averted, and that war could

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³ Speech of the Chinese delegate to the World Federation of Trade Unions meeting in Peking on 8 June 1960 cited in Floyd op cit p276
therefore be eliminated from the planet. This was the peaceful coexistence policy
which Khrushchev had relaunched at the 20th Party Congress in 1956.

In the second half of 1960, Khrushchev used several opportunities to
lay down the Soviet orthodoxy and in doing so brought the question of deterring
and eliminating local wars, and US development of limited war doctrine, directly
onto the public ideological battlefield. In June, at the Romanian Communist Party
Congress, he remarked:

And if the imperialists do unleash a war, will our socialist camp be
in a position to cut it short? Yes it will. Let me cite an instance. When France, Britain and Israel attacked Egypt in 1956, our
intervention put an end to this ... Or let us take another example. In
1957 we prevented Syria from being attacked by Turkey ... And in
1958, after the revolution in Iraq ... ¹

In December, the statement issued after the Moscow Conference of Communist and
Workers' Parties, claiming deterrent effect for Soviet support to Egypt in 1956,
Syria in 1958 and the Congo in 1960, said:

Experience shows that it is possible to combat effectively the local
wars started by the imperialists, and to stamp out successfully the
hotbeds of such wars.
The time has come when the imperialist aggressors' attempts to start
a world war can be curbed.²

By early 1961, Khrushchev advanced a more coherent view,
abandoning the extreme notion that all local wars could be deterred.³ He
distinguished between local wars and wars of national liberation in order to be able
to work out the correct political line toward each, and discussed US development

¹ Cited in Floyd op cit p280
² ibid p299
³ N S Khrushchev "Za novye pobedy mirovogo Kommunisticheskogo dvizhenia" [For New Victories in the World Communist Movement] Kommunist 1961 (1) pp3-37. This was the text of a speech delivered to party organisations from several ideology-related institutions and published in The Communist in January 1961.
of limited war doctrine for the same reason.\textsuperscript{1} His rejection of the concept of limited war was arguably little more than a propagandistic device necessitated by the USSR's technological and strategic inferiority,\textsuperscript{2} and the ideological need to blame all wars on imperialism.

Soviet ideologists had realised by then that it was illogical to claim that certain types of war no longer existed, if its principal adversary had in the preceding decade actively planned to undertake them. Khrushchev's avowal of support for national liberation movements as a "sacred duty" leads to the conclusion that he estimated the probability of such wars as quite high.\textsuperscript{3}

As Garthoff assessed, the speech was designed to justify Soviet abstention from "local wars" and to inhibit Western involvement in them, while preserving ideological correctness by supporting national liberation wars.\textsuperscript{4} Garthoff noted that in practice the USSR accepted as a fundamental principle that war can assume various forms. He went on to say:

Limited conflicts represent the classic form of Communist military action, waged for limited objectives, at limited risk. In recent years, Military Strategy and other publications have noted that socialist countries need to study the requirements for such wars.\textsuperscript{5}

The Khrushchev article's advocacy of non-violent paths to communism probably reflected Soviet desire to avoid unnecessary commitments, rather than firm commitment to the idea that small wars carried a risk of escalation.

\textsuperscript{1}ibid p18
\textsuperscript{2}Katz \textit{op cit} p30 notes that the "fact that the Soviets had nothing favourable to say about the concept of local war at this time indicates that they did not envision it as a policy that they themselves could pursue successfully".
\textsuperscript{3}Scott and Scott \textit{Soviet Military Doctrine} p34. President Kennedy reportedly regarded the speech as a virtual declaration of war, and read sections of it aloud to his Cabinet. This speech probably influenced Kennedy to include the rhetoric about "pay any price", "bear any burden" in his inauguration speech (William G Hyland \textit{The Cold War - Fifty Years of Conflict} Random House, New York NY, 1990, p114).
\textsuperscript{4}Garthoff \textit{Soviet Military Policy} p198
\textsuperscript{5}ibid
to nuclear war. This was not a treatment of the main issues of military strategy for small wars, but it did provide an ideological signal that the era of local wars was not over, and that the question of how to approach them in the future was firmly on the agenda.

