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SOVIET INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIVES

For people living in a democratic society, with its many centers of decision-making and with its government constitutionally restricted in authority, it is difficult to conceive of a country having positive global "objectives." Such societies may hold in common certain ideals and aspirations, but they do not work toward concrete goals in their foreign policy. A rich country like the United States, insofar as it may be said to have national aspirations, conceives them in domestic terms: full employment, better health care, or racial equality. International objectives are perceived primarily in negative terms, such as the absence of war, or the removal of obstacles to the free flow of people and goods.

But not all societies operate in a similar manner. Some, at certain stages of their historic development, do have a strong commitment to global objectives. Failure to understand this difference and to take it seriously constitutes a grave danger to democratic societies. "Mirror-imaging," i.e. the tendency to think of others as being like ourselves and likely to behave as we would under analogous circumstances can be extremely dangerous for a democratic society challenged by a society organized on different principles and driven by different motives.

The Soviet Union is such a different society. There are many reasons why this is the case: but the most important of these are rooted in that country's economic conditions and political system.

Notwithstanding its vast territory and rich mineral resources,

Russia is inherently a poor country which can only with difficulty support its population. Its extreme northern latitude makes for a very short agricultural season, a situation aggravated by the shortage of rain in areas with the best soil. Its mineral resources, often located in areas difficult to reach, are costly to extract. Due to great distances and difficult climatic conditions, its transportation network is inadequate. These natural factors have historically tended to drive Russia--tsarist and Soviet alike--toward the conquest of richer neighboring lands. No empire in history has expanded as persistently as the Russian. Russia is the only country to have emerged from World War II larger than it had entered it.

Russia's economic problems are aggravated by political ones. Except for very brief periods in its history, Russia has been governed by small elites unresponsive to the needs of the population at large. The concentration of power has reached extreme proportions after the Revolution of 1917. Soviet Russia today is a country in which an elite composed of a few million members of the Communist Party and their families live disproportionately well at the expense of the remaining 240 million citizens. This elite can enjoy its advantages only as long as it is able to keep the population under total control--democracy spells for it surrender of privileges and wealth--and it can justify this control only by creating a state of artificial tension between Soviet Russia and an imaginary external enemy, i.e. by pressing outward, and thus creating international crises.

Running a highly authoritarian regime, the Russian ruling elite is both required to and able to pursue its international objectives in a relatively coherent manner. This is not to say that it has any "time tables" or "blue-prints" at its disposal: such schedules are simply not possible in an unpredictable world. It does mean, however, that the Soviet elite, as directed by the Politburo, being in total control of the country's political institutions, economic resources, and media can set for itself short-term as well as long-term objectives and, varying its strategy and tactics to suit changing circumstances, pursue them in an organized and decisive manner.

The openly stated ultimate Soviet objective is the world-wide triumph of socialism. By this is meant the elimination of all private property in the means of production, the dissolution of all private associations (including political parties), and the establishment of a global system best described as a regime of state capitalism managed by a self-perpetuating elite on the model of the Soviet Communist Party. Such a system would give the Soviet elite ready access to the world's resources, both human and material; it would also do away with all external challenges to its privileged position by eliminating alternative political and social systems. Because the Soviet Union was the first to experience a Communist revolution and because it is and will likely remain the most powerful of the Communist states, the Soviet elite believes that in a Communist world it is they that should lead and dominate. In fact, however, the Soviet elite is prepared to accept less than that, and there are

indications that it may have no choice but to acquiesce to the ideal of a polycentric global Communist community in which Russia is not so much the directing center as the first power among equals.

The attainment of this ultimate objective--a new world order--requires first and foremost the reduction of the power, influence, and prestige of the United States, a country which the Soviet leaders perceive as the central bastion of the "capitalist" or enemy camp. They see the global conflict as a drawn-out process, replete with temporary reverses for their side, in which the two principal contenders--Russia and America--vie with each other for the purpose of isolating and reducing its respective opponent to impotence. The notion of a stable world order in which nations cooperate rather than contend is entirely alien to both their psychology and doctrine. "Peaceful coexistence" is in Soviet theory not a concept involving a stable world order, but a strategy adapted to the era of nuclear weapons, an era which, more than any before, calls for patience and prudence.

