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Conflict and Consensus in the Soviet Armed Forces

Rose E. Gottemoeller

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This report analyzes the evolution of conflicts over modernization within the Soviet military, and efforts to develop the consensus needed to resolve these conflicts during the period from 1978 to 1988. Thus, the analysis covers a period of enormous upheaval that originated in the reorganization of the Soviet armed forces and subsequently involved the restructuring initiated by Gorbachev's reforms. The efforts of ground forces, strategic rocket forces, and the navy to cope with and to avoid changes initiated by the General Staff are examined against a backdrop of the consequences of strategic nuclear parity, the high-technology revolution, and constraints on the Soviet military budget.

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PREFACE

This report analyzes the evolution of conflicts over modernization within the Soviet military and efforts to develop the consensus needed to resolve these conflicts during the period from the mid-1970s to 1988. This period included a major reorganization of the Soviet Armed Forces, as well as the onset of the Gorbachev reforms. Thus, the analysis spans years of enormous upheaval that originated in the military establishment, but subsequently involved the restructuring initiated by the political leadership. As a result, the report is able to contribute important insights into the process of change that is now taking place in the Soviet Union.

The research for this report was conducted as part of the project on "Soviet Civil-Military Relations: The Possibilities for Policy Change" under the National Security Strategies Program of Project AIR FORCE. The study will be of interest to Air Force analysts and other members of the policymaking and intelligence communities concerned with the Soviet threat and the current reforms.

SUMMARY

As early as the 1970s, the Soviet military recognized the need to catch up with the technological revolution taking place in the West. The process of modernization, however, and especially the pace and extent of the required changes, elicited considerable controversy within the military. This report examines how the Ground Forces, Strategic Rocket Forces, and Navy reacted to demands for change in the period from the mid-1970s to 1988.

In contrast to intramilitary conflict in the United States, which usually involves rivalry between or among the services, that in the Soviet Union tends to arise between the General Staff and the services. The General Staff has traditionally held enormous power in the Soviet Union, serving as the main channel for requesting resources from the Communist Party and government leadership and for receiving party and government decisions regarding the services. Its commanding position in the defense planning structure has thus made it a focal point for intramilitary conflict and confrontation.

Marshal of the Soviet Union N. V. Ogarkov, a forceful and intelligent theoretician, headed the General Staff during six of the years covered. Ogarkov recognized that nuclear parity with the United States, which his country had achieved with great effort, would not solve all of the USSR's strategic problems and that the Soviet defense establishment would have to catch up with the high-technology revolution in the West despite increasing budgetary constraints. His solution involved the rapid implementation of changes that would transform the Soviet Armed Forces with high-technology weapons and equipment and new strategy and tactics for their use.

On the civil-military front, Ogarkov sought greater resources from the party leadership. Asserting that the Reagan administration's military buildup threatened war, Ogarkov argued in the early 1980s that the military should regain the preferential economic treatment that it had received in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Otherwise, he intimated, the Armed Forces could not guarantee the security of the country.

To his colleagues in the military services, he proposed the immediate conversion to high-technology weapons and equipment and the adoption of revolutionary changes in the strategy

and tactics of their use. Although it was closely related to the resource issue, this solution touched more specifically on the structure and development of the Armed Forces. As such, it was largely an intramilitary matter, and it led to intramilitary conflict.

Ogarkov and other high technologists on the General Staff apparently concluded that the normal incremental approach to change in the Soviet military—and indeed, in Soviet society as a whole—no longer sufficed. The slow accumulation of practical experience on which to base decisions about new strategy or weapon acquisitions would not enable the Soviet Union to compete with the West's technological surge. Ogarkov and his fellow officers evidently resolved, therefore, to innovate as rapidly as possible, replacing the traditional incremental approach with a revolution.

Their colleagues in the Ground Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces, however, continued to argue for evolution. Although they too were committed to modernization, their model was not rapid innovation, but rather the military reforms that were just coming to fruition in the late 1970s. The theater high commands, for example, had been planned for a decade and were being implemented. The majority of the military leadership, therefore, understood the need for change, but did not have the same sense of urgency as the high technologists on the General Staff.

The long-standing prominence of the Ground Forces and the Strategic Rocket Forces no doubt shaped the attitudes of their leaders. These two organizations had benefited from an intramilitary compromise of the early 1960s between the proponents of the new nuclear missiles and the Ground Force traditionalists, who had drawn their experience from World War II. The two groups had struggled to decide whether missiles alone could defeat the enemy, or whether large land armies were also needed. Eventually, each retained a special role, the Rocket Forces to seize the strategic initiative, the Ground Forces to bring the enemy to final defeat on the battlefield.

Owing to their history of prominence—and the preferential treatment that accompanied it—the Ground Forces and the Strategic Rocket Forces faced a difficult challenge. To address the high-technology revolution, the General Staff had proposed a radical variant of the combined-arms strategy, one based on the dominance of neither the Ground Forces nor (in the strategic nuclear realm) the Strategic Rocket Forces. Instead, the strategy emphasized the forces of greatest mobility and flexibility of employment. In that sense, air assault troops compared favorably with tanks and armored vehicles, and bombers and submarines with land-based ballistic missiles. Neither the

Ground Forces nor Strategic Rocket Forces offered particular advantages to the new strategy.

The Soviet Navy's case differed significantly from those of the Ground Forces and the Strategic Rocket Forces. The Navy had long struggled to establish itself against the preference shown to these two services. Naval Commander in Chief S. G. Gorshkov had begun 20 years earlier to seek the resources for a blue-water fleet, and he had succeeded. By the early 1970s, he and other prominent naval theorists were challenging the then prevalent combined-arms strategy, with its emphasis on Ground Force dominance of the theater campaign.

Although Gorshkov failed in this challenge, he renewed it at least once before his departure from office in 1985. Indeed, because the Soviet Navy has lacked the prominence of the Ground Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces, it has provided the clearest example of repeated challenges to the dominant views of the defense establishment. Adapting its stand to new circumstances, the Navy has resumed its challenge when the opportunity arose. Its initiative in this regard is probably the result of its less favored position.

Some of the issues examined in this report have led to change. Others continue unresolved. As new challenges arise, the services and organizations that make up the military will interact to adapt to the demands for change. Sometimes they will fight to maintain status; at other times they will acquiesce to new circumstances. The willingness to reopen issues will doubtless serve the Soviet military well as it copes with the implications of Gorbachev's new thinking in arms control and national security affairs. It also foretells a new round of conflict.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1970s, as the Brezhnev regime's policies produced increasing stagnation of the Soviet economy and political system, the Soviet military, more than any other Soviet institution, recognized the technological and other changes that were taking place in the outside world. Long before Gorbachev came to power with his message of reform or falter, the Soviet military had begun to think about the problems that it would have to face as it entered the twenty-first century.

The process of technological modernization, however, and especially the pace and depth of the required changes, elicited considerable controversy among the Soviet military. Although none resisted the idea that change was necessary, some objected to moving too quickly or too radically. Constraints on the military budget—one of the main products of the Brezhnev economic stagnation—abetted their hesitation. Thus, in an era of resource scarcity, the Soviet Armed Forces faced the extremely difficult problems of accommodating to the mass obsolescence of old equipment and the rapid infusion of new. Moreover, the effective deployment of the new weapons required major changes in strategy and tactics.

Many years have passed since internal Soviet military conflict has been a subject of comprehensive Western research and analysis. During the early 1960s, the military's attempt to grapple with the implications of nuclear missile weapons produced a lengthy internal debate that was clearly visible to foreign observers. Thomas Wolfe and Roman Kolkowicz produced analyses of that era that have become classics of the Soviet studies field.¹

In the early 1970s, however, military debate and discussion became muted in the Soviet press. This development was probably partially the effect of generous allocations of resources to the defense sector: With plenty for all, the military had less to complain of in public.² It probably also stemmed from the stifling pall of the Brezhnev era, when, unlike in the Khrushchev years, little of interest appeared in the central press, especially little to do with controversy. As a result,

¹Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1965; Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1967. Another useful source on this period is Michael J. Deane, *Political Control of the Soviet Armed Forces*, Crane, Ru. ink & Company, Inc., New York, 1977.

²An exception to this overall satisfaction seems to have been the Soviet Navy, the case of which will be discussed in detail below.

Western specialists largely ignored the topic of conflict in the Soviet military.³ In fact, some believed that the military acted remarkably cohesively, with agreed goals and firm plans throughout.

By the mid- to late 1970s, the Soviet military again began publicly to discuss major issues, and Western specialists once more began to consider how the Soviet military deals with internal conflict. Most analysts, however, focused on the dramatic civil-military aspects of the debates that were appearing in the literature: The leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was delivering some clear messages to the defense establishment, and the military hierarchy was answering back, frequently in disagreement.⁴ As a result, the subject of conflict inside the Soviet military remained neglected.

This study attempts to remedy that neglect by examining in detail how the Ground Forces, Strategic Rocket Forces, and Navy addressed demands for change in the period from the mid-1970s to 1988.⁵ considers their efforts to cope against the backdrop of three major issues: the aftermath of strategic nuclear parity, a high-technology revolution, and constraints on the military budget.

Long awaited and long sought in the Soviet Union, the acknowledgment by the United States of Soviet strategic nuclear parity finally came with the signing of the SALT I accords in 1972. The U.S. recognition led Soviet military and political leaders to conclude that what they call the correlation of forces was at last moving in Soviet favor.⁶ The Kremlin apparently planned to exploit the favorable correlation to bring the Soviet Union gains in the Third World and in other areas of U.S.-Soviet competition.

³Dale Herspring, who has closely studied the inner workings of the Soviet military over the past two decades, was the exception; see his *Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Politics and Personalities*, Princeton University Press, forthcoming (Autumn, 1989).

⁴The subject of civil-military conflict is covered in Jeremy R. Azrael, *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command, 1976-1986*, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif., R-3521, June 1987; Abraham S. Becker, *Ogarkov's Complaint and Gorbachev's Dilemma: The Soviet Defense Budget and Party-Military Conflict*, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif., R-3541-AF, December 1987; F. Stephen Larabee, "Gorbachev and the Soviet Military," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1988; Stephen M. Meyer, "The Sources and Prospects of Gorbachev's New Political Thinking on Security," *International Security*, Fall 1988.

⁵These cases were largely chosen because of the overwhelming quantity of information on them. The case of the Air Defense Forces (PVO), in addition, has been well covered in a recent study. See Bruce Parrott, "The Soviet Union and Ballistic Missile Defense," SAIS Papers in International Affairs, No. 14, Westview Press, Boulder, Colo., 1987, esp. pp. 45-52.

⁶The correlation of forces refers to the sum of qualitative and quantitative factors that measures a country's strength compared with that of its competitors. It includes such factors as economic performance, social benefits (housing, medical care, transportation), and military power. Prior to the Gorbachev era, the military factor weighed heaviest in Soviet correlation-of-forces calculations.

The failure of strategic parity to propel the Soviet Union to a position of superpower equality with the United States, however, more than any other issue, may have alerted the Soviet military to its dilemma: Nuclear weapons, no matter how powerful, could not benefit policy if their effect was canceled by the U.S. nuclear arsenal. If, as a result, the military competition moved to the conventional sphere, then an explosion of new technologies in the West would soon overshadow Soviet numerical superiority in major weapon classes.

In effect, the implications of parity added impetus to a swing toward conventional warfighting that had begun in the 1960s, as the Soviets reconsidered the operational problems associated with using nuclear weapons on the tactical and operational level to achieve Soviet goals in the theater. Partially a result of changes under way in the NATO alliance, the Soviet review of the utility of nuclear weapons evidently produced the conclusion that their benefits did not outweigh the operational problems and escalatory risks that they entailed.