The article was also used to make clear the polemical complexities of questions of local war, in particular the need to differentiate Soviet policy from Chinese support for armed revolution, and from US policies of limited war.

Soviet military writers would have found it difficult to shape any subsequent discussion, public or private, of local wars without reference to this article.1 The polemic with China on these issues was particularly sensitive, as a 1969 Soviet work made plain:

> Anti-Marxist Chinese see these wars and revolutions as an effective means to speed up revolutionary processes. Maoists believe that local wars will under no circumstances lead to nuclear war. They see in local wars a useful political tool, but this is against Marxism-Leninism.2

The ideological setting, therefore, in which serious Soviet analysis of local wars began in the late 1950s or 1960, was extremely complex. It coincided with a rebirth and foment in military science, the introduction of nuclear weapons into the Soviet armed forces, conflict in civil-military relations, liberalisation of intellectual activity after the 20th Party Congress, the international embarrassment of having to use force against another communist country, Hungary, and the constraints imposed by the Frunze orthodoxy and the Sino-Soviet polemic.

The signs of thaw after 1956 were to dissipate within a few years,

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1 William T Lee and Richard F Staar Soviet Military Policy since World War II Hoover Institute, Stanford CA, 1986, p37 commented generally on the effect of the dispute with China on Soviet military doctrinal literature.

2 Zhioltov et al op cit p100
and under Brezhnev a return to more rigid patterns of control occurred. The full extent of the effort which would be made to reimpose Stalinist rules of orthodoxy on Soviet society began to emerge as early as 1965 with the arrest of two writers, Sinyavskii and Daniel, their trial in February 1966, and their sentencing to seven and five years jail respectively.¹

This was also the case with Soviet military science. Khrushchev’s ousting freed the armed forces from his personal interference in military doctrinal matters, but did not free them from Party control of that doctrine. The main difference, as in the running of the country at large, was greater regard for the institutional processes that went with Party control.² In this respect, there was more freedom to discuss professional issues, such as the military characteristics of local wars, but the resulting analyses remained subject to propaganda controls, especially the straight-jacket of a single military doctrine.

It is no coincidence that the most extensive accounts of the views of opponents of the the single military doctrine were published in 1965 and 1985.³ The publishing in the 1965 work of large tracts from theorists who opposed the single doctrine, excluding of course Trotsky, contrasts starkly with the treatment in a work on military history published in 1975, where the author dismisses the debate.

¹ Heller and Nekrich op cit p613
² The primary objectives of Brezhnev included a return to the primacy of the Communist Party, especially through a rejuvenation and professionalisation of institutions, and the primacy of the Soviet Communist Party in the world communist movement. He sought to eliminate the element of personal rule developed by Stalin and Khrushchev, the one violent and rigidly centralist, the other liberalising and idiosyncratic, with unwelcome decentralising aspects. Ideology played a central role in Brezhnev’s political agenda for the country and in his own personal agenda to defeat the more pragmatic Kosygin in the jostling for power after Khrushchev’s ouster. See Terry L Thompson Ideology and Policy - The Political Uses of Doctrine in the Soviet Union Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1989, pp9-10
³ The 1965 work was A B Kadieshev (ed) Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskih voennykh trudakh Voenizdat, Moscow, 1965. The 1985 work was Gareev’s work (op cit) on Frunze.
An article written in 1989, as the ideological restraints were being lifted, rejected the whole Soviet concept of military doctrine. Colonel General Lobov wrote: "there should be no system of strategy". He asserted:

it is up to each general, studying the the science of war, knowing its development in the contemporary era, to work out his own approach, as a result of theoretical and practical work.  

Apart from public avowal of the need for the Soviet armed forces to study the military characteristics of local wars, the doctrinal literature avoided any direct linkage between its analysis and force structure. This remained the case for the entire Soviet period, except for occasional references to the effect of the Afghanistan experience on training.

Even when the political leadership invented the political doctrine of limited sovereignty of socialist states in the wake of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, and thereby gave ideological justification for preparing Soviet forces for local conflicts, the military doctrinal literature remained silent on this.