✓ In its global activities the Soviet Union pursues what may be called "grand strategy," involving the use of a great variety of instrumentalities to attain one's ultimate end, the reduction of one's opponents' ability to resist. These means include economic weapons, political weapons, ideological weapons and, of course, military weapons. All these instrumentalities are used concurrently and it would be a mistake to think that Russia's eagerness to increase its trade with the Western world or to participate in arms' limitation negotiations precludes very hostile

political propaganda or a military build-up against its partners in these endeavors. It would be equally wrong, however, to see the US-USSR rivalry primarily in terms of the military balance, insofar as "grand strategy" conceives military power as only one instrumentality (albeit a critical one) in a large arsenal of means of persuasion and coercion.

The principal medium-term objective of Soviet grand strategy may be defined as follows:

1. Strengthening the Soviet economy through a process of intensive modernization as an essential prerequisite to the improvement of the country's military capacity. This aim is to be achieved primarily through heavy borrowing of capital and technology in the advanced "capitalist" countries, and secondarily by accelerating the integration of the economies of the Communist countries. The desire to avail themselves of foreign money and know-how has been a principal factor in the adoption by the Soviet elite of the policy of "detente." Its contribution to the modernization of the armed forces has been the major reason for the acquiescence of the Soviet military to a policy of temporary and partial accommodation with the West, which they find basically odious.

2. Multiplying and tightening the links connecting Western Europe to the Soviet Union and its dependencies, and concurrently decoupling it from the United States. The integration of West European economies into the Communist economy which would ensue would give the Soviet bloc that level of productive and technological capacity which it requires to be able to deal with the United States from a position of great strength.

It is with this vital objective in mind that the USSR has acquiesced, however reluctantly, to the adoption by the leading West European Communist parties of democratic programs and strategies. The experiences of Chile and Portugal have shown that it is only by such a strategy that Communist parties have a chance of coming to power and paving the way for Soviet hegemony in the area.

3. Undercutting the economic links connecting the "capitalist" world, and especially the United States, with the countries of the Third World, on the assumption that lack of access to the raw materials and cheap labor available in these countries would throw capitalism into a series of fatal convulsions. Particular attention is paid to energy resources, especially oil: the USSR wishes both to make oil more costly (in part to profit from increased oil prices, being itself an oil exporting country) and to be in a position to cut off western oil supplies as a means of exerting political and economic pressure.

4. Containing and isolating China, which the USSR presently does not fear as a military power but about which it has profound, almost atavistic anxieties as a long-term threat. Although still hoping to mend relations with the post-Mao regime, the Soviet leadership fears that unless China is dismembered through the separation from it of border regions (Manchuria, Tibet, etc.) and the creation of buffer states, its long-term threat will persist.

Although the pursuit of these aims calls for the use principally of economic and political measures, the ultimate instrument--and the

backbone of Soviet strategy--involves military power. The point is that the Soviet Union presently has neither the economic nor the political strength to compete successfully with the United States and to establish on this basis its world hegemony. The only instrument at its disposal at which it can match and surpass the United States is the military one. True, the Soviet Union lags behind the United States in both productive capacity and weapons technology, but it can compensate for these deficiencies with other advantages. Its leadership is not restrained by legislation or public opinion in expending the country's resources on the military, and it can allot a disproportionately high share of its limited resources to that end. It can also mobilize its population at will, whether to undergo compulsory military training or participate in civil defense. Nor is it inhibited internally in how it disposes of these forces: it can send military aid or military forces of its own or of its allies to any part of the world where opportunities seem ripe. These inborn advantages induce the Soviet leadership to rely heavily on military policy as an instrument of grand strategy not only in the strictly military sense of subduing and conquering, but also in the political sense of intimidating.