In addition to reconsidering their reliance on nuclear weapons, the Soviets recognized the approach of "a new revolution in military affairs." According to Soviet theory, such a revolution occurs under the influence of scientific-technical progress, which brings changes in weapon systems, in the organization and training of the Armed Forces, and in combat methods.⁷

The first modern revolution in military affairs, according to Soviet theorists, grew out of advances during the 1950s in nuclear weapons, radioelectronic technology, and automation.⁸ The new revolution, they state, is likewise based on advances in electronics, but also on weapons "based on new physical principles" and on longer-range conventional as well as nuclear weapons.⁹

Conventional weapons and weapons based on new physical principles became an explicit element of this new revolution only in the late 1970s, with Marshal of the Soviet Union N. V. Ogarkov as its main exponent.¹⁰ Concern about how the Soviet military would absorb rapidly accelerating technological change, however, had emerged much earlier. Ogarkov wrote in 1971 that

⁷See "Revolutsiya v voyennom dele" (revolution in military affairs) in the *Voyennyi entriklopedicheskiy slovar'*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1986, p. 628.

⁸Ibid.

⁹See, for example, Marshal Nikolay V. Ogarkov, *Vsegda v gotovnosti k zashchite Otechestva* (hereafter *Vsegda v gotovnosti...*), Voenizdat, Moscow, 1982, p. 31.

¹⁰Ogarkov apparently first took up the theme in 1978. See N. V. Ogarkov, *Izvestiya*, May 9, 1978. I am grateful to Mary FitzGerald, formerly of the Center for Naval Analyses, for this citation.

Nuclear weapons and other new combat equipment have radically changed the methods and forms of conducting military actions. . . . The full provision of units and formations with various kinds of combat equipment, the enormous strike power of modern weapons, the colossal scales in terms of space, the dynamic character and tension of military actions, the rapid and profound changes in a situation, the sharp increase in the volume of information and the equally sharp reduction in the time allotted to working out a decision on a battle or operation—all this has made unusually high demands on Soviet military-scientific thinking and the ideological-theoretical and professional training of army and navy cadres.¹¹

New efforts to accommodate the trends that Ogarkov outlined, both in doctrinal and hardware terms, provided the first hint of reborn conflict inside the military establishment in the aftermath of the 1973 Mideast war. These differences were soon exacerbated by a steadily worsening budget crisis.

Pressures on the military budget emerged in 1974–1975, during the planning period for the Tenth Five-Year Plan (1976–1980). The Brezhnev leadership, faced with slowing economic growth, evidently decided that the Soviet Union would have to conserve its resources by slowing industrial investment and military procurement. As a result, the rate of growth in defense spending fell by half, averaging only 2 percent a year after 1975, and the growth of military procurement likewise decreased sharply. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the rate of spending on procurement programs showed almost no increase. Jeremy Azrael refers to this period as the end of a “golden age” in Soviet civil-military relations.¹²

These resource constraints in effect collided with plans for military modernization and reorganization stemming from the two earlier factors: parity and technological change. The collision forced stark choices on the Soviet military establishment. No longer could the military solve its internal conflicts by attempting to accommodate multiple interests. The military leadership and the services had to take positions and then fight for them, with little chance that competing sides would each come away with a share. The budget crisis in effect sharpened competition for resources that had earlier been conducted with hope of accommodation for all. In this atmosphere, serious conflicts developed between high technologists on the General Staff and the service commands.

¹¹N. V. Ogarkov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, September 3, 1971; translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service Soviet Union Daily Report (hereafter FBIS), September 10, 1971, p. M 2.

¹²Azrael, *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command*.

This General Staff-service rivalry underlies the traditional model of Soviet intramilitary conflict. (In the United States, in contrast, the rivalry involves relations between and among services.) The enormously powerful Soviet General Staff serves as the main conduit for channeling the services' requests for resources to the CPSU leadership and the party's decisions to the military services. The General Staff's commanding position in the defense planning structure ensures that it is a focal point for conflict, effectively drawing confrontation from the service branches.

The relatively low level of intramilitary conflict in the early to mid-1970s seems to indicate that the General Staff's relationship with the service branches can vary a great deal. This effect probably depends in part on the issues that are being addressed. As noted above, in an era of relative plenty, conflict is likely to abate; scarcity would increase the rivalry. The effect probably also depends, however, on the personality and agenda of the chief of the General Staff.

During six of the years covered here, the General Staff was led by Marshal of the Soviet Union Nikolay V. Ogarkov, a forceful and intelligent theoretician. Ogarkov seemed to recognize early that nuclear parity would not solve all of the USSR's problems and that the Soviet defense establishment would have to deal with the high-technology revolution in the West, despite resource stringencies. These three issues—nuclear parity, high-technology competition with the United States, and limited resources—he evidently concluded, would have a major long-term impact and should be dealt with as quickly and completely as possible. His solution, spelled out in a 1978 article in the CPSU journal *Kommunist*, involved the rapid implementation of changes that would transform the Soviet Armed Forces with high-technology weapons and equipment and new strategy and tactics to accommodate them.

Rejecting the incremental approach to change, which put a premium on practical experience and which the Soviet military, as well as the remainder of Soviet society, usually followed, Ogarkov urged his colleagues to pursue untried, but high-technology, solutions:

Now as never before, it is important not empirically but scientifically to determine the necessary relationship among various branches of the Armed Forces . . . using quantitative and qualitative indicators of the performance of various weapon systems . . . and also of the performance of force groupings in the theaters of military operations.¹³

¹³N. V. Ogarkov, "Voyennaya nauka i zashchita sotsialisticheskogo Otechestva," *Kommunist*, No. 7, May 1978, p. 118.

Like no other, this statement seemed to capture Ogarkov's attitude: Against the West's burst of progress in high-technology weapons, the Soviet military had to maintain a rapid pace of change. The pace could not be supported, however, if proof of practice—the empirical approach—were required at every step of the way. It was time to develop new weapons and theory in the laboratory—the scientific approach—and then to take risks with them.

Because empiricism and science are closely linked in Western parlance, Ogarkov's distinction is somewhat difficult to grasp. His writings, however, indicate that he was distinguishing between a slow accumulation of experience (exercises, field trials, even operational experience in local wars) and a rapid assimilation of new technologies and techniques based on modeling and simulation.¹⁴ Ogarkov was not discarding the value of practical experience, but he was criticizing overdependence on it during a period when computers and related analytical methods could produce shortcuts in the race to keep up with scientific-technological progress.

Ogarkov returned to this theme again and again over the next six years, attempting to communicate his views in a collection of articles and monographs more detailed and interesting than any writings to come out of the defense hierarchy since the 1960s. Although the writings served other purposes, especially in the civil-military realm, they clearly contained an intramilitary message.

Part of the message was that, in an age of heavy dependence on theory rather than practice, the General Staff—the “brain of the army,” as Marshal Shaposhnikov called it—would naturally accrue greater power and authority.¹⁵ Ogarkov was quite specific in asserting that the role of the General Staff had been strengthened by the demand to create a new theory on how to develop, build, maintain, and employ the Armed Forces.¹⁶

Like much research on the Soviet military, this analysis of intramilitary relations relies on the writings of the top and the most visible leaders—the first deputy defense ministers, including the chief of the General Staff, and the commanders in chief of the services. These

¹⁴For a useful compendium in English of Ogarkov's works, see Mary C. FitzGerald, *Marshal Ogarkov on Modern War: 1977-1985*, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Va., Professional Paper 443, March 1986.

¹⁵See B. M. Shaposhnikov, *Mozg armii* (The Brain of the Army), in 3 vols., 1927-1929.

¹⁶N. Ogarkov, *Pravda*, October 2, 1981, p. 3. For more on the General Staff, see Edward L. Warner III, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics: An Institutional Analysis*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1977; Condoleezza Rice, “The Party, the Military, and Decision Authority in the Soviet Union,” *World Politics*, Vol. XL, No. 1, October 1987.

officers tend to publish on regular occasions—for example, Army-Navy Day (February 23) and Victory Day (May 9). They also tend to express views on specific current issues—for example, reasonable sufficiency and the importance of technological change.

Many other officers in both the General Staff and the services doubtless contribute to the debate and discussion of the issues that their leaders raise in the central press. For example, Marshal Ogarkov is known to have established a think tank of like-minded specialists in the General Staff to aid him in elaborating his concept of a high-technology future for the Soviet Armed Forces. Although little is known in the West about this think tank, it apparently played an important role during Ogarkov's tenure and probably continued to pursue his agenda once he had departed. Although his stature as chief was important, Ogarkov did not have to remain in the General Staff for his views to receive an airing.

In short, this analysis may largely reflect the writings only of the top military leadership, whereas conflict and consensus building in the Soviet Armed Forces depend also on the affiliations, loyalties, and work of numerous officers in various echelons of the Ministry of Defense, including the General Staff. Because these lower-ranking officers are difficult to track, however, Western research, including this study, tends to neglect them.

Furthermore, although this analysis focuses on conflict and consensus inside the Soviet military, the issues raised here also have important civil-military aspects. Ogarkov's campaign to press a high-technology agenda on the services left unanswered the question of who is to pay, and how. This question was the focal point of the civil-military conflict, and in this sense the civil-military and intramilitary issues are closely intertwined. The relationship, however, is not an overt part of this analysis.

Sources for the research included not only the Soviet military writings referred to above, but also a considerable Western literature examining the past 20 years of activity in the Soviet military. These sources ranged from accounts by well-informed Moscow correspondents to detailed and lengthy analyses conducted by experts on the Soviet system. Despite the scarcity of specific studies of Soviet intramilitary problems, many knowledgeable experts have commented on individual aspects of the subject as developments have unfolded inside the Soviet Union.

Following this introduction, the report consists of case studies of conflict and resolution in the Ground Forces, the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF), and the Navy. The conclusions then summarize the conflicts between the services and the General Staff, describe solutions

that have been pursued, and present a prognosis for further consensus building on the issues discussed.

An important conclusion of the study is that, as in most large organizations, conflict resolution and consensus building in the Soviet Armed Forces are never-ending processes. Whether the problem involves new technologies, the comparative status of Soviet opponents, or a downturn in the defense budget, the solutions developed have little permanence against change. The Soviet military services appear to be flexible in the face of this constant requirement to reopen old issues and consider new solutions. From Ogarkov's point of view, however, they were evidently not flexible enough.

II. THE GROUND FORCES IN AN AGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

The Soviet Ground Forces found themselves, in the mid-1970s, entering a period of resource constraint just as they were embarked on implementing radical organizational changes, especially in the command and control structure, to prepare them to fight and prevail in a long conventional war in Eurasia.¹ The ferment that resulted from upheaval in long-standing organizational arrangements thus probably coincided with a major period of reviewing priorities in allocating resources for weapons and other military requirements.

The Ground Forces apparently felt this ferment acutely. New technologies were rapidly emerging, many of which would contribute to the ability of the Armed Forces to fulfill important new missions, especially to strike deep into enemy territory with conventional weapons. The place of the Ground Forces configured as a tank-heavy army seemed in doubt in the new order. Could these forces, equipped as they were to defeat Hitler in 1945, now defeat the combined, modernized armies of the NATO alliance? If the answer was no, could the Soviet Union afford the steps required to revamp the Ground Forces? And would the Ground Forces accept a new status or reconfiguration along with their new missions?

Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov, for one, apparently answered no to the first question and yes to the second. What he may not have accounted for, however, was the Ground Forces' answer to the third. This service reacted strongly to the General Staff's plans to redesign the combined-arms strategy to adapt to technological change. Soviet military doctrine since the 1930s had relied on a combined-arms strategy predicated on the predominance of the Ground Forces.² Ogarkov's new design seemed to negate that predominance to take advantage of

¹A description of these changes and their implementation may be found in Phillip A. Petersen and John G. Hines, "The Conventional Offensive in Soviet Theater Strategy," *Orbis*, Fall 1983; John G. Hines and Phillip A. Petersen, "Changing the Soviet System of Control: Focus on Theater Warfare," *International Defense Review*, March 1986; John G. Hines, Phillip A. Petersen, Notra Trulock III, "Soviet Military Theory from 1945-2000: Implications for NATO," *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 1986; C. N. Donnelly, "The Operational Maneuver Group: A New Challenge to NATO," *International Defense Review*, September 1982; U.S. Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power 1988*, 7th edition, pp. 69-74.