The "Brezhnev doctrine" was as minimalist and defensive a doctrine with respect to the socialist commonwealth as that outlined by Khrushchev in respect of national liberation wars in 1960. It was formulated exclusively to help the USSR mobilise political support for such interventions, and any translation of it into military requirements was simply too sensitive from a propaganda image point of view.

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1 Zhilin Problemny voennoi istorii pp141-153
It could be argued that the General Staff saw no need for a military doctrine to accompany this political doctrine because the Soviet armed forces were so well equipped for a NATO-related contingency that ample force was available for any policing operation in Eastern Europe. This is an inadequate explanation for the doctrinal silence in the face of Soviet passion both for military doctrine and military preparedness (verging on over-insurance).\(^1\)

By 1985, with a lessening of political controls, the tenets of the orthodoxy established by Sokolovskii’s *Military Strategy*, including the most sacred ones relating to the offensive and the preoccupation with general nuclear war, were challenged directly in a book by a Deputy Chief of General Staff. The notion that all wars were caused by imperialism also began to be challenged.

Since official Marxist-Leninist doctrine could not conceive - at least for most of the post-war period - of wars between socialist states, the USSR could not have a public doctrine for war with China, whether small or total. Yet for most of the period both the political and military leadership judged China to be a serious military threat, especially in respect of local war scenarios, such as seizing Soviet territory or invading Vietnam.

Throughout the entire period from 1960 to 1985, several ideological tenets affecting discussion of local war remained unchanged: the Soviet armed forces did not commit aggression; all wars were caused by imperialism; the US policy of limited war was its only recourse after 1958 because of new Soviet military power; if a world war broke out, it would be the final clash between

\(^1\) After all, had Czechoslovakia fought in 1968, and the Soviet army become bogged down in a protracted local war, the military leadership would certainly have had to concede the need for a more developed local war doctrine that was widely discussed and disseminated, as they came to concede after the Afghanistan war.
communism and capitalism; and the USSR not only could but must prevent escalation of local war into world war. The only modification to the "final clash" thesis was a hardening of the position in some military doctrinal literature related to the need to win such a war.¹

The exclusively defensive mission of the Soviet armed forces was elaborated to include active defence of the socialist commonwealth and deterrence of imperialist aggression elsewhere, but these general propositions in themselves set a political doctrinal boundary.

The Chinese insistence on violent paths to revolution lessened in the late 1970s, but any opportunity for closing the ideological gap on that score was removed by continued ideological embarrassment over China's invasion of Vietnam, the continued stand-off on the Sino-Soviet border, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These "problem" wars reinforced the very narrow definition of the so-called internationalist mission of the Soviet armed forces, just as national liberation wars had done in the late 1950s and 1960s. Any elaboration of local war missions of the Soviet armed forces would have threatened the credibility of the more narrow interpretation. The rejection of limited nuclear war was an important anti-American propaganda device to emphasise the war-like intentions of the imperialist camp, because the official Soviet view of world war after 1956 was that it was unlikely.

The political sensitivity of the general subject of Soviet involvement in local wars was demonstrated by the contrast between, on the one hand, the glut of information in Soviet military publications about US involvement in local wars, alleged US plans for a devastating nuclear attack on the USSR, or robust

¹ This was the subject of the debate between Pipes and Garthoff referred to in Chapter Four.
descriptions of Soviet plans for general war, and on the other, the almost total neglect of historiography of local conflicts, such as Soviet participation in the Spanish Civil War, the clashes with Japan in 1938 and 1939, or with China after 1965. Information on Soviet involvement in local wars (Finland, Hungary, China) before and after the Second World War was mostly still secret.¹

If the Soviet armed forces had wanted to develop a comprehensive doctrine for local wars, it would have had to confine such work to a small and secret group because of the damage public disclosure would do to Soviet domestic and international propaganda images. This thesis provides some evidence that this may be exactly what the General Staff did.

