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

BY

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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 Sokolovskii’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. Scholars agree that between 1965 and 1975, "military spending grew rapidly, expanding its share of a national product that was still increasing vigorously," 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.

After 1984, there was a return to higher growth in annual

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expenditure, and spending on procurement rose by about three per cent per year.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

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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.
\end{flushright}
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.\textsuperscript{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].\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{5} and were exacerbated between 1955 and 1965 by

\textsuperscript{3} ibid p298
\textsuperscript{5} Kolkowicz "The Military" in Skilling and Griffith (eds) op cit p146; Gottemoeller "Intramilitary Conflict in the Soviet Armed Forces" loc cit pp86-106
serious divergence of opinions on military strategy within the General Staff,\(^1\) with the "radicals" advocating reliance on nuclear missiles and large reductions in conventional ground forces.\(^2\)

Official Soviet views claimed after 1965 that balance was restored to Soviet force structure development after Khrushchev was removed from power.\(^3\) 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 [Morskoj 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 \(\text{[boegotovnost]}\) 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 \textit{op cit pp}425-426

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

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.1 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.2

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.3 Yet that conclusion does not necessarily imply that the political leadership gave the General Staff a blank cheque, as suggested by some scholars.4

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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

¹ Slusser op cit pp219-220. The Malinovskii speech was published in Pravda 14 September 1961 pp3-4. The Vershinin speech was published in Krasnaja zvezda 16 September 1961 p2
² Investitsia 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

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.\textsuperscript{1} General Staff opposition to the invasion of Afghanistan was referred to in Chapter Seven.\textsuperscript{2}

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.\textsuperscript{3} 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.\textsuperscript{4} There is certainly clear evidence of General Staff recognition of the opportunities local wars provide for testing weapons systems and troop training,\textsuperscript{5} 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

\textsuperscript{1} ibid p185 citing interviews given by Mazurov and Pavlovskii in Izvestiia at unspecified dates
\textsuperscript{2} Gen. Valentin Varennikov, Interview with Artiom Borovik, Ogoniok, 1989 (12) 18-25 March, pp6-8, 30-31, translated by FBIS FBIS-Sov-89-062 3 April 1989 Annex 1
\textsuperscript{3} Shlapentokh op cit p92
\textsuperscript{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 Frof 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.
\textsuperscript{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

\(^1\) 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 Kittrinos "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
document 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,¹ 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.²

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

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.¹

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".² 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.³

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¹ One angle of attack on the radical ideas of Colonel-General Gavrilov 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

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

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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 issledovani sovremenikh voin)* [New Forms of Combat - Experience from Research on Contemporary Wars] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1940. See P G Grigorenko The Grigorenko Papers translation of *Mysli sumashchedshego* [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 elections 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! Vospominaniiia 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.

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 doctrine, 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

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.\(^1\) 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\(^2\) 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.\(^3\)

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.\(^4\)

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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:

> Science as a system of knowledge, developing under concrete circumstances, cannot be ideologically neutral


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 strategia 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.\footnote{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.}

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.\footnote{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}

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"\footnote{N N Azovtsev V. I. Lenin i sovetskaia voennaia nauka [V. I. Lenin and soviet Military Science] Nauka, Moscow, 1971, p33} - coloured all expressions of military doctrine.\footnote{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.} This orthodoxy, like many, was embellished as Soviet interests expanded or changed, but remained an important reference point.
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 [edinaiia 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

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. 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. 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. 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 Krasnaia armiia" [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. Ozhigov *Slovar’ russkogo iazyka* gives two listings for *edinyl*: [odin, obschii, ob’edinomyi] and [odin, 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 *edinyl* would in most cases be "single". If one looks at other uses of related words, as defined in Ozhigov *Slovar’ russkogo iazyka*: edinimenie "unity"; edinista "the number one"; edinichnyi "only one"; edinobozhie "mono-theism"; edinoborstvo "single combat"; edinovlastie "all power concentrated in the hands of one person"; edinovremennyi "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 "edinyl" 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,

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¹ For example, A S Zhioltov et al Metodologicheskie 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, and his extreme ardour in pursuing suppression of creative strategic analysis caused the concept of military doctrine to become pejoratively associated with dogmatism. In 1962 Sokolovskii claimed, with only slight exaggeration, that no major Soviet work on military strategy had been published since 1926. A project announced in 1931 for a new 10 to 15 volume history of the Civil War was not completed until 1960.