²For the typical Soviet description of a combined-arms operation, see the entry for "obshchevoyskovaya operatsiya" in *Voyennyy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1986, p. 499.

the special mobility and flexibility offered by other forces, such as airborne. The Ground Forces objected strenuously.

THE ROLE OF ARMORED FORCES

The dialogue between the Ground Forces and General Staff continued the debate over the utility of tanks that had begun in the early 1970s. Phillip Karber, who has written extensively about the early stages of the antitank debate, argues that as early as 1974, the Soviet command echelons, including the Minister of Defense and the Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces, had reached a consensus that the 1973 Mideast war had grave implications for Soviet tank forces.³

The issue was not whether antitank munitions were effective, but what steps were needed to maintain the place of tanks in Soviet military strategy. According to Marshal of the Soviet Union A. A. Grechko, then minister of defense, "The continuing process of perfecting the antitank weapon has placed before science and technology a serious task in the business of tangibly raising the viability of tank troops and developing more effective ways and means of reliably suppressing antitank defense."⁴

The debate, in short, was over how to deal with the accurate anti-tank weapons that were threatening the basis for the Soviet Union's traditional approach to armored warfare. The focus on tanks symbolized much broader concerns about whether the Ground Forces, configured in armor-heavy formations, could survive and succeed against advanced enemy weapon systems used decisively at the outbreak of a conflict.

Solutions broached during the 1970s focused on revising tactics and employing passive defenses, such as reactive armor, to improve the survivability of tanks and armored vehicles against antitank guided missiles. On the tactical side, articles in Soviet military journals through the 1970s called for such countermeasures as speeding up the attack tempo, dispersing in depth and laterally, and massing fire rather than weapons.⁵

³Phillip A. Karber, "The Soviet Anti-Tank Debate," *Survival*, May/June 1976, p. 105.

⁴A. A. Grechko, *Armed Forces of the Soviet State*, 2d edition, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1975, p. 198; cited in Karber, *fn 4*.

⁵References to these articles can be found in Karber and in C. N. Donnelly, "Tactical Problems Facing the Soviet Army: Recent Debates in the Soviet Military Press," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 11, No. 9, 1978, pp. 1405-1412. Both Karber and Donnelly stress that concern over survivability extended beyond tanks to infantry combat vehicles or BMPs. According to Donnelly, "during conventional battle, due to the high density of anti-tank weapons in NATO armies . . . an attack on a prepared defensive position will

That the chief of the General Staff considered these steps to be inadequate was evident from Ogarkov's return to the problem in 1978. In the article in *Kommunist*, cited above, the Chief of Staff broached the vulnerability issue in a way that raised a tantalizing question: Was he actually suggesting that tanks had outlived their usefulness and should be abandoned in favor of more modern weapons?

The question emerged when Ogarkov intimated that tanks should be likened to horse cavalry, which had fallen into disuse once motorized vehicles became common. According to Ogarkov, tanks were in danger of disappearing in precisely the same way, for the enemy was "intensively developing means for battling tanks. They have already reached the point where their numbers require attentive study."⁶

Although Ogarkov did not say point-blank that tanks were headed for obsolescence, his association of tanks with an obsolescent means of warfare seemed to indicate his opinion in that regard. He appeared convinced that the Soviets would have to rely on more than improvements in reactive armor or tactics to solve the problems posed by new, highly accurate munitions. If the problems were not solved, he suggested, Soviet tanks and other means of armored warfare would fail against more modern weapons.

Thus, Ogarkov embarked on a campaign to rally others to his view that the time for radical change had come. The association of tanks with horse cavalry that first emerged in 1978 was repeated almost verbatim in Ogarkov's 1982 treatise, *Always in Readiness to Defend the Homeland*.⁷ Furthermore, he stressed the threat of obsolescence in his May 9 Victory Day articles in both 1983 and 1984 in which he used such phrases as "inertia of thought and stubborn, mechanical unthinking attachment to old ways are dangerous in present-day conditions," "bold experiments and solutions are necessary—even if it means discarding obsolete traditions," and "new means of armed combat require improvement of existing forms of combat action."⁸

Ogarkov's talk of tank obsolescence recalled the 1960s challenge to the Ground Forces. During that period, Soviet military theorists had argued that nuclear missile weapons alone would suffice to achieve the Soviet Union's strategic objectives and that the enemy would not have to be defeated also in ground warfare. Nuclear missiles, in this view,

normally require the troops to dismount and attack on foot" (p. 1496). The major Soviet investment in mechanized vehicles to address the problems of nuclear operations would have limited value if antitank weapons dominated the conflict.

⁶Ogarkov, *Voyennaya nauka...*, pp. 119-120.

⁷Ogarkov, *Vsegda v gotovnosti...*, pp. 42-43.

⁸Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov, *Izvestiyu*, May 9, 1983, p. 2; Ogarkov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, May 9, 1984, p. 3.

could be used "to rout the enemy on the very first day of the war," obviating the need for costly and time-consuming combined-arms campaigns.⁹ The nuclear forces would thus become the ultimate means to achieve strategic objectives, replacing the Ground Forces in that role.

Not surprisingly, this enthusiasm for nuclear missiles roused the opposition of many who had made their careers in the Ground Forces. Chief among them was Chief Marshal of Tank Troops Rotmistrov, a hero of the tank troops during World War II, who was an eloquent critic of the missiles-only school:

[A] contemptuous attitude toward old types of forces or toward old weapons is not only impermissible, but even harmful. . . . As the history of war teaches, new forms of warfare replace the old not at one stroke, but gradually, since the new cannot manage without the old for a long time. This situation also pertains to the development of armaments and military technology.¹⁰

Two decades later, criticisms such as those of Rotmistrov might have been paraphrased as a reply to Ogarkov: Modern, high-technology weapons do not conquer territory, and neither can they replace old forms of warfare at one stroke. In fact, Marshal V. I. Petrov, commander in chief of the Ground Forces in the early 1980s, probably played the Rotmistrov role in the modern version of the drama. The Western press carried rumors to the effect that Petrov had threatened to resign if Ogarkov went ahead with his plans for radical change.¹¹

In the Soviet military press, Petrov strongly defended the tank's continued viability. Typical was a 1982 article in which he described tanks as "a modern, highly promising category of troops" and asserted that tanks still constitute the main strike force of the Ground Forces and "a powerful means for resolving the most important tasks in combat operations."¹²

⁹Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads*, pp. 131-132. It must be noted that Nikita Khrushchev was deeply involved in this issue, also arguing that nuclear missiles removed the need for large land armies. On that basis, Khrushchev announced in a famous January 1960 speech that the Soviet Armed Forces would be reduced unilaterally by about one-third. See *Pravda*, January 16, 1960; and Wolfe, pp. 30-34. Khrushchev's involvement lengthened and complicated the intramilitary debate in this earlier example of intramilitary and civil-military relations being closely intertwined.

¹⁰Chief Marshal of Tank Troops P. A. Rotmistrov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, April 26, 1964, p. 2. Thomas Wolfe describes this debate between "modernists" and "traditionalists" in detail. See *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads*, especially Chapter XIII.

¹¹Mark Frankland, "Marshal Ogarkov Comes Out Fighting on Strategy," *The Observer* (London), June 23, 1985, p. 10.

¹²Army General V. I. Petrov, *Pravda*, September 12, 1982, p. 2. Petrov was promoted to marshal in 1983.

One year later, Petrov, after praising the new missiles, self-propelled artillery, and command and control assets of the Ground Forces, was asked if the role of tank troops had not been forgotten in this diversity of potential.¹³ Petrov replied that it had not and that "tanks are still the main strike force of the Ground Forces even today—a reliable shield in defense, a telling sword in attack."¹⁴ Petrov, in short, seemed to be replying directly to Ogarkov's proposals to deal radically with the vulnerability of the tank troops to modern, high-precision weapons. He was not alone in this effort.

A group of tank officers led by Marshal of Tank Troops A. Kh. Babadzhanyan clearly criticized Ogarkov's views in a 1980 book on tank operations. Replying to Ogarkov's 1978 *Kommunist* article, they asserted that "there are no objective reasons to speak of a demise of the tank troops, of how the tank has allegedly ceased to be viable on the battlefield."¹⁵ They specifically contradicted Ogarkov's suggestion that the tank was subject to total obsolescence. To the contrary, they argued, the arrival of antitank guided missiles had led to enhancements in tank survivability and effectiveness, "a new stage in the improvement in tanks and the development of new methods of using them and combating ATGMs."¹⁶

Marshal of Tank Troops O. A. Losik, the commander of the Malinovskiy Academy for Armored Troops, also spoke up strongly on behalf of the continued viability of tanks. He insisted that although tank losses had been heavy during the October 1973 war in the Mideast, the "massive employment of tanks" would continue to increase "the mobility and strike power of the Ground Forces."¹⁷

The professional tank officers thus appeared to adopt a consistent line in opposition to Ogarkov: Tanks continued to be viable, and so was the theory of armored warfare that had governed their employment

¹³Interview with Marshal of the Soviet Union V. I. Petrov, *Pravda*, September 11, 1983. His list of praiseworthy new weapons echoed that usually given by Ogarkov. See, for example, N. V. Ogarkov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, May 9, 1984, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴*Pravda*, September 11, 1983.

¹⁵Marshal of Tank Troops A. Kh. Babadzhanyan, ed., *Tanki i tankovyye voyska*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1980; quoted in *Strategic Review*, Winter 1982, p. 89.

¹⁶*Ibid.* See also Hung P. Nguyen, "Soviet Thinking on the Next Land War," *Parameters*, Winter 1985.

¹⁷Marshal O. A. Losik, ed., *Stroitel'stvo i boyevoye primeneniye Sovetskikh tankovykh voysk v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1979, pp. 372-374. The Soviets had indeed taken steps to protect their tanks against antitank guided missiles, employing reactive armor so successfully that by 1987, the U.S. Department of Defense publication, *Soviet Military Power*, remarked that "the development and extensive deployment of reactive armor capable of defeating relatively inexpensive antitank weapons threatens to shift fundamentally the conventional force balance." U.S. Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power 1987*, 6th edition, April 1987, p. 73.

in combined-arms operations. Tanks and theory could both adapt to modern conditions. Evolution, not revolution, was required.

EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION?

This view of evolution received the support of a broad group of top military leaders at a meeting of the USSR Defense Ministry party organization in June 1983. At that meeting, Marshal of the Soviet Union D. F. Ustinov, then minister of defense, joined by Petrov and Army General A. A. Yepishev, the chief of the Main Political Administration, stressed a single message: New weapon technologies would be introduced into the Soviet Armed Forces through evolutionary change, the pace of which would be determined by experience with the weapons in the field.

Ustinov, the meeting's keynote speaker, asserted that "strained interpretations and haste are intolerable when acting on views that are inadequately confirmed by practice, without comprehensive verification and discussion."¹⁸ Yepishev similarly emphasized the idea that the Armed Forces must "make the maximum use of everything new and progressive generated by practice."¹⁹ Petrov, while stressing readiness to recognize new forms of combat action, reportedly "drew attention to the continuity of the combat traditions of frontline commanders and political workers."²⁰ In short, these three men seemed to agree that radical revolutionary change without practical experience would ill-serve the Soviet military's efforts to absorb new technologies.

Marshal Ogarkov voiced a different view. After criticizing "bureaucratism and seniority" and calling for "resolute eradication of departmental and localistic tendencies that are all the more dangerous in military matters," he said that the time for radical change had come.²¹ According to *Krasnaya zvezda*, "he drew special attention to the bold raising of new issues, the efficient introduction of everything progressive into practice, and the fostering of a creative atmosphere in the collectives."²² Ogarkov clearly implied that many institutional barriers within the military blocked the goals that he had in mind.