Secrecy

Throughout the Stalin era, the mass media conveyed no serious information about the military strength of other countries, nor even information on the devastating effects of nuclear weapons.² After Stalin’s death this situation was remedied to some degree by publication of more informative articles in Foreign Military Review [Zarubezhnoe voennoe obozrenie from the late 1950s.³ But if information on foreign military forces was sparse, information on the Soviet armed forces was almost totally lacking. The Soviet military planning system was consistently one of the most secretive in the world. The desire to keep most planning information secret probably influenced the shape and circulation of doctrinal literature on local wars.

¹ Information about Soviet combat operations in the Second World War was voluminous and mostly not secret.
² Shlapentokh op cit p90. The author notes that private discussions during the war of the actual capabilities of the German army often led to arrests.
³ Zisk op cit pp50-51
The primary functions of any doctrine are to inform, mobilise support, or standardise responses. Soviet military doctrine served such purposes: to tell officers and soldiers of the gargantuan efforts and sacrifices that would be needed in a general war; to inform potential enemies that any aggression against the USSR would suffer a crushing response; to mobilise the support of Soviet intellectuals, Government officials and the people for a closed society in which mobilisation for general war was an underlying or prospective requirement; and to standardise responses across the officers corps and in the society at large on the objectives of the Soviet state.

While Soviet military sources claimed that they had not concealed their military doctrine because it was important to inform, mobilise and educate, the claim was verifiable to some degree only in general terms, and then only for the contingency of general war.

Military contingency plans are the most secret information in any defence organisation,¹ with the possible exception of intelligence collection methods and results. The US Department of Defense regularly discussed many of its contingency plans in broad outline, in terms of which forces would be available for deployment to particular theatres, what mobilisation schedules would be, and even concepts of operations. but this official elaboration of local war strategies usually occurred only in the context of justifying claims on resources to Congress or the public, or, as in the case of Vietnam, justifying a particular policy of engagement. The USSR did so only in respect of one contingency - general war. It did not face

¹ The reason for this is that access to the detailed plans is the best way for a potential enemy to plan counter-measures. One of the most important goals of an intelligence organisation tasked with collecting military intelligence is to obtain such plans, as protection of them is the most important task of military counter-intelligence.
a similar requirement for public justification\textsuperscript{1} and the General Staff almost certainly would have wanted to avoid signalling its military responses in the same way as the demands of open government often obliged the US armed forces to do. As in other aspects of Soviet policy, the military doctrine was made available only to the minimum extent necessary to mobilise resources and support and prepare the armed forces. If the leadership judged resources, support and preparation for general war to be adequate for a small war, there was no perceived need to go publicly into details of local war strategies.

This policy of giving the people - and officers with no "need to know" - as little information as possible about military policies for regional conflicts, reinforced the constraining effects of ideology discussed earlier.

\textbf{Force of Past Experience}

A powerful source of bias operating in the General Staff that may have had the potential to affect development of Soviet local war doctrine was the determination to observe the principle that experience is the best teacher. In military circles, military history is an important mode of analysis, either explicit or implicit. In the USSR it became the dominant source of doctrinal debate, fitting the Hegelian notion of history as progress and Leninist notion of history as teacher. The country’s military history was the General Staff’s Bible, but like the Bible, subject to differing interpretations which often competed for the mantle of orthodoxy.

A common presumption in the scholarship has been that the General

\textsuperscript{1} There was still a requirement for the General Staff to be able to justify to non-public forums its claims on resources, as Chapter Nine suggests.
Staff's experience was so heavily dominated by the Second World War that they had a strong predilection for conceptualising their post-war military problems in its light. This implied, not unreasonably, that the experience of the World War was so threatening and devastating that any lessons of military history from other campaigns faded into insignificance in comparison.

Yet the General Staff's pre-1946 historical legacy contained much that was pertinent to consideration of local war. Many of the commanders in the Second World war had fought in smaller scale conflicts. Even the main hero of that war, Marshal Zhukov, had commanded an Independent Army Corps in Mongolia against the Japanese in 1939. General Berzin, who headed the main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff for a number of years, commanded in the Spanish Civil War the Soviet military advisers' group, whose members included the future Marshals Malinovskii (Minister of Defence 1957-67) and Meretskov, and Navy Minister Admiral Kuznetsov.