In 1931, Stalin wrote a letter to the journal 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.

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.

The extent of the deficiencies in strategic studies at this time was

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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-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 *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


3 A Svechin *Strategia* [Strategy] Gosvoenizdat, Moscow, 1926

4 James McCann "Beyond the Bug: Soviet Historiography of the Soviet-Polish War of 1920" *Soviet Studies* 1984 (4) p486. It was not until 1930 that the first general history of the Russian Civil War was published in Russia.

5 cited in McCann *op cit* p486

6 Garthoff *How Russia Makes War* pp34-35. There were articles in *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.\footnote{Lt.-Col. I Levchenko "Obrushehnie uchebnika po istorii voennogo iskusstva" [Appraisal of the Textbook on Military History] \textit{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.} 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;\footnote{\textit{Voennoe iskusstvo kapitalisticheskogo obschestva (1789-1917)} [Military Art of Capitalist Society 1789-1917] Voennaia Akademiia, Moscow, 1953} one on Soviet military science a year later;\footnote{\textit{O sovetskoi voennoi nauke} [On Soviet Military Science] Moscow, 1954} a general history of military art;\footnote{\textit{Istoriia voennogo iskusstva} [The History of Military Art] Voennaia Akademiia, Moscow, 1956} a second, revised edition of the political view of Soviet military science, \textit{Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army};\footnote{\textit{Marksizm-Leninizm o voine i armii} [Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army] 2nd ed (rev), Voenizdat, Moscow, 1956, 159pp} and three books on "bourgeois military science".\footnote{M A Mil'shtein \textit{O burzhuaznoi voennoi nauke} [On Bourgeois Military Science] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1957; M A Mil'shtein \textit{Voennye ideologii kapitalisticheskikh stran o kharaktere i sposobakh vedeniiia sovremennoi voiny} [Military Ideologists of Capitalist Countries on the Character and Methods of the Conduct of Modern War] Znanie, Moscow, 1957; V A Vasilenko, V M Kulakov, V M Kulish (eds) \textit{Sovremennaiia imperialisticheskaiia voennaia ideologii} [Contemporary Imperialist Military Ideology] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1958} Frunze's collected works were also published.\footnote{M V Frunze \textit{Izbrannye proizvedeniia} 2 vols, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1957}

The institutional resurgence came with the first post-war conference on military science in 1957,\footnote{Harriet Fast Scott and William F Scott \textit{Soviet Military Doctrine - Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination} Westview Press, Boulder CO, p24} and in 1958, the creation of the Military History Institute;\footnote{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.} the General Staff's decision to publish a \textit{Military History Journal} from
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 mysl² and did not disappear.
⁴ G V Kuzmin Grazhdanskaia voina i voennaia interventsiya v SSSR [The Civil War and Military Intervention in the USSR] Voenizdat, Moscow, 1958
⁵ Kratkii slovar’ operativno-takticheskikh i obshchestvennykh 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 years⁴ 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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² *Voennye voprosy v resheniakh KPSS* Moscow, 1957 (edited by M E Kireeva); 1960 (edited by N Tsvetaev); 1962
³ T A Belov *Voenno-teoreticheskie 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.
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
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} \textit{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} \textit{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 Kadoshev (ed) Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskikh voennykh trudakh Voenizdat, Moscow, 1965. The 1985 work was Gareev’s work (op cit) on Frunze.
in a little more than ten pages.\textsuperscript{1}

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.\textsuperscript{2}

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.

\textsuperscript{1} Zhilin \textit{Problemy voennoi istorii} pp141-153
It could be argued that the General Staff saw no need for a military
document 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).  

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

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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 Gathoff 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.

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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\(^1\) 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.

**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

\(^1\) 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

1 Zh Lkhagvarusen "40 let sovmestnoi raboty" [Forty Years of Shared Work] Voenno-istoricheskii 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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