But what exactly were those goals? And who had helped Ogarkov to develop them? In seeking an answer to the high-technology developments in the West, the chief of the General Staff evidently had relied

¹⁸*Krasnaya zvezda*, June 22, 1983, p. 2.

¹⁹*Ibid.* (Emphasis added.)

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*

on a group of innovative theorists in his own organization. He reportedly formed a think tank to study the operational issues raised by highly accurate conventional weapons. General Gareyev's book, *M. V. Frunze—Voyennyy teoretik*, was probably one product of the group's efforts. Published in 1985, it contained a strong endorsement of the effectiveness of the new conventional weapons against targets deep in the theater.²³

The Soviet Armed Forces theorist could use the new conventional weapons to attack the enemy at great depth, depriving him of the initiative even as he was on the offensive. These weapons, however, would force the Soviets to disperse reserve and second-echelon forces to preserve them against destruction by conventional weapons even deep in the rear.

In recognition of these issues, the view seemed to develop within the General Staff that the new conventional technologies had greater utility than nuclear weapons, but also renewed some of the operational problems that accompanied nuclear use. Ponderous tank-heavy formations would be hard-pressed to disperse for survival in the rear and then regroup to mass for action in forward areas.²⁴

So complex an array of problems might have motivated Ogarkov to renew the antitank debate of the 1970s and broaden its scope to take account of the many operational implications of precision-guided munitions. His proposed solution to these operational problems is not fully understood in the West, but it evidently involved a streamlining of the Ground Forces to enable more rapid movement and faster reaction to deep strikes. It also apparently involved a reemphasis of combined-arms operations in which air, air defense, and naval assault assets would be organically combined with Ground Force components to increase their overall mobility and flexibility of employment.

A streamlining and reorganization of this scale could not take place without massive upheaval in the Armed Forces, perhaps resulting in

²³Col. Gen. M. A. Gareyev, *M. V. Frunze—Voyennyy teoretik: Vzglady M. V. Frunze i sovremennaya voyennaya teoriya* (M. V. Frunze—Military Theoretician: The Views of M. V. Frunze and Contemporary Military Theory), Voenizdat, Moscow, 1985, p. 240. Although little is known about Ogarkov's think tank, a likely location for it would be the Military Science Directorate of the General Staff. Ogarkov probably also drew on the capabilities of the General Staff Academy. According to Condoleezza Rice, in the 1970s the academy was improving "its ability to conduct games and simulations in order to 'scientifically substantiate' the efficacy of various options for strategy and for the solution of 'military theoretical problems.'" Rice, *Party and Military in the Soviet Union*, p. 62; see also Warner, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics*, p. 124; and Viktor Kulikov, *Akademiya General'nogo shtaba*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1976, p. 208.

²⁴Col. Stanislaw Koziej, "Anticipated Directions for Change in Tactics of Ground Troops," *Przegląd Wojsk Lądowych* (Ground Forces Review), September 1986, p. 4. I am indebted to Notra Trulock and Phillip Petersen for this citation.

personnel losses and large-scale retirement of older, less capable weapon systems, including older tanks. The process would also require a fundamental change in the management or command and control of forces. Ogarkov and at least some of his colleagues in the General Staff seemed convinced that these changes should be implemented in a revolutionary manner, without regard for the incremental approach that had characterized previous periods of reform in the Soviet Armed Forces.²⁵

Against this view, Petrov and his like-minded colleagues argued that the Soviet Union should respond to the West with improvements in the exploitation of existing capabilities, including the new weapons and equipment, which were already arriving in units. They stressed that the battle against a well-armed enemy would not be won by new weapons alone, but by superior Soviet military art and by highly trained and motivated troops.

A typical example of this theme was Petrov's 1984 article in *Communist of the Armed Forces*, in which he wrote: "Modern combat is not only a sharp conflict of men and military equipment, but also an intense battle of mind, will and skill. Its outcome is determined by people, their military training, and desire to fulfill their mission no matter what."²⁶ He also quoted Minister of Defense Ustinov on what is needed to defeat a high-technology opponent: (1) knowledge of the enemy, his weapons, and tactics; (2) a combination of powerful fire, deep strikes, and sudden maneuver; (3) firm maintenance of troop control.²⁷

²⁵For example, the major reorganization of the Armed Forces in 1975-1980 had begun with the establishment of a theater high command in the Soviet Far East, followed by a period of experimenting with operational concepts and command and control arrangements there. Subsequently, similar high commands of forces were established in the Western, Southwestern, and Southern theaters of military operations. Marshal Petrov, who so strongly defended tanks against Ogarkov's criticisms, was responsible for the lengthy implementation of the Far Eastern High Command as its first commander in chief.

²⁶Marshal V. Petrov, "Persistently Improve Military Training," *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, No. 24, December 1984; in Joint Publications Research Service (hereafter JPRS), JPRS-UMA-85-027, April 19, 1985, p. 27.

²⁷Ibid.; other articles on this theme are Petrov, *Trud*, May 9, 1981, p. 1; Petrov, "Combat Readiness," *Sovetskiy voen*, No. 5, March 1983; Petrov, *Prauda* (Bratislava), February 23, 1983, p. 6 (in FBIS, March 1, 1983); Marshal O. A. Losik, Moscow Television Service, September 9, 1984 (in FBIS, September 12, 1984); Marshal S. F. Akhromeyev, *Izvestiya*, May 7, 1985, p. 2; Admiral G. Kostev, "Our Military Doctrine in Light of New Political Thinking," *Kommunist vooruzhennykh sil*, No. 17, September 1987 (in JPRS, JPRS-TAC-87-062, December 30, 1987); General V. Shabanov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, August 15, 1983, pp. 2-3.

AFTER OGARKOV

Thus, Ogarkov's urge to let technology push Soviet military theory along a revolutionary path did not gain broad acceptance among other military leaders. In fact, his insistence on radical action, among other factors, seemed to lead to his removal as chief of the General Staff in September 1984. Although this outcome was a product of the rancorous relationship that Ogarkov had developed with the CPSU leadership, it evidently also stemmed from his serious disagreements with senior military colleagues.²⁸

One indicator that Ogarkov had resigned, in part, because he faced military opposition was a retraction of his statements on the approaching obsolescence of tanks. In 1985, one year after his departure from the General Staff, Ogarkov published another major treatise, *History Teaches Vigilance*. By contrast with the 1978 *Kommunist* article and the 1982 *Always in Readiness...*, this book did not intimate that tanks, like horse cavalry, were on the road to obsolescence. Instead, Ogarkov merely repeated his earlier assertions that defense means against tanks, aircraft, and ships were reaching such a level of quantity and quality that the consequences of their deployment would be "dangerous to ignore."²⁹

The behavior of Marshal Sergey Akhromeyev, Ogarkov's successor, further indicated that significant military opposition had arisen to Ogarkov's views. From 1980 to 1983, the main body of Akhromeyev's writings, as well as his public statements (including press conferences), had been devoted to advocating and explaining Soviet arms control initiatives and other aspects of Soviet national security policy.³⁰

In February 1984, however, Akhromeyev broke this pattern with a lengthy article in the *Military History Journal*. Discussing the lessons

²⁸The public explanation was that Ogarkov had been removed for "unpartylike behavior." For a number of possible reasons for Ogarkov's demise, see Rose Gottemoeller, "Ogarkov's Mistake," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 4, 1984, p. 16; Richard Owen, "Dismissal of Outspoken Military Chief Signals Soviet Power Upheaval," *London Times*, September 8, 1984, p. 5; Bernard Gwertzman, "Ogarkov's Views on Defense Seen as Clue in Soviet Shake-Up," *International Herald Tribune*, September 9, 1984, p. 1; "USSR—the Riddle of Marshal Ogarkov," Radio Liberty Research Memorandum, RL 41/84, Munich, October 1984.

²⁹MSU Nikolay Ogarkov, *Istoriya učit bditel'nosti* (History Teaches Vigilance, cited as such hereafter), Voenizdat, Moscow, 1985, p. 54.

³⁰See, for example, V. Morozov, interview with General S. Akhromeyev, *Krasnaya zvezda*, December 2, 1980, p. 3; Marshal S. Akhromeyev, *Prauda* (Bratislava), June 22, 1983, p. 6, in FBIS, July 8, 1983, p. A6; Georgiy Korniyenko and Sergey Akhromeyev, press conference on INF, TASS in English (Moscow), September 14, 1983, in FBIS, September 14, 1983, p. AA1. Although he became well known for these duties during the Gorbachev regime, Akhromeyev had begun fulfilling them during the late Brezhnev years and post-Brezhnev transition.

of World War II, he differed with Ogarkov on several major points. First, Akhromeyev's discussion of the World War II "operation in depth" strongly contrasted with Ogarkov's presentation of the same subject in the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia*.³¹ While Ogarkov had described a rapid and efficient implementation of the deep operation during the early stages of World War II, Akhromeyev criticized the Soviet military art of that period, asserting that "the 'operation in depth' that had been adopted in theory had not been fully worked out in practice" and that "at present, our command personnel should consider these lessons."³²

Next, Akhromeyev stressed that the creativity of the Soviet military leadership had enabled the Armed Forces to overcome obsolescence during World War II:

Undoubtedly, much of the operational art, tactics and those specific norms which were followed in the course of combat were already obsolete. But the experience, methods and skill of preparing for combat and an operation were not obsolete and the boldness, military cleverness, skill and creativity shown by our commanders and political workers in resolving the most complex problems arising in the course of combat were never out of date.³³

Finally, Akhromeyev reiterated the point that new weapons and equipment were not the whole answer to the problems of the Soviet military. The Soviet Armed Forces had sufficient modern combat equipment, in his view, but unless they mastered it, it would be worthless: "No matter how well-armed our Army is and no matter what equipment it possesses, this alone is r.o. sufficient."³⁴

Because these views appeared seven months before Ogarkov left office in September 1984, one might conclude that Akhromeyev may actually have become a serious candidate to succeed Ogarkov well before the Politburo decision to remove him. Indeed, although intramilitary tensions

³¹MSU Nikolay Ogarkov, "Glubokaya operatsiya (boy)" (The Deep Operation [Battle]), *Sovetskaya voyennaya entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1976, pp. 574-578.

³²MSU Sergey Akhromeyev, "The Role of the Soviet Union and Its Armed Forces in Achieving a Fundamental Change in World War II and Its International Significance," *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No. 2, February 1984, pp. 23-24.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 24. In this respect, Akhromeyev's views coincided with those of Minister of Defense Ustinov, who provided a vital link between the military and party leaderships. Like Akhromeyev, Ustinov replied to Ogarkov's assertions on obsolescence with a strong statement of the value of past experiences: "What attitude should be taken to the experience of the past? Of course, the combat experience of the last war must not be transferred mechanically to the present day. Time and the development of military hardware and of military matters as a whole have made inexorable amendments. However, these are theses of lasting significance." Speech of MSU D. F. Ustinov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, December 15, 1983, pp. 1-2.

³⁴Akhromeyev, "The Role of the Soviet Union . . .," p. 25.

appear to have gone hand-in-hand with the civil-military conflict that Ogarkov engendered, some of Ogarkov's military colleagues may have proposed a replacement—Akhromeyev—some months before the civilian leadership took action.

After he became chief of the General Staff, Akhromeyev developed the themes put forward in his 1984 article with a major piece in *Kommunist*. He reiterated the thesis that pre-World War II operational premises that had been built on theory alone were inadequate until they had been honed by experience on the battlefield. He also raised an issue that increased in importance as the Gorbachev leadership required the military to adapt to increasingly radical economic reform and changing foreign policy, i.e., that in elaborating theory and implementing it in practice, the military should take its cue from the overall policy goals of the nation:

In the early period of the Great Patriotic War . . . appropriate corrections were constantly introduced both in strategy and in operational art and tactics as a result of combat experience. . . . In other words, it was necessary to learn everything that had been left incomplete or omitted in the prewar years both in theory and practice. . . . Soviet military science and military art were constantly being made more precise and, in many respects, the most effective methods of countering the offensive strategy of fascist Germany were also restated. In this connection, the questions of the art of war were solved in close interdependence with the country's economic potential and the foreign political activities of the party and government.³⁵

Once again, the contrast with Ogarkov's work was startling. Ogarkov had written in the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* that the pre-World War II theory of deep battle had been based on new technical equipment enabling the Soviet Armed Forces to reject former methods of combat. The continuing introduction of new equipment in wartime, moreover, permitted the theory to be continuously improved.³⁶ Technology, in Ogarkov's view, drove theory, theory was rapidly implemented in practice, and old ways were abandoned as a result.

