



*Master File*

# Soviet Goals and Expectations in the Global Power Arena

National Intelligence Estimate

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Date: 1/11/77

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13. Although they expect fluctuations in their fortunes abroad, the Soviets still see basic trends in the world as positive for themselves and negative for the United States. In seeking to capitalize on these trends, however, they are beset by problems of various kinds. In areas where they have actively sought to advance their influence they have suffered a number of setbacks, some of them very costly. Events of recent years in Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia provide examples. Elsewhere, as in Vietnam, Angola, and Ethiopia, they have been more successful. Although not oblivious to the costs and risks incurred by these enterprises, the Soviets see them as the inevitable accompaniment of a forward policy in the Third World.

14. While the Soviets have won recognition as the strongest military power in Europe and a legitimized role in the management of European security, they have not succeeded in winning the full respect for Soviet interests and preferences that they have sought. Some domestic developments in Western Europe, particularly the rising fortunes of Eurocommunism, give new promise of weakening NATO, but at a possible cost of further diminishing Soviet influence over European Communist parties and eventually of contaminating Eastern Europe.

15. To Soviet leaders the strategic meaning of US-Soviet detente is the management of change in world politics in ways that control costs and risks while constraining as little as possible Soviet efforts to exploit fresh opportunities for gain. Such processes as the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) and US-Soviet cooperation in regional security negotiations allow the superpower competition to be monitored and modulated. On occasion, they offer Soviet leaders opportunities for exerting by diplomatic means influence that might not otherwise be available or require more costly or risky measures to pursue. These processes also oblige Soviet leaders to calibrate their own competitive behavior against the risks of disrupting detente, particularly in areas where core US interests are perceived to be deeply engaged. This concern does not, however, appear to have reduced the USSR's willingness to pursue competitive advantages vigorously in areas such as Africa, where Moscow may perceive US interests to be less deeply engaged or US policy more hamstrung by domestic political constraints.

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indeterminate future. Force improvement programs that stick to the war-fighting track of doctrine and present a spectrum of favorable possibilities distinctly more likely than unfavorable ones are in accord with established Soviet policy and practice.

C. Forces for the European Theater\*

33. It has long been Soviet policy to acquire and retain in Central Europe a preponderance of ground and tactical air forces for theater warfare. Particularly since the mid-1960s, this policy has occasioned the expansion and modernization of conventional, theater nuclear, and peripheral strategic strike forces. In support of this effort, the Soviets have also enhanced the capabilities of the general purpose naval forces assigned to their three European fleet areas. The Soviets originally sought and largely achieved quantitative superiority over NATO and have now achieved qualitative competitiveness in most major weapon systems. Part of the force improvements seen since the mid-1960s can be attributed to efforts designed to correct deficiencies that were permitted to develop during the Khrushchev years. The need to place large forces opposite China added to the total cost of these efforts. Control of Eastern Europe continued to be a major concern of Soviet political and military leaders, but the sizing and mix of Soviet forces oriented toward Europe have been governed by the pursuit of an offensive, war-winning dominance in the theater.

34. The Soviets now probably believe that their military forces in Europe provide them with a "winning combination" in the special sense of having a better-than-even chance (1) of winning a decisive victory over NATO on German territory in a short conventional war in which they seized the initiative early, and (2) of prevailing--however more ambiguously because more destructively--if a conventional war in Europe were to lead to the widespread

\* For a dissenting view on this discussion of Soviet forces for the European theater, see the comments by the Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, at the end of the Key Judgments.

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use of nuclear weapons yet not involve massive attacks on Soviet territory. This is a kind of theater superiority, and, judged by the economic costs incurred in its pursuit, it is valued as such by the Soviets. It is highly qualified, however, by the grave risks of nuclear escalation and by the possible danger of becoming bogged down in a prolonged war of attrition.

35. It is these considerations that produce an evident ambivalence in Soviet assessments of the European balance. The Soviets perceive their superiority and display little fear that NATO could at the outset of war unleash a successful offensive against the Pact. Yet they understand that their preferred formula for victory is complicated and highly scenario-dependent, and they worry constantly about improving their posture. They look to redundant theater and peripheral strike nuclear forces to deter, and if necessary to preempt or counter, nuclear escalation. They give great attention in their exercises to rapidly assuming the offensive.

36. The Soviets are vocally apprehensive that improvements in NATO's capabilities in tactical air forces, antitank weapons, enhanced radiation weapons, readiness, and disposition could blunt Soviet advantages in the region. But they appear determined to match and counter any such improvements and if possible to enlarge their margin of advantage.

37. The Soviet force posture in Europe is based on the political judgment that war could occur, and on the military judgment that, if it did, they should be prepared to achieve a quick victory. Were such a victory denied them, they would have to conduct military operations with an uncertainly reliable rear in Eastern Europe. Moreover, if NATO's mobilization base remained intact, NATO's superior strength in population and industry might eventually grind down Soviet forces in a protracted conflict or force the decision on nuclear escalation onto the Soviet side.