It is very difficult to gauge the effects on the post-1945 General Staff of any doctrinal lessons handed down by the military education system or their own study of Soviet experience of local conflict before June 1941. Available evidence is very thin because study of these events was suppressed for so long.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that senior officers' pre-1941 experience of local war would have provided the General Staff with important doctrinal precepts and a solid historical base on which to construct a post-war doctrine for local war. But Soviet military history was as much a victim of Communist Party doctrines as any other aspect of history or military science. As a

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1 Zh Lkhagvarusan "40 let sovmestnoi raboty" [Forty Years of Shared Work] *Voenno-istoricheski zhurnal* 1974 (3) p65
2 Garthoff *Soviet Military Policy* p17
former Director of the Military History Institute wrote in 1975:

military history has the functions not only of assisting the development of Soviet military art but also of educating the people, especially youth, in the heroic and patriotic traditions of defence of the Soviet State, and of struggling against bourgeois falsifiers [of history] against each type of anti-scientific version and false theory in the field of military history, used by opponents as weapons in the ideological struggle.\(^1\)

The author remarked that a renewed emphasis on the history of the Second World War had been one of the outcomes of the death of Stalin ("the cult of personality") and ousting of Khrushchev ("subjectivism and voluntarism").\(^2\) The almost exclusive primacy accorded to the Second World War gave little opening for military histories of local wars involving the USSR, or generalisation of the lessons.

One of the earliest works, if not the first, to acknowledge the pre-war local conflicts as an integral part of development of the Soviet armed forces was a 1984 book on the political bodies in the armed forces. It had separate sub-headings in one chapter for "events on the Chinese Eastern Railway", "Fighting near Lake Khasan", "Battles on the Khalkin Gol River", "Liberation of the Western Ukraine and Western Bielorussia", and "Military Conflict with Finland".\(^3\)

The fact that the historical experience of Soviet involvement in local wars had no visible impact on the inchoate doctrine as it emerged provides indirect evidence of the force of the ideological constraints referred to earlier in this chapter. For officers with an elaborate process for formulating military doctrine and a deep respect for military history, the neglect of these wars and conflicts is otherwise inexplicable.

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\(^1\) Zhilin *Problemy voennoi istorii* pp372-373
\(^2\) ibid p374
\(^3\) Isakov et al *op cit* p4
**Conclusion**

The Soviet armed forces had to appear, like all institutions in Soviet society, as an integrated part of a communist state advancing toward noble goals and taking the world communist movement with it. This image was central to the domestic and foreign political goals of the Soviet Communist Party, which applied rigid controls to ensure that the presentation of military doctrine conformed to it. Using rhetoric typical of totalitarian societies about an enemy without, and favouring one orthodox view over a flexible or pragmatic approach, the Communist Party endorsed a single military doctrine positing a global clash between the two opposing blocs as the framework for the acceptable military doctrine.

This framework stifled the full development of a local war doctrine in the General Staff from its beginnings in the initial flowering of thought in the post-Stalin thaw. But a bitter ideological dispute with China clouded this even more, as did Soviet embarrassment before the world communist movement over its own military actions against Hungary and Czechoslovakia. If this were not enough to make the question of local wars difficult politically, China’s military harassment on the Soviet border and Soviet retaliation, the resulting stand-off, and China’s invasion of Vietnam, appears to have put the discussion of local war missions for Soviet forces completely off the agenda.

The US concept of limited nuclear war, once denounced as evidence of the arch-enemy’s war-like intentions in a world where general war was less likely, became an *idée fixe* which no General Staff interest could neutralise to the point where any comparable Soviet concept could be discussed in public.

Chapters Five to Seven demonstrated consistent General Staff interest in a local war doctrine. Chapter Eight provided strong evidence of General
Staff efforts to develop a multi-variant military strategy. Chapter Nine discussed possible institutional incentives for the armed forces to have a comprehensive local war doctrine. This chapter suggests that it was only the Communist Party stranglehold which prevented the General Staff from taking its extensive study of the common characteristics of local war to its logical conclusion, by publicly elaborating local war missions as an influence in the development of Soviet forces.
CONCLUSION
The thesis has outlined, as far as the evidence permits, Soviet General Staff reactions, in a doctrinal sense, to its requirements for local war. It has demonstrated that despite the mutual interest of the political and military leadership in a military posture that would be effective in local war, and despite mutual acceptance of the principle that doctrine was a *sine qua non* of military effectiveness, the General Staff did not develop a comprehensive doctrine for local war.