Revolution or evolution: this was the critical choice facing the Soviet military establishment. Ogarkov stood for the revolutionary approach, but his successor, Akhromeyev, the evolutionary. An important group of military leaders, including Ground Forces Commander in Chief Petrov and Minister of Defense Ustinov, agreed with

³⁵MSU Sergey Akhromeyev, "Superiority of Soviet Military Science and Soviet Military Art as One of the Most Important Factors of Victory in the Great Patriotic War," *Kommunist*, No. 3, February 1985, pp. 53-54.

³⁶Ogarkov, *Glubokaya operatsiya...*, p. 574. See also Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov, *Izvestiya*, September 23, 1983, pp. 4-5.

Akhromeyev. They were resolved, it seems, to implement change as operational methods were adapted to new equipment; the old ways were not abandoned, but woven together with the new. Ogarkov's revolution failed to take hold.

But the evolutionary approach did not discount the overall goal of modernization. In fact, modernization remained the goal, and Ogarkov played a prominent role in the process. Instead of retiring after leaving the General Staff, Ogarkov became the commander in chief of forces in the Western theater.³⁷ This position placed him in charge, in large part, of the Soviet forces facing NATO. The Western theater, the most important for the Soviets strategically, had also been receiving the most modern weapons and equipment. Ogarkov's position thus enabled him to implement theory in practice—the process of experimentation that would lead to modernization and change.

And the Western theater has been experimenting. The two unified army corps that appeared on the scene in the 1980s are a prime example. A radical reorganization of older divisions, these formations seem to represent an experiment in streamlining similar to that which would be needed both to deploy high-technology weapons and to cope with the operational problems that they entail. They represent a more equitable mix of infantry and armor than the traditional Soviet tank division, making them "well-suited for relatively independent, fast-moving deep operations," the role assigned to the operational maneuver group.³⁸

Another experimental innovation is the air assault brigade, which is designed for parachute or heliborne operations in enemy rear areas. It is a well-armed force suitable for employment early in battle, against targets deep in enemy territory.³⁹ Like the unified army corps, these combined-arms brigades could provide flexibility, speed, and the ability to operate deep without an enormous logistics train, features previously

³⁷"USSR—the Riddle of Marshal Ogarkov," Radio Liberty Research Memorandum, RL 41/84. Ogarkov left this post in October 1988 and retired, reportedly for health reasons. His retirement may also have been linked, however, to his objections to proposals to reduce Soviet forces in Europe unilaterally, an initiative that was announced during Gorbachev's visit to the United Nations on December 7, 1988.

³⁸*Soviet Military Power 1988*, pp. 74–75. According to *Soviet Military Power 1988*, the two unified army corps that have been established so far "have received the latest Soviet equipment and are organized into combined-arms tank and mechanized brigades, integrating tank and motorized rifle forces down to the battalion level." See also D. L. Smith and A. L. Meier, "Ogarkov's Revolution: Soviet Military Doctrine for the 1990s," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1987, pp. 870, 872–873; and R. H. Pepper and P. Leonard, "A New Soviet Model Army? Future brigade and corps structures," *International Defense Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1989, pp. 259–263.

³⁹Smith and Meier, p. 872. Since 1980 over 20 of these brigades have been established. See *Soviet Military Power 1988*, p. 74.

lacking in traditional tank-heavy divisions. They may presage other types of brigades deploying modern tanks or mechanized vehicles. Although the experimental status of these two types of units shows some ambivalence, their equipping with the latest Soviet weapons reaffirms the continuing commitment of the Armed Forces to a high-technology future.

The Soviet military's measured response to demands for innovation echoes the initial reaction to Gorbachev's reform movement in the larger Soviet economy; the similarity shows that civilians and military men alike faced deeply rooted systemic problems. Both establishments had to contend with bureaucratic entrenchment and barriers to innovation, but Marshal Ogarkov had begun to rail against them long before Gorbachev came to power.

Ogarkov's unbridled support of a radical solution—especially in contrast to Gorbachev's efforts at consensus building at the cost of radical reform—indicates that the former chief of the General Staff was no politician. The military leadership, too, opted for a consensus that spelled evolutionary change. Now that Gorbachev is himself proposing more radical action in arms control and national security policy, the military may be forced to return to a revolutionary approach.

A key question today is whether the military leadership can adapt the revolution they already know and understand—Ogarkov's revolution—to the policy initiatives emerging from the Gorbachev regime. Gorbachev seems to intend a much more radical revolution than anything that Ogarkov had envisioned. The Soviet military finds itself operating in a new dimension, one dominated by the political leadership's agenda.

III. THE STRATEGIC ROCKET FORCES ADAPT TO CHANGE

The same factors that led to the revision of the organization and missions of the Ground Forces also transformed the status and role of the Strategic Rocket Forces. Prime among them was the achievement of strategic nuclear parity. As parity led to the expanded importance of conventional warfare in Soviet military doctrine, it also altered expectations about how and when nuclear weapons would be used. From a force poised for nuclear warfighting early in a conflict, the Strategic Rocket Forces, with the other elements of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, became an asset that would have to be maintained throughout a long conventional campaign.

The change significantly affected the Strategic Rocket Forces. They found themselves moved from first among the service branches, the main deterrent of the enemy, to joint membership in strategic nuclear forces that included the submarines and bombers as equal members. This change was first confirmed authoritatively by Marshal Ogarkov in a *Kommunist* article in 1981 as part of his effort to articulate the changing status and roles of the Soviet Armed Forces.¹

Ogarkov's attempt to divide the strategic nuclear mission more equally among the SRF, Navy, and Air Force coincided with an apparent drop in the SRF budget. In the second half of the 1970s, the SRF's operating and investment outlay reportedly declined by more than five percent per year.² Thus, the implications of parity and resource stringency together were affecting the fortunes of the Strategic Rocket Forces.

The SRF command responded to this challenge with a campaign to glorify their service. The campaign unfolded in the early 1980s, during the period when the chief of the General Staff was first elaborating, in public, his concept of the strategic nuclear forces.

A key player in the campaign was Chief Marshal of Artillery V. F. Tolubko, the SRF commander in chief, who had presided over the unprecedented growth of the SRF that had culminated in the

¹See Marshal N. Ogarkov, "Na strazhe mirnogo truda," *Kommunist*, No. 10, 1981, p. 87.

²Becker, p. 17. Becker cites *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China—1983*. Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Trade, Finance and Security Economics of the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Washington, D.C., 1984, p. 246.

achievement of strategic nuclear parity in the early 1970s. Having propelled his country to equal status with the United States in at least this one aspect, Tolubko was probably eager to reap rewards for his institution.

Tolubko and other SRF commanders clearly resolved to depict the SRF as a force as relevant in the 1980s as it had been in the 1960s, at the height of the nuclear warfighting strategy. During the course of the campaign, however, he and his colleagues were careful to adapt to the new tone of Soviet military doctrine, consistently presenting the SRF as a secure retaliatory, rather than a nuclear warfighting, force.³

Thus, even if parity implied a burgeoning emphasis on conventional weapons, it need not have implied that the other nuclear services were the SRF's equal. In contrast to the view being advanced by the chief of the General Staff, the leadership of the Strategic Rocket Forces evidently concluded that the SRF could and should still dominate the nuclear retaliatory mission. Their response to Ogarkov was clear: although the Navy and Air Force "possess strategic weapons . . . the Strategic Rocket Forces are the foundation of the country's nuclear forces."⁴

A major theme of the campaign was the SRF's uniqueness. In a 1984 interview, Tolubko emphasized the 1959 decision to establish the SRF as the predominant nuclear service branch by right of its strategic nuclear potential:

Frankly speaking, this decision was not one of the easiest to take. There were many differing opinions. Some proposed distributing the existing nuclear missile weapons among the Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force, and Air Defense Forces. Others proposed distributing them only among the Air Force and the Navy. Yet others substantiated the need to pool the strategic means within a special and autonomous branch of the Armed Forces. . . . It can be asserted boldly that the birth of the terrifying rocket forces was an essentially new and correct step in pursuit of a humane goal—to enhance the Soviet state's defense might and prevent the unleashing of World War III.⁵

With this statement, Tolubko seemed to be reminding his audience that the SRF was created the supreme branch of the Armed Forces, a status commensurate with its overwhelming responsibility to prevent

³Valeriy Gorbunov, interview with Marshal Tolubko, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 8, 1984, p. 10; see also Yevgeniy Stanchev, "Soviet Missiles: How Good It Is That They Are There," *Pogled* (Sofia), July 16, 23, 30, 1984.

⁴General V. F. Tolubko, Moscow Domestic Service in Russian, August 28, 1982; in FBIS, September 1, 1982, p. . . .

⁵Gorbunov interview, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 8, 1984.

World War III. Ogarkov, by contrast, seemed to be recalling the conviction of those who in 1959 wanted to divide the nuclear missions between the Navy and the Air Force.⁶

The main concern of the SRF leadership seemed to have been that accepting equal status with the other nuclear services would rob them of arguments for resource allocations in the long term. Tolubko and other campaign participants emphasized that the unusual stature of the SRF justified its first claim on economic resources. In turn, this special treatment reinforced the unique qualities of the SRF, creating an organizational culture that ensured the fulfillment of the most difficult strategic nuclear missions.

The SRF's strength, Tolubko asserted in 1982, "stems from the fact that during the 22 years of their development, conditions have been created for them to have their own traditions and hallmarks and to maintain their combat watch at all times."⁷ As one article put it, the SRF was special from its inception. To produce the Soviet missile arsenal, the state "'lined up' mines, plants, whole sectors of industry and huge collectives of metallurgists, electronics experts and chemists."⁸

A related theme was the SRF's first claim on skilled and committed manpower.⁹ These articles praised the intellectual prowess and political devotion of Soviet missilemen at the same time that Ogarkov and others were criticizing Soviet youth for a lack of these same qualities. In short, the articles delivered a powerful message: the Rocket Forces offered not only unique capabilities, but also unusual loyalty and commitment to the Soviet system.

Tolubko's departure from office in 1985 seemed to indicate that the glorification campaign had failed. Tolubko, as a major actor in the Soviet Union's long strategic nuclear buildup, probably did not look kindly on Gorbachev's proposals to reduce and then abolish nuclear weapons. But the proposals only further exacerbated the intramilitary problem that he had been grappling with for half a decade: the General Staff's efforts to equalize the status of the nuclear service branches and establish a true strategic triad.

⁶It should be noted that Nikita Khrushchev's emphasis on land-based ballistic missiles in his deterrence strategy strongly influenced the decision to create the SRF. For a discussion of the interplay between Khrushchev's ideas and those of the Soviet military, see *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads*, especially Chapter XIII, pp. 153-171.

⁷Tolubko, *Moscow Domestic Service*, August 28, 1982.

⁸Aleksandr Prokhanov, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, November 17, 1982, p. 10.

⁹See *ibid.*, and Yuriy Teplyakov and Andrey Knyazev, *Moscow News*, January 13, 1985, pp. 8-9.