The Soviet military buildup of all the armed services over the past quarter century has been staggering: its only parallel is Nazi rearmament of the 1930s. The buildup affects all the branches of the military: conventional ones as well as strategic nuclear ones, the air force and the navy, and, last but not least, the internal defensive program designed

to enable the USSR to fight and survive an all-out nuclear war. Arms' limitation talks have not had a visible effect on this buildup: their principal effect so far has been to restrain the United States in the development of weapons in which it happened to have enjoyed an advantage. Nor has the self-imposed restraint by the US in the past decade in the development and deployment of ICBMs evoked a similar response from the USSR. The Soviet Union does not subscribe to the US notions of nuclear sufficiency or mutual deterrence, which postulate that once a certain quantity of strategic nuclear weapons is obtained, further accumulation becomes pointless. Their strategists regard nuclear weapons as weapons to be used where and when required, and they believe that the possession of more and better strategic weapons is a definite military asset. The intensive programs of civil defense and hardening of command and control posts against nuclear attack undertaken in the Soviet Union in recent years suggest that they take very seriously the possibility of all-out nuclear war and want to be able to emerge from it as a viable system.

All the evidence indicates that the USSR is striving in earnest to obtain strategic superiority over the United States. Such superiority could serve two important ends. For one, it would enable the Soviet Union to apply effective pressure on the United States in various conflict situations which might arise as a result of Soviet expansion and compel it to retreat, much as the United States had done to the USSR in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis. For example one can conceive of

another war in the Middle East where the USSR, relying on its nuclear superiority, could compel the United States to abandon Israel. In this sense, superiority would serve basically offensive aims, enabling the USSR to project its power in various parts of the globe without necessarily establishing a major physical presence there. It could also serve defensive ends by assuring the USSR that should it eventually succeed in isolating the United States from its allies and the Third World, the United States would be less likely, in desperation, to lash out with strategic nuclear weapons; should it do so, however, the Soviet Union would be able to absorb the blow, retaliate with massive destruction, and still survive.

There is prevalent in the United States the comfortable notion that in the age of strategic nuclear weapons military superiority is a phantom that need not be feared: any power foolhardy enough to launch a nuclear war would doom itself to self-destruction. Hence, our stockpile of nuclear weapons assures our defense. This view unfortunately is not quite realistic. Modern warfare, being highly technical, is subject to constant revolutions through technical breakthroughs, so that what today appears as mutual assured destruction may become unilateral assured destruction the day after. The Soviet Union (like the United States) is engaged in intense research and development of both defensive and offensive weapons whose potential is unknown. The fact ~~is~~ that at the level of today's technology, for example, it is virtually certain that in an all-out war some submarines would survive and be able to launch their

missiles against the enemy does not guarantee a permanent counterforce: advances in anti-submarine warfare may well lead to submarines becoming some day as vulnerable as land-based missiles are today. Similarly, work on anti-satellite weaponry could lead to the development of means of blinding and silencing surveillance satellites, ~~and~~ leaving one side in the dark during the critical hours about the enemy's preparations for an all-out nuclear attack. Research and development in the fields of lasers, of anti-ballistic missiles and mobile missiles, all of which vastly complicate the picture, suggest that no comfort can be taken from the fact that we presently have "enough" ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers. Neither technology nor the relationship of forces to which it contributes are static; and given the intensity and scope of the Soviet military drive the security of the US could be seriously endangered as long as the opposite assumption ^{were} ~~is~~ accepted.

The Soviet Union, judging by its actions and doctrine, has very great ambitions. Its resources are limited, it confronts major internal difficulties; and its forays into world politics often experience setbacks. But it is nevertheless driven internally toward an aggressive and expansionist policy, which, given its enormous military might, makes it a very dangerous adversary. There is no evidence that SALT, economic and cultural relations, the Helsinki agreement, or any of the other features of detente have weakened Russia's outward drive. Its objectives are global, its instrumentalities varied, its ability to pursue long-term objectives while exploiting short-term opportunities unchanged.

It could be fatal short-sightedness to ignore these facts in the smug conviction that we have "enough" to defend ourselves and that there is always "time" to strengthen ourselves should it prove otherwise. In the nuclear age "enough" may not be enough, and "time" may prove too short to serve any constructive purposes.