Chapter Five showed that as early as 1962 or 1963 there was a comprehensive conceptualisation within the General Staff of the nature of local war but Chapter Seven concluded that by 1991 the formal doctrine was still incomplete or inchoate.

It is possible to see a correlation between moves by both superpowers after the Korean War away from exclusive preoccupation with general war strategies. For example, George Kennan wrote in 1958, in an essay called "A Sterile and Hopeless Weapon", that the interest in flexible response and limited war in the mid-1950s grew out of the need to find a military strategy independent of the H-bomb. The effects of nuclear weapons had undermined traditional military strategy and served to redefine the relationship between war and politics.

The Korean War had demonstrated that neither superpower was prepared to use a localised conflict as a pretext for general war and, after 1951 in the Soviet case and 1952 in the US case, the superpowers began to accept that a threat to the central balance by general war was becoming less likely.

But other causes were visible. In the US case, the concentration in doctrinal statements on the policy of massive retaliation had reduced the amount of
attention and budgetary resources given by the Government to the conventional forces which would be needed in the contingencies US forces were most likely to face. The concept of limited war, an idea elaborated largely by civilian analysts and scholars, therefore attracted American generals and admirals keen to adopt a balanced or multi-faceted military posture. It was equally useful to successive US Administrations as a justification of military policies for areas distant from American shores.

In these respects, the development in the USA of military doctrine based on the concept of limited war was specific to the economic and political circumstances of the US armed forces, to the geopolitical objectives of the US Government, and to the USA’s geographical position as a maritime nation distant from other continents.

Using the benchmark of the US concept of limited war, one group of scholars in the USA looked to see if the USSR had a similar doctrine for limited war. When no exact match could be found, alarm bells were rung. The catch-cry of this school (the "Armageddon school") was that for the Soviets, war meant total war.

That this scholarly conclusion fitted well with the an extreme view of the USSR and communism as an implacable, omnipotent and evil system aiming for world domination, was apparently of no concern to the scholars responsible, nor did they seem particularly exercised by the implication of their conclusion, that Soviet leaders were less than rational.

Most importantly, the Armageddon school did not reflect sufficiently on the nature of the phenomenon they were studying. Quite illogically, many cited Soviet claims that their concept of military doctrine was scientifically valid; and
The main inadequacy of the formal doctrine for local war as it developed after 1963 was lack of discussion of how the Soviet armed forces were or should be structured to meet the requirements of local wars. The available theoretical writings, both classified and unclassified, did not deal directly with the question of preparing the Soviet armed forces for local war, even though the key works were based on the assumption that they needed to prepare for such wars. Officers responsible for developing and disseminating Soviet military doctrine were constrained from elaborating the effects of local war requirements on Soviet force structure by several powerful political dogmas, such as the propositions that the USSR would only fight wars of self-defence, or that the next war would be a world war. That some of these dogmas (or taboos) were inconsistent or modified over time did not seem to weaken their effects.

The gap between appreciation of the nature of local wars and dissemination of a workable doctrine for fighting them was demonstrated in the early stages of the Afghanistan war. This war gave new impetus to development of local war doctrine in the Soviet armed forces, especially at tactical levels, but the impetus was insufficient to effect a corresponding reform in the official doctrine.

Conscious of the need to understand the interplay of the different influences on the development of a country’s military doctrine, the thesis sought to test Jack Snyder’s model to examine possible explanations of why the General Staff did not elaborate a comprehensive local war doctrine. It found that of three main sources of military doctrine - international circumstance, motivational bias, and doctrinal oversimplification - international circumstance was not decisive. Group motivations, especially the enduring interests of the armed forces, would mostly have supported comprehensive development of a local war doctrine, although
Snyder's "institutional assault" premise may explain a preference for exclusive reliance on an offensive-oriented general war doctrine. The process by which military doctrine was formulated in the USSR (doctrinal simplification) appears to have had the more profound influence on both the development of military doctrine for local war and its public presentation.