Army General Yu. P. Maksimov, who replaced Tolubko as commander in chief of the SRF, had been a successful Ground Forces commander with no SRF experience prior to his accession to the post in 1985. He was probably selected in the hope that under him the SRF would comply with Gorbachev's radical reduction proposals, a theme that will be further discussed below.¹⁰

He might have been selected also with the idea of easing intramilitary tensions over the formation of the strategic nuclear forces. From early in his tenure, Maksimov's writings indicated that he considered the SRF a secure retaliatory force on a par with the other nuclear services: "The high combat potential of the Rocket Forces and other component parts of the Soviet strategic nuclear forces is nothing but a deterrent to the aggressive designs of the enemies of peace."¹¹

Maksimov was probably in a better position than Tolubko would have been to remind the SRF that, despite budget cutbacks and a decline in the SRF share of nuclear delivery systems, the organization was not dying.¹² A fifth generation of ICBMs was being developed, including the SS-25, deployed as a road-mobile system, and the SS-24, deployed both on trains and in silos. A follow-on was also being tested for the SS-18, the big Soviet counterforce missile deployed in hardened silos. According to *Soviet Military Power*, this follow-on was "likely to be deployed in existing silos through the end of the century. By the mid-1990s, the current Soviet ICBM force will have been almost entirely replaced with new systems."¹³

Thus, the Strategic Rocket Forces continued to attract resources for important new programs. The leveling off in Soviet missile procurement that had been noted in the West since the mid-1970s might

¹⁰Bruce Parrott calls this attempt by the civilian leadership to produce military compliance the "Yazov gambit," after Defense Minister D. T. Yazov, who was appointed under similar circumstances. See also Dale R. Herspring, "Gorbachev, Yazov, and the Military," *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1987, pp. 99-107. A later example of the phenomenon was the appointment of Colonel General Mikhail A. Moiseyev to replace Marshal Akhromeyev as chief of the General Staff. Moiseyev, a relatively junior general officer and colleague of Yazov in the Far East, was confirmed as Akhromeyev's replacement on December 14, 1988. His appointment was rumored to be linked to civil-military disagreements over Gorbachev's offer of unilateral force reductions at the United Nations on December 7. See Alexander Rahr, "Moiseyev Appointed as Chief of General Staff," *Radio Liberty Research*, Munich, December 15, 1988.

¹¹Major Aleksandr Kondrashov, interview with General Yu. P. Maksimov: "Always Combat Ready," *Soviet Military Review*, November 1986, p. 5.

¹²Between 1970 and 1985, the SRF share of nuclear delivery systems declined from 75 percent to about 60 percent of the total force. This trend is depicted graphically in John M. Collins, *U.S./Soviet Military Balance*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, No. 87-745-S, Washington, D.C., p. 28.

¹³*Soviet Military Power*, 6th edition, March 1987, U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., p. 31; see also *Soviet Military Power*, 7th edition, April 1988, pp. 45-47.

reflect, in this sense, completion of the modernization program involving the fourth-generation ICBMs rather than a major loss of investment funds. It was time to concentrate on the next generation, a decision that would mean continued leadership commitment to a strong SRF.

The commitment of resources apparently also extended to the other strategic nuclear services, however. The Navy, for example, had acquired 21 new ballistic-missile submarines since the late 1970s, among them two new classes, called in the West the *Typhoon* (five boats) and the *Delta IV* (four boats). It had also obtained four new attack submarine classes, among them the most modern and quiet Soviet submarines. Some of these would likely deploy long-range, nuclear-armed cruise missiles, which would provide the Navy with a second type of nuclear weapon for attacking land targets.

A surge in new programs during the 1980s greatly improved the status of the Strategic Air Force (SAF). From a force largely equipped with 20-, even 30-year-old bombers, the SAF emerged as a major beneficiary of Soviet nuclear modernization programs. It was the first service branch to receive new Soviet long-range cruise missiles, and to deploy those missiles it acquired at least 50 new Tu-95 bombers. Known as the *Bear H* in NATO circles, these aircraft are newly constructed variants of a class that had been the backbone of Soviet bomber aviation since the 1950s.

The SAF also expects to receive significant new capabilities in the *Blackjack*, a swing-wing bomber similar in design to the U.S. B-1. Once deployed, this aircraft will provide the Soviets with a very long-range bomber capable of flying at speeds of 1500 miles per hour over ranges of 4500 miles—i.e., capable of attacking targets in the continental United States.¹⁴ Thus, although the bombers remain a modest proportion of the strategic nuclear forces, they have profited from major weapon and platform development programs.

In short, all three nuclear force branches appeared to have benefited from decisions to improve the potential of the Soviet nuclear arsenal as a retaliatory force. The improvements focused on enhancing survivability—through mobility and site hardening—and on improving the accuracy and command and control of the forces. The diversification of the nuclear arsenal that occurred with the reemphasis of bomber aviation may be read as part of the trend toward mobility for survival. The SRF participated in this trend. In intramilitary terms, it clearly did not face critical threats to its ongoing modernization programs.

¹⁴Richard Halloran, "Soviet Gains Seen in Air-Launched Cruise Missiles," *New York Times*, February 29, 1988.

The era of resource scarcity thus by no means forced the cancellation of nuclear programs. If anything, the new weapons and launch platforms were more capable than any since the appearance of the fourth-generation ICBMs in the early 1970s. Perhaps part of the bargain struck to gain agreement to more equal status for the bombers and submarines involved promises of significant new capabilities for all. In any event, the goal of a secure retaliatory force, the strategic nuclear forces, could not be realized without enhancements to survivability for each branch of the triad.

The political environment of the Strategic Rocket Forces, however, changed markedly after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985. In January 1986, Gorbachev publicly declared his commitment to radical reductions in nuclear forces, with the goal of their total elimination by the year 2000.¹⁵

At the Reykjavik summit of October 1986, Gorbachev proposed that 50 percent reductions in nuclear forces be negotiated in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) then under way in Geneva. The Soviet negotiating position eventually came to embrace a subceiling of 4900 ballistic-missile reentry vehicles (RVs), as well as a sublimit of 1540 heavy missile warheads.¹⁶ This decision spelled major cuts in the SRF's SS-18 force, the heavy ICBMs that the United States had long considered to be threatening counterforce weapons.

Acquiescence to deeper cuts in heavy ICBMs, when joined with the ban on regional strategic weapons that had occurred under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Agreement, suggested that the protection of the SRF that had continued through the SALT years was fast disappearing.¹⁷

The START agreement will, however, also penalize the Soviet Navy. According to one estimate, the number of strategic submarines may drop from 62 to as few as 19, and from almost 3400 weapons to about

¹⁵Statement by M. S. Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee," *Pravda*, January 16, 1986, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶Michele A. Flournoy, "START Thinking About a New U.S. Force Structure," *Arms Control Today*, July-August 1988, p. 9.

¹⁷The Soviet Union had long maintained that the two sides should have complete freedom to mix the numbers of ICBM, SLBM, and bomber weapons within the overall limits set by an arms control agreement—first the SALT agreements, later START. The Soviets traditionally protested that U.S. efforts to alter this "freedom-to-mix" concept were actually attempts to force the USSR to redesign its nuclear arsenal, de-emphasizing ICBMs in favor of aerodynamic weaponry, such as bombers and cruise missiles. See, for example, V. Vasilev, "What Lies Behind Washington's 'Flexibility' on the START Talks in Geneva," *Novoye vremya*, October 21, 1983; in FBIS Soviet Union Daily Report, October 28, 1983, pp. AA 8-12.

1896.¹⁸ Despite the reductions, both services will probably end up with highly modernized forces, the SRF deploying new SS-18 follow-on missiles, SS-24 rail-mobile missiles, and SS-25 ground-mobile missiles, and the Navy deploying SS-N-20 and SS-N-23 missiles on the newest Soviet strategic submarines, the *Typhoon* and *Delta IV*.¹⁹

The ratio of strategic weapons deployed by the two services may change somewhat, with the SRF going from 60 percent to 50 percent of the total force, while the Navy remains at about 30 percent. The ten percent lost by the SRF will probably accrue to the Soviet bomber forces, Strategic Aviation.

In addition, the Soviet bomber forces are likely to benefit from the START counting rule that figures bomber payloads as one unit as long as the aircraft carry no air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs).²⁰ Under this rule, Soviet bombers could carry a large mixed load of gravity bombs and short-range attack missiles (SRAMs). These non-ALCM bomber weapons could theoretically provide the Soviet Union with an additional 3000 warheads above the 6000-warhead limit called for by START.²¹ In the past, Soviet bombers provided only 8 percent of available warheads; this change therefore would add significantly to Soviet striking power. If the 3000 additional bomber weapons were added to the 6000-warhead START limit, the bomber forces would then be deploying approximately 45 percent of Soviet strategic nuclear weapons.²²

An interesting facet of the bomber counting rule is that it was the Soviets who proposed it at the Reykjavik summit in October 1986.²³ The Soviet leadership may thus have foreseen the advantage of a

¹⁸Edward L. Warner III, "Alternative U.S. and Soviet Strategic Force Postures Under the Prospective START Agreement" (unpublished paper), December 16, 1987.

¹⁹If the U.S. proposal to ban mobile missiles in START persists, the SS-24s can be deployed in silos.

²⁰Flournoy. ALCMs will also be discounted, but as of this writing it remains to be seen what the final ALCM counting rule will be. Proposals have ranged from six per aircraft to over twenty, with the United States at the low end of the scale and the Soviet Union at the high end.

²¹This amount assumes a load of 16 SRAMs on each bomber in a force of 200 *Blackjack* aircraft. Flournoy provides similar calculations for the U.S. side.

²²In December 1987, the Soviet bomber forces deployed approximately 830 of a total of 10,602 Soviet strategic nuclear weapons (8 percent). In the mid-1990s, a Soviet START-constrained force might include about 900 ALCMs, and 200 non-ALCM-carrying bombers (each of which would count as one weapon), plus the uncounted 16 SRAM weapons per non-ALCM-carrying bomber (200 × 16 = 3200). ALCM and non-ALCM weapons would then total 4100 of about 9000 weapons, or 45 percent. Figures provided by Warner, "Alternative U.S. and Soviet Strategic Force Postures Under the Prospective START Agreement."

²³Mark Hosenball, Louise Bransom, John Witherow, "How Gorbachev Took Reagan's Breath Away," *The Sunday Times* (London), October 19, 1986, pp. 12-13.

much-augmented bomber force as early as that date. By this evidence, Strategic Aviation was long planned to be a major beneficiary of the START I agreement.

This outcome, which amounts to further equalization of the status of the SRF, Navy, and Strategic Aviation, would accord well with the goal that Ogarkov set in 1981 of establishing a triad of largely mobile and survivable strategic nuclear forces. The current arms control policy of the Soviet leadership thus appears to represent these in the military hierarchy who favor the triad concept in an intramilitary exchange that began nearly a decade ago.

The SRF leadership has not uniformly applauded this outcome. While Maksimov, the commander in chief, has written approvingly of the strategic nuclear forces concept, career SRF officers have reacted negatively. As late as 1987, General Yu. A. Yashin, the first deputy commander in chief of the SRF and Tolubko's long-time colleague, refused to link the SRF to the other nuclear force arms. Asked in an interview in *Izvestiya*, what constitutes the Soviet Union's missile arsenal, Yashin mentioned only the ground-based missiles of the Strategic Rocket Forces,²⁴ rather than the "strategic nuclear forces," the term that Ogarkov had introduced in 1981 to describe the combined SRF, Navy, and Air Force nuclear assets. Moreover, he criticized the term "triad" as one used by the Pentagon.

Yashin may have been reacting to a statement a few months earlier by Army General V. M. Shabanov, the deputy minister of defense for armaments. For the first time, Shabanov had publicly described the Soviet nuclear forces as a triad, a term previously applied only to the U.S. nuclear arsenal.²⁵ Because of the long association of triad with the U.S. forces, Shabanov's use of the term came as a surprise to many Western analysts. It also, evidently, elicited a response from Yashin, who was not ready to use a U.S. strategic term to describe the SRF.

The exchange between Yashin and Shabanov highlights an important aspect of the SRF's current efforts to maintain its status: What began as an intramilitary issue has by now become a problem involving

²⁴General Yu. A. Yashin, *Izvestiya*, January 8, 1987, p. 3.