38. Even apart from the danger of the outbreak of war, the Soviets would probably not regard a purely defensive military posture in Europe as having sufficient political weight in peacetime. Their image of preponderant military strength on the continent gives them a weighty role in European security affairs, and, over time, makes that

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role seem natural to all involved. The Soviets probably see their offensive power in Europe as a necessary deterrent against intolerable political and military developments that might impact on Soviet interests or alter the balance of power in Europe and give rise to new dangers to Soviet security. At the same time, however, they wish to appear strong without appearing threatening, lest NATO's potential strength be marshaled. So long as Soviet leaders perceive NATO, and West Germany in particular, as capable of being galvanized, this objective inhibits them from engaging in tactics of direct military pressure and confrontation against NATO in pursuit of marginal or temporary advantages.

39. A major East-West military crisis has not occurred in Europe since the early 1960s, notwithstanding some anxiety at the time of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Thus, the political and military implications of the more favorable force balance that the USSR has created in Europe in the past decade have not been tested under conditions of severe stress. How the Soviets perceived and exploited those implications would no doubt depend heavily on the location and political content of events that caused a European crisis. Caution about provoking or intensifying an East-West military confrontation would probably continue to characterize Soviet behavior, although, once committed, Soviet leaders may be less willing than in the past to retreat from contested positions.

40. Nevertheless, the chosen posture and operational doctrine of the Warsaw Pact would create a serious dilemma for Soviet leaders in managing a crisis in which they felt the need to threaten offensive action or perceived that war was somehow likely to occur. As in the case of their strategic doctrine, their seizing the initiative effectively is favored by the opponent's not being in a high state of readiness. Yet NATO would be given warning by a mounting political-military crisis, especially if the Soviets were threatening offensive action as a means of leverage to resolve it favorably. The prospect of a wasting military advantage alone would probably not be sufficient to overcome the Soviet leadership's propensity to behave with great caution and restraint, especially in a European crisis. But in combination with a weighty Soviet political interest that might not be secured without military action, the present Soviet military posture in Europe could generate powerful pressures to seize the initiative and undertake rapid offensive action.

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41. Whether or how Soviet leaders think about the potential problem of crisis management arising from their military doctrine and force posture in Europe is not clear. For the present it appears likely that they will maintain the policies of the past decade, continuously modernizing their own and their allies' forces to keep, and if possible to add to, the advantages designed to yield a victory in a quick offensive conflict. NATO's planned force improvements, if implemented, will make this a more difficult task, never susceptible to fully satisfactory accomplishment; but neither NATO military improvements of the kind now programmed nor force reduction formulas of the kind that have been advanced by the West are in themselves likely to dissuade Soviet leaders from pursuing their present military policies in Europe. Even if pressed by demographic and economic factors to consider cutbacks in military manpower levels, the Soviets will probably remain highly conservative in their calculations of what they might give up in force reductions. While demographic and economic factors may constrain the total size of Soviet forces on a national basis, it seems unlikely that the pinch would be so severe as to compel the Soviets to want to cut their forces in the NATO center region.

#### D. Forces Against China

42. During the last dozen years the Soviets have increased their Far Eastern forces to more than 40 divisions, together with appropriate tactical air and air defense elements. They have augmented air and missile nuclear strike capabilities targeted against US forces in the Far East, and have deployed some ICBMs which are targetable against China as well as the United States. The increased targeting flexibility of ICBMs and SLBMs makes them available for employment against China. In addition, new peripheral strike systems, such as the SS-20 mobile IRBM, are being added to the forces opposite China.

43. Soviet military policy against China may be characterized as one of containment with a variety of limited objective offensive options. As distinguished from Soviet

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public American attitudes to produce less predictable and, intermittently, more competitive US behavior than they earlier anticipated. They are probably less concerned that Washington may succeed in downgrading the importance of the USSR in American foreign policy in ways that could diminish their international status and are reasonably confident in any case that the sheer weight of the Soviet Union in world affairs will prevent this from happening. The Soviet leaders probably appreciate that their prospects for managing political relations with the US on a desirable basis will depend on tactical subtlety and on positions they choose or are forced to take on developments external to the direct bilateral relationship.

#### B. Detente Diplomacy Toward Western Europe

71. Soviet detente policy toward the United States in the early 1970s followed upon Soviet efforts of the mid-1960s to respond to changed political conditions in Europe. France and, somewhat later and more cautiously, West Germany were looking toward the East in a manner that presented the USSR with both diplomatic opportunities and palpable threats to its East European hegemony. Moscow's task was to convince European capitals as well as Washington that Eastern Europe was untouchable, that Moscow was the sole partner of consequence in any political dialogue over new European security arrangements, and that more West European independence from the United States was a promising course.

72. The results of Soviet policy in the succeeding 10 years were mixed. Moscow clearly succeeded in driving home the point that there would be no revising of the political map of Europe by stealth or negotiation. The USSR proceeded to cultivate reasonably amicable relations with the major European countries for both political and economic ends. On the other hand, a combination of unwelcome events--from the invasion of Czechoslovakia to the souring of the Helsinki gains--tended to block what Moscow had earlier seen as improved chances for a more pronounced West European shift away from reliance on the United States.