In some respects, Snyder's approach may seem little different from that a careful historian or careful scholar of strategic studies might take: recognising a broad range of influences, domestic and international, that might be relevant. Yet the value of Snyder's model may be that it gives a more visible role than traditional approaches to the less tangible aspects of policy formulation, particularly the process by which military doctrine is conceived.

By applying Snyder's approach, the thesis appears to bear out Atkinson's suggestion in respect of military strategy, that a country's military doctrine is the product not so much of military or international circumstance, but of the political or social contract between political and military leaders by which each of these two sources of State power cooperates with, tolerates or controls the other. Since the real nature of the political contract is often not apparent to the players, the doctrine can take on a life of its own, which can ultimately undermine the political and social contract, and hence the strategic goals which caused the doctrine to be formulated in the first place.

Military doctrine can be a useful tool, but it cannot exist independently of a political milieu which tends to corrupt its value as a rational basis for military planning. Moreover, the very processes by which a doctrine is formulated have the potential to transform its substance and affect its application to the military goals it is supposed to serve.
few offered independent analysis of the phenomena of doctrine or strategy. These methodological flaws were compounded by undue reliance on published Soviet statements, the analysis of which was often unsophisticated in its failure to acknowledge the peculiar, and occasionally erratic consequences of Party control of all media, including military, in the USSR.

By contrast, those scholars who studied Soviet foreign policy more broadly, and who recognised the USSR's domestic political and economic circumstances as powerful influences, had no difficulty seeing that Soviet leaders entertained a wide array of options in pursuit of their international objectives, and that limited war was probably one option. (The word "probably" is needed because of the lack of reliable information on General Staff plans.)

The same conclusion - that limited war was a Soviet option - was reached by those scholars who studied Soviet military doctrine from a broad perspective, taking into account a diversity of influences (politics, economics, history, geography) and the institutional circumstances in which military doctrine was formulated and disseminated.

The US transition to limited war strategies and associated doctrine was gradual, explicit and highly elaborate. In the Soviet case, this thesis contends, the transition was more sudden, but less explicit and never as elaborate - at least in terms of officially authorised military doctrine. The thesis argues that the Soviet General Staff had not become so preoccupied with general nuclear war as to need a shift back towards a multi-variant strategy and doctrine of the dimensions that occurred in US policy.

In fact, the General Staff found itself having to cope with a political system disposed for political reasons exclusively toward a general war doctrine, and
actively opposed to local war doctrine. There is evidence that the Soviet military establishment began to take notice of the concept of limited or local wars as a result both of the Korean War and of its political masters' decision in 1954 to expand military relations with Third World countries. But doctrine for local wars was not the primary preoccupation of the years immediately after 1953. This period was one of vigorous reform in the Soviet armed forces, reform made urgent by the USA's overwhelming military superiority and the USSR's technological and economic backwardness.

The political environment in which these military reforms took place was complex. It was characterised by liberalisation of the political controls in society at large, countervailing resurgence of the power of political commissars in the armed forces, and factional battles in the Communist Party leadership. The General Staff's reform objectives could not remain unaffected by these swirls and eddies of politics.

General Staff interest in local wars intensified in the wake of Soviet intervention in Hungary and Anglo-French intervention in Egypt in 1956, and after support in the US for a strategy other than massive retaliation became more evident. By 1958 the USA had made important changes in its force structure for limited nuclear war; and Chinese views on the need to confront the West through local war became an issue in ideological feuding within the Communist camp. China itself became a threat through gradually escalating border clashes in the second half of the 1960s.

This thesis contends that within this milieu, the General Staff had a well developed appreciation of political and military characteristics peculiar to local wars, and of appropriate Soviet responses.
Therefore, analysts cannot claim to have divined the mystery of a country's military doctrine without a comprehensive review of the diverse sources of military doctrine, particularly the parochial interests of the key players and the ideological context in which the doctrine is formed.
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