²⁵General V. Shabanov, *Krasnaya zvezda*, August 18, 1986, p. 2. Although this is the first specific reference to the Soviet nuclear arsenal as a triad, political and military spokesmen had long been noting a trend toward similar capabilities in each branch of the strategic forces. For example, Marshal Akhromeyev in an October 1985 press conference: "Now, all strategic means are drawing closer together in their strike capabilities. . . . It is precisely for this reason that the whole triad of strategic armaments—intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-based ballistic missiles, and heavy bombers—should be regarded as a complex, as a single whole." (Moscow Television Service in Russian, October 22, 1985, p. AA 3.) These arguments were used to refute U.S. assertions that bombers and cruise missiles were more stabilizing in the balance than land-based ballistic missiles.

the civilian leadership and its new arms control policies. With Gorbachev backing the idea of deep cuts in ICBMs, military proponents of the triad concept—Shabanov, for example, and Akhromeyev—can invoke his authority to serve their goal of a more equal distribution of missions among the nuclear services.²⁶

Yashin and the old SRF elite thus face a formidable alliance. Engineering a fit between the SRF's long-standing status and clear capabilities and the new national security policy of the Gorbachev regime will be a major challenge for the SRF leadership for years to come.²⁷

²⁶The recent views of Marshal Akhromeyev on this subject appear in *Trud*, February 21, 1983, pp. 1-2.

²⁷Yashin's appointment as a deputy minister of defense in spring 1989 may have removed him from direct proximity to this conflict—and responsibility for its outcome. See RFE/RL Daily Report, No. 93, May 18, 1989.

IV. THE NAVY CHALLENGE TO COMBINED ARMS

The new emphasis on conventional warfighting found the Soviet Navy in a unique position in relation to the other service branches. In the early 1960s, the United States had been able to dominate every crisis, even bringing nuclear strike platforms into the Mediterranean, while the Soviet Union had had no meaningful capabilities at its disposal save the threat of nuclear war. The Soviet leadership did, however, begin to use the Soviet Navy to counter U.S. naval deployments, although the Navy at that time was little better than a coastal defense force. Thus, after the nuclear threat backfired in the Cuban missile crisis, Fleet Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, the Navy commander in chief, probably found sympathetic ears among those who were eager to compete with the United States with more diverse power projection capabilities.

Gorshkov argued that the Navy, unlike the other services, had an important peacetime role. He further argued that in wartime the Navy's inherent nature and its deployment on the high seas gave it an independence of action that could not be shared by the services that were tied to the land theater.

Gorshkov and his allies in the Navy presented their case with great energy in a series of articles published between 1972 and 1975 in the naval journal *Morskoy sbornik*. Known in the West as the "Gorshkov series," these articles served multiple purposes, all of which involved establishing the Navy as an independent actor among the Soviet services. According to Michael McGwire, the Gorshkov series had three goals: to establish the military and political importance of forward naval deployments in peacetime, to define operational requirements for ensuring the security of the strategic strike submarines (SSBNs), and to describe the Navy's role in a war that did not escalate.¹

This last goal put Gorshkov's Navy on a collision course with the combined-arms strategy. The conflict unfolded most clearly in the first (1976) edition of *Sea Power of the State*, Gorshkov's major book that culminated the Gorshkov series.² The book criticized the military leadership's preoccupation with continental theaters of military

¹Michael McGwire, *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy, Appendix C: The Debate over Naval Roles and Missions*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1987, p. 465.

²See S. G. Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1976.

operations and its inability to comprehend the importance of the Navy.³

The Navy, Gorshkov wrote, would often be involved in the first battles of the war, before the campaign could develop in the land theaters. Thus, he argued, the Navy might have a decisive effect on the course of the war in its earliest stages. On the basis of the Navy's importance to the defense of the SSBNs, he urged the construction of a fleet with enough firepower on surface platforms and submarines to challenge the United States for control of the sea, at least in strategically vital sectors.⁴

Gorshkov evidently had important supporters, for the publication of his book was timed to coincide with the opening of the 25th Party Congress in March 1976.⁵ It was also "favorably received" by a number of military spokesmen, including Marshal of the Soviet Union I. Kh. Bagramyan, a retired World War II commander and later a spokesman for then Minister of Defense Grechko, and Admiral of the Fleet S. M. Lobov.⁶ Moreover, Gorshkov's forceful arguments apparently influenced acquisition decisions, for during the years of his tenure as commander in chief, the Soviet Navy became one of the largest and most heavily armed fleets in the world.

His efforts also produced a backlash from a military establishment that was dominated by the Ground Forces. By the time the second edition of *Sea Power of the State* was published in 1979, it included a separate section describing the unity of views inside the Soviet military on strategy issues.⁷ The book also dropped references to naval science as an entity distinct from military science, a feature that had marked the earlier edition. These and similar events amounted to "a reassertion of Ground Force dominance."⁸

Arguments for an independent naval role and independent theory of naval art to support it doubtless became more difficult to maintain as the budget tightened in the mid-1970s. Francis Fukuyama suggests in this context that former Minister of Defense Ustinov and former Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov had priorities that differed from those of Marshal Grechko and Admiral Gorshkov. While Grechko and

³MccGwire, p. 471.

⁴Ibid., p. 472.

⁵Ibid., p. 470.

⁶See I. Kh. Bagramyan, "Mogushchestva vo imya mira," *Izvestiya*, May 22, 1976; S. M. Lobov, "Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva: ego oboronosposobnost'," *Morskoy sbornik*, pp. 99-105. See also MccGwire, p. 473.

⁷S. G. Gorshkov, *Morskaya moshch' gosudarstva*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1979, pp. 305-318.

⁸MccGwire, pp. 474-476.

Gorshkov wanted to establish a peacetime power projection capability for the Soviet Navy, Ustinov and Ogarkov sought to reorganize the Soviet Armed Forces to make them better able to fight a modern conventional war.⁹

By the late 1970s, Ustinov and Ogarkov also recognized that they would have limited resources for a rapid, high-technology modernization of the Soviet Armed Forces. Under these circumstances, Gorshkov's arguments for aircraft carriers and heavy battle cruisers probably received less and less attention.¹⁰ The continental theaters, as always, remained the priority.

Despite these challenges, Gorshkov and his group renewed their arguments during the early 1980s. The debate included an exchange between Admiral V. N. Chernavin, who was subsequently named the commander in chief of the Soviet Navy and a fleet admiral, and Vice Admiral K. Stalbo, Gorshkov's deputy and long a proponent of his views in print. The exchange ensued as follows.

In April and May 1981, Stalbo published a two-part article in *Morskoy sbornik*, in which he alluded to the "specific peculiarities" of naval warfare. The goals of naval warfare, he argued, frequently differ from those of the Ground Forces, particularly in regard to taking and holding territory: "Offensive actions at sea against the enemy's vessels do not have as their goal some sort of geographic objectives. . . . The only exceptions are joint actions with the Ground Forces, especially amphibious landings."¹¹

In January 1982, Chernavin, who had been named chief of the Navy's Main Staff a month earlier, took the unusual step of criticizing Stalbo by name in *Morskoy sbornik*. Chernavin took exception to Stalbo's definition of "naval art" and to his view of the Navy's uniqueness:

In our opinion, the definition given in the *Soviet Military Encyclopedia* is clearer, neater and more precise. . . . Each service of the Armed Forces is able to exercise combat influence on the opponent. . . . Victory is attained by their joint efforts, which evoke

⁹Francis Fukuyama, *Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the Power Projection Mission*, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif., R-3504-AF, April 1987, pp. 39-42.

¹⁰In addition to this intramilitary aspect, party leaders, especially General Secretary Brezhnev, were apparently bent on curbing naval growth. See Jeremy Azrael, *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command*, p. 9.

¹¹Vice Admiral K. Stalbo, "Some Issues of the Theory of the Development and Employment of the Navy," *Morskoy sbornik*, No. 4, 1981, p. 24; the second article appears in No. 5, 1981.

the necessity of integrating all knowledge on armed struggle within the framework of a unified military science.¹²

Unified military science is the business of the General Staff and its subordinates, the main staffs of the service branches. As chief of the Navy's Main Staff, Chernavin seemed to be arguing that the Navy had gone too far in claiming its own uniqueness. He was urging the Navy back into line as a player in the combined-arms strategy.¹³

Despite these arguments from the chief of his Main Staff, Commander in Chief Gorshkov continued to press for recognition of the Navy's unique qualities, especially its role in enhancing the Soviet Union's status and the effectiveness of its Armed Forces:

It is no exaggeration to say that the present state of the fleet has consolidated the Soviet Union's position as a great sea power. It has widened the potential of the Soviet Union's Armed Forces and invested them with new qualities that fully correspond to the tasks of strengthening the defense of the countries of the socialist community.¹⁴

Gorshkov's efforts failed, however, and he retired in December 1985. Chernavin, his successor, seemed to discard the themes that Gorshkov had returned to again and again. Instead, Chernavin argued that the Navy was "an integral part of the USSR Armed Forces."¹⁵ He contrasted the Soviet emphasis on submarines and naval aviation with that of the United States, which "considers its surface ships and naval aviation to be the most important component of its naval strike forces designed to ensure supremacy in regions of 'vital interest' to the United States."¹⁶ The Soviet Navy, Chernavin stated categorically, could not pursue such a course, for it has no aircraft carriers or battleships.¹⁷

¹²Admiral V. Chernavin, "Naval Theory," *Morskoy sbornik*, No. 1, 1982, p. 21. The encyclopedia defines naval art as "the theory and practice of planning and conducting military actions with naval forces, whether independently, or in conjunction with other branches of the Armed Forces." *Sovetskaya voyennaya entsiklopediya*, Vol. 2, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1976, p. 231.

¹³Despite the formal link between the General Staff and the main staffs of the services, the service chiefs of staff apparently do not adhere without question to the views of the chief of the General Staff. In the same *Morskoy sbornik* article, Chernavin commented thoughtfully on the significance of combat readiness and combat capability (*sposobnost'*), an issue over which Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov had differed with other military leaders. See *Naval Theory*, pp. 23-24; also Sec. II, above.

¹⁴Capt. 1st Rank V. B. Oppokov, interview with Fleet Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, "Raising Combat Readiness and Vigilance, Skillfully Utilizing Accumulated Experience," *Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 7, 1985, p. 74.

¹⁵V. Shmyganovskiy, interview with Admiral V. N. Chernavin, *Izvestiya*, July 26, 1987, p. 2.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Chernavin's disingenuous assertion notwithstanding, the Soviet Union had deployed helicopter and vertical-takeoff-and-landing (VTOL) carriers for over a decade and was in

Thus, Chernavin's Navy evidently relinquished its challenge to the combined-arms strategy. Although Gorshkov's initiatives had some success in the period when the expansion of Soviet military power was synonymous with the growth of Soviet state influence, they lost impetus once the defense budget came under pressure. In these circumstances, the bulk of the Soviet defense establishment evidently considered the combined-arms strategy to be the most efficient use of resources. It might also have provided a rationale for lowering expenditures on the Navy, a service that contributed in only a minor way to seizing enemy territory.

In July 1988, a new book appeared under the honorary editorship of Admiral Gorshkov, authored by naval theorists who had long worked under Gorshkov's tutelage. While the book reaffirmed that the fleet would participate in "joint action with ground troops in continental theaters of military operations," it also continued to stress the idea that naval forces should independently fight the enemy to gain control of the sea.¹⁸

This return to the theme of independent naval action indicated that Gorshkov's original challenge had not been totally abandoned, at least by his long-time associates. The book might thus have been a new salvo in the campaign to loosen the grip of the combined-arms strategy on naval theory.