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At bottom what altered the more expansive mood of the mid-1960s was a renewed appreciation on the part of West European elites, including those of the left, that the USSR is a nation whose behavior, values, and power are not congenial to their way of life. Problem areas can be tranquilized, as in the Berlin agreements of 1971, but Moscow probably sees no major diplomatic revolutions in the making with the kinds of governments currently in office.

73. The longer term objectives of Soviet policy in Europe remain what they have long been, to assure the USSR's hegemony in the East while gradually levering the United States out of the West in a manner that precludes the emergence of a politically and militarily united Western Europe. In present circumstances, they see the most active source of dynamism on the West European scene to reside in internal political and economic developments.

74. The implications of Eurocommunism are crucial, and here they see both good and bad news, and much ambiguity. Leftwing electoral prospects imply movement in what would once have seemed wholly welcome directions for the Soviets. Yet the Communist parties so eager to play a role in this are, from Moscow's point of view, deserting certain Leninist orthodoxies as well as some pro-Soviet political positions, creating danger for the ideological integrity of the USSR's own dominions and new uncertainties for European politics. This produces notable ambivalence in Soviet behavior. In doctrinal matters, the Soviets want to make their orthodoxy evident without anathemizing wayward parties. With respect to the recent elections in France, they indicated some distaste for the prospect of a victory of the leftwing alliance on the terms likely to prevail between its members, and appear to be satisfied with the outcome.

75. Soviet policy aims at cultivating and promoting among West European governments and publics an inclination to pay greater deference to Soviet interests both in all-European affairs and in the framing of national security policies. The behavior of Soviet leaders in working toward this end often appears to be calibrated according to the size and location of the state in question and to

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Soviet perceptions of the political vulnerability of its government. In its various separate dealings with NATO members, the USSR has displayed a tendency to be relatively more blunt and forceful in pressing Soviet desires with the small Scandinavian states of the Northern Tier, which are both closer to Soviet borders than most other West Europeans and more vulnerable to the force of the Finnish example. In the Southern Tier, on the other hand, while the Soviets evidently have considerable hopes that the coherence of NATO will over the long run be weakened by the disruptive forces at work, their behavior remains somewhat constrained by a variety of complicating factors, including their desire to woo both Greeks and Turks. Even in Italy, where the Soviets clearly hope that the slow insinuation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) into the government will gradually attenuate Italian ties to NATO, this is partially offset by Soviet concern over the price they pay in the PCI's growing incentives to take a more independent line toward Moscow.

76. In their dealings with the strongest European states--Britain, France, and West Germany--near-term Soviet expectations are probably modest. Although the Soviets continue to see the nationalist element in French policy as helpful to their interests over the long term, in recent years they have seen disturbing negative trends in French behavior, particularly the warmer French posture toward NATO. Similarly, in the case of the Federal Republic, Soviet leaders are especially concerned over what they see as a trend toward increasing West German weight in NATO, a trend which they fear may lead to eventual German acquisition of cruise missiles and possibly other advanced weapons. Finally, the Soviets interact with the three largest European powers and the United States in Berlin, which Moscow continues to regard as a point of Western vulnerability where pressure may be applied at any time, if circumstances warrant.

#### C. Defense of the Status Quo in Eastern Europe

77. The prospects for Soviet policy in Western Europe are interwoven with the economic and political fortunes of its Warsaw Pact allies, and are affected by how the USSR manages the persistent task of preserving its

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hegemony in Eastern Europe. Soviet leaders regard this task as a quasi-domestic problem, a characteristic which distinguishes Soviet policy toward Eastern Europe from all other elements of Soviet foreign policy. Major economic and ideological developments in the states of this region have important implications for the USSR, and political setbacks in Eastern Europe strongly affect Soviet politics, even leading (as in 1956) to a serious weakening of the Soviet leadership's cohesion. In the present circumstances, the Soviets can see developments inimical to social and political stability in Eastern Europe emerging from several directions. The workers riots of June 1976 in Poland were especially unsettling to Moscow, and economic difficulties in other Warsaw Pact countries have also been a source of concern. In recent years, the Soviets have seen the economic burdens associated with maintaining their position in Eastern Europe grow, as Communist economies in the area consumed subsidized Soviet energy resources that could otherwise be exchanged for scarce hard currency.

78. It is generally understood that the Soviet leadership would use whatever means it deemed necessary, including force, to maintain control. If economic or political discontent once again generated a deep crisis in Eastern Europe and forcible Soviet measures were taken to end it, this would inevitably damage Soviet interests in other regions and probably, as in 1956 and 1968, impede preferred Soviet policies toward the West at least for a time. For the present Soviet leaders and for any likely successors, however, what would be in question in confronting a serious challenge to their grip on Eastern Europe would not be the ultimate outcome, but only the costs of achieving it.

#### D. Containment of China

79. While the Soviets regard the United States as their major competitor in the world and Europe as the most important arena of the competition, they now regard China as their most intractable opponent. For years, despite sober calculations to the contrary, the Soviets entertained hopes

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