The effort probably had little chance of success, however, for the entire thrust of the Gorbachev regime's policy toward the Navy in the latter half of the 1980s emphasized disengagement and negotiations to constrain both the U.S. and Soviet fleets. A cutback in out-of-area naval deployments was one of the first pieces of evidence that the Kremlin offered to prove the sincerity of its "new thinking" on defense and security matters.¹⁹ In this overall political environment, a Gorshkov-style blue-water navy that lacked intramilitary support would be unlikely to find backing among the civilian leadership.

these programs. This view is supported by a recent interview with Admiral Amel'ko, the retired commander of the Pacific fleet, who claimed that he had recommended against construction of the VTOL carriers in the 1970s, advising that "they are fragile and inefficient in terms of combat capability and too expensive." The Soviet Navy, Amel'ko stated, "should not have made a desperate effort to have the same types of vessels as the U.S. Navy." *Tokyo Shimbun*, October 25, 1988; in FBIS, December 20, 1988.

¹⁸N. P. V'yunenko, B. N. Makeyev, V. D. Skugarev, Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, ed., *Voyenno-morskoy Flot: rol', perspektivy razvitiya, ispol'zovaniye*, Voenizdat, Moscow, 1988, p. 261.

¹⁹Michael R. Gordon, "Soviets Scale Back Naval Deployments and Large Exercises," *New York Times*, July 17, 1988, p. 1.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Influenced by the continuing high-technology competition with the United States, the Soviet military recognized the need for change even during the most stagnant years of the Brezhnev regime. New technologies tested for the first time in regional conflicts—especially the October 1973 war in the Middle East—forced the military to think hard about how it would adapt to change. The pace of that change was being set by rapid innovation in countries that were already far advanced over the Soviet Union in critical areas of high technology. As a whole, the Soviet military recognized the existence of this gap and was prepared to close it.

From the mid-1970s on, however, the defense establishment also faced the critical problem of resource stringency. Pressures on the defense budget coincided with the technological challenge from the West. The military leadership understood well the expense of high-technology systems: How were the Armed Forces to pay for new weapons if resources were severely constrained? Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov adopted a two-pronged approach.

On the civil-military front, Ogarkov sought greater resources from the Communist Party leadership. Asserting that the Reagan administration's military buildup threatened war, Ogarkov argued in the early 1980s that the military should regain the preferential economic treatment that it had received in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Otherwise, he intimated, the Armed Forces could not guarantee the security of the country.

To his colleagues in the military services, he proposed the immediate conversion to high-technology weapons and equipment and the adoption of revolutionary changes in the strategy and tactics of their use. Although it was closely related to the resource issue, this solution touched more specifically on the structure and development of the Armed Forces. As such, it was largely an intramilitary matter, and it led to intramilitary conflict.

Ogarkov and other high technologists in the General Staff apparently concluded that the normal incremental approach to change in the Soviet military—and indeed, in Soviet society as a whole—no longer sufficed. The slow accumulation of practical experience on which to base decisions about new strategy and tactics or weapon acquisitions would not enable the Soviet Union to compete with the West's technological surge. Ogarkov and his fellow officers on the

General Staff evidently resolved instead to innovate as rapidly as possible, using modeling and other analytical methods to provide the theoretical underpinnings for the changes that they intended to implement. The General Staff, in short, proposed a revolution.

Their colleagues in the service commands, however, continued to argue for an evolutionary approach. The commander in chief of the Ground Forces, Marshal Petrov, maintained that current hardware could be hardened against new means of attack and could be modernized for use against an enemy even many miles from the battlefield. Tanks and other armored vehicles, he asserted, remained the main means to achieve success in ground warfare.

Marshal Tolubko, the commander in chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces, maintained that his service would continue to have a special role, even in a period when Soviet military doctrine was de-emphasizing nuclear warfighting and placing increased weight on assured retaliation. The Strategic Rocket Forces had been created the supreme service of the Armed Forces, he emphasized, a status commensurate with their responsibility to defend the Soviet state and prevent World War III.

Both service chiefs, it should be stressed, were eager to modernize, to deploy new weapon systems, develop new strategy, and reorganize forces to accommodate change. But their model was probably the military reforms that were just coming to fruition in the late 1970s, rather than rapid innovation. At that time, Petrov had been the new commander in chief in the Far Eastern theater. He was experimenting with strategy and tactics and implementing a reorganization that had been in planning stages for as much as a decade. He understood the need for change, but evidently did not have Ogarkov's sense of urgency.

In short, the General Staff and the services each had solutions to the high-technology problem, but Ogarkov was calling for a rapid transformation while the service chiefs were calling for a more deliberate pace. Ogarkov seemed convinced that the Soviet Union would never gain in the high-technology race unless the military was prepared to take risks. Petrov and Tolubko seemed prepared to bank on past experience in gradually assimilating progress.

The long-standing prominence of both the Ground Forces and the Strategic Rocket Forces no doubt contributed to Petrov's and Tolubko's attitudes. These two organizations had benefited from the great intramilitary compromise of the early 1960s between the missile enthusiasts and the Ground Forces traditionalists, who had drawn their experience from World War II. These two groups had struggled during the Khrushchev period to decide whether missiles alone could defeat the enemy, or whether large land armies also were needed. Eventually,

each retained a special role, the Rocket Forces to seize the strategic initiative, the Ground Forces to bring the enemy to final defeat on the battlefield.

Owing to this history of prominence—and the preferential treatment that accompanied it—the two organizations faced a difficult challenge. To address the high-technology revolution, the General Staff was proposing a radical variant of the combined-arms strategy, a variant based on the dominance of neither the Ground Forces nor (in the strategic nuclear realm) the Strategic Rocket Forces. Instead, the strategy emphasized the forces of greatest mobility and flexibility of employment. In that sense, airborne troops compared favorably with tanks and armored vehicles, and bombers and submarines with land-based ballistic missiles.

Given the nature of the General Staff's challenge, the Ground Forces and SRF commanders unsurprisingly resisted accepting equal status with the other branches of the Armed Forces. Long after the chief of the General Staff began espousing his variant of the combined-arms strategy, the two service chiefs continued to insist on the unique qualities of their organizations and the weapons that they deployed.

Unlike the Ground Forces and the SRF, which the General Staff was attempting to dislodge from favored positions, the Navy had long been struggling to establish itself against the preference shown to these two services. Naval Commander in Chief Gorshkov had begun 20 years earlier to seek the resources for a blue-water fleet, and in the early 1970s he and other prominent naval theorists had challenged the combined-arms strategy as it existed at the time—with an emphasis on Ground Force dominance of the theater campaign. They wanted recognition that the Navy could play an independent role in defeating the enemy, divorcing action in at least some maritime theaters from the progress of the campaign on the ground.

By 1979, Gorshkov and his colleagues were forced to back away from their challenge and admit that, in wartime, the Soviet Navy was primarily meant to support progress in the land theaters. Although this outcome was clearly a defeat for Gorshkov, within two years he had resumed the campaign for an independent role for the Navy. Gorshkov continued to argue for a unique naval role until he was retired in December 1985.

The naval leadership may have concluded that the upheaval resulting from Ogarkov's efforts to redefine the combined-arms strategy could be exploited to achieve its own goals. In their view, the Navy also offered flexibility and mobility—qualities that could be used to take the war farther from the Soviet homeland. The Navy could be a combined-arms player, but at the forefront of the action.

The General Staff dealt with this resumption of the Navy's challenge through the chief of the Navy's Main Staff, Admiral Chernavin, who later succeeded Gorshkov as the commander in chief of the Navy. If the military and political leadership hoped in this way to end the Navy's attempt to establish its independence from the combined-arms strategy, it failed. In 1988, Gorshkov and his colleagues once again raised the issue of naval independence.

Because the Soviet Navy has lacked the prominence of the Ground Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces, it has provided the clearest example of repeated challenges to the dominant views of the defense establishment. Adapting its stand to new circumstances, it resumed its challenge as the opportunity arose.

The Ground Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces, by contrast, had reached a compromise solution in the early 1960s that provided a stable basis for their relationship—and prominence—for almost 20 years. They seemed eager to continue the balance, responding to demands for high-technology modernizations through incremental change. Their challenge came from the General Staff, more particularly, from a group of high technologists led by Ogarkov, and their responses differed.

Marshal Petrov's strong arguments on behalf of the Ground Forces for evolutionary modernization evidently garnered wide support, including from Minister of Defense Ustinov, who provided an important link to civilian party leaders concerned with the defense budget. Petrov's position must have contrasted well with Ogarkov's strident demands for additional resources for the military.

In the end, the Ground Forces evidently proceeded to implement the reborn combined-arms strategy, but at a more deliberate pace than Ogarkov proposed. They might eventually lose their favored position, but the slow pace of the process would blunt the negative effects. More than anything else, the Ground Forces leadership probably feared a return to the chaos that their organization suffered during the Khrushchev years, when millions of troops were demobilized and the Ground Forces were dismantled as a separate command.

The Strategic Rocket Forces had never faced a threat to their own existence. In fact, from the beginning they had been the favored service, the symbol of the Soviet Union's power and technological prowess. They resented the attempt to reduce them to equal status as a member of a strategic triad with the Navy and bomber forces.

To answer this challenge, the SRF leadership argued that the capabilities and qualities of the organization continued to be unique, even during a period when conventional war had gained greater importance and nuclear escalation was less likely to occur. Tolubko, the SRF

commander in chief, and others who argued the SRF's case, failed, however, to achieve their goal.

The military leadership, including General Maksimov, Tolubko's successor as SRF commander, continues to consider the Strategic Rocket Forces a component of the strategic nuclear forces, no more or less important than the others. That long-time SRF leaders have continued to insist on their organization's uniqueness shows only that they do not yet consider the issue closed.

The broader goals of Soviet arms control policy have also clashed to some extent with those of the Strategic Rocket Forces. The fairly broad civil-military agreement that arms control negotiations should be pursued with the United States will undoubtedly lead eventually to deep cuts in the SRF's force structure.

In the intramilitary arena, however, a clear pattern of interaction emerges between the General Staff and the services. A challenge to established thinking or practice occurs; it is answered, and a solution emerges over a period of time. The solution is not complete, however, and the unresolved aspects of the issue remain, ready to cause new problems or controversy in the future.

The General Staff is not the only initiator of this process. The Soviet Navy, under its energetic commander in chief, Admiral Gorshkov, long hectored the General Staff to recognize the fact that the fleet could play a wartime role well beyond support of the land battle. Nor does the General Staff always win the challenge. The Ground Forces succeeded in the early 1980s in resisting General Staff demands that they proceed with a rapid revolution in force structure and strategy.

The unresolved aspects of the issues examined here leave a clear message: As the Soviet military faces new challenges, its component organizations will interact to adjust to demands for change. Sometimes they will fight to maintain status; at other times they will acquiesce and adapt to new circumstances. This willingness to reopen issues will doubtless serve the Soviet military well as it copes with the implications of Gorbachev's "new thinking" in arms control and national security affairs. The willingness, however, also foretells new conflicts.

Gorbachev's 1988 proposals to reduce Soviet troops and equipment unilaterally probably indicate a reacceleration of the modernization process for the Soviet Armed Forces. As events unfold around these unilateral initiatives, the public reaction of the military leadership will be an important sign of the current attitude inside the Armed Forces to the pace and depth of reform. Thanks to Ogarkov's strong lobbying of the early 1980s, the defense establishment is already acquainted with the idea of revolutionary change. How the military will react when the revolution is imposed by the political leadership is the critical question.

Indeed, although the similarity between Ogarkov's revolution and Gorbachev's restructuring is startling in some respects—both proposed rapid reorganization and streamlining of the Armed Forces—the differences are far more significant. Ogarkov sought a lean, modern, high-technology force to permit a more rapid and effective combined-arms offensive, especially in an age when the enemy could attack massed Soviet forces far from the front. Gorbachev, by contrast, seems bent on implementing a doctrine that excludes rapid offensives into enemy territory.

Whereas Ogarkov urged change in order to better prepare for an offensively oriented war that the military leadership knew and understood, Gorbachev is proposing a strategy rooted in defenses. He thus places before the military establishment a much more serious challenge, and the vision of a much more radical revolution than Ogarkov described. Implementing Gorbachev's initiatives will stretch, perhaps to breaking, the military's proven and long-standing ability to adapt to change.