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# The Evolution of Soviet Security Strategy, 1965-1975

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Avigdor Haselkorn

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educated was meant to ensure obedience in all situations and simultaneously excluded any competition between superiors and subordinates. Consequently, a maximum of general and special branch education was introduced for officers in order to guarantee the dominance of the superiors. Chapter IV is an excellent source of information for professionals who are interested in schools of the navy and the various ways of thinking during the time from 1850 to 1914. Although the author obviously tried to write a comprehensive book in order to share with a broad public his remarkable research efforts and experience in the interrelation between the different social fields—military and pedagogy—sometimes the tendency to overemphasize the scientific aspects reduces the pure reading delight. For historians, however, and those interested in 19th-century social and pedagogic matters in Germany, the book is an excellent work of reference.

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Captain, German Navy

Haselkorn, Avigdor. *The Evolution of Soviet Security Strategy, 1965-1975*. New York: Crane, Russak, 1978. 135pp.

If you would like to read a detailed account of modern Soviet expansionism based on meticulous research in a broad range of source material, Avigdor Haselkorn's *The Evolution of Soviet Security Strategy, 1965-1975*, may be the book. What most observers have gathered on an impressionistic basis has been presented in definitive text and tables in concise (135 pages), readable form. With impressions and suspicions substantiated by Haselkorn's data, we can conclude that Ulam's recognized work on Soviet international relations, *Expansion and Coexistence*\* should perhaps

now be titled as *EXPANSION and Coexistence* in a new edition. When Chinese polemicists refer to the "New Czars" and the "Social imperialists," they in fact can be well supported with the evidence compiled by Haselkorn.

Western scholars and policymakers long have recognized the Soviet "quest for security." Stalin's maneuvering to outwit a German-Japanese two-front attack in the late 1930s, his attempts to develop buffer states or areas in the East before the war, and his success in arranging buffer states in the West after the war are generally known. Our problem has been, as Helmut Sonnenfeldt has so ably put it,\* that Moscow's quest for security inexorably has led to the insecurity of all its neighbors. The United States, pursuing its own "forward strategy," "containment," and "collective security" since the late 1940s, has sought to assist those neighbors while enhancing its own security. Haselkorn highlights the changing world situation in the 1965-75 period: Washington's defensive efforts, successful for several decades, were rapidly eroded. With increased military capabilities, especially in the Red Navy and in maritime and air logistics, Moscow in the 1970s can leapfrog into areas further and further from its own borders. The United States is forced into ever wider-ranging containment efforts, while Moscow probably takes some comfort in being able to defend against the normally postulated (in Soviet circles) U.S.-NATO attack further from the homeland. According to Haselkorn, the Soviet "Blue Belt of Defense" has proceeded from concept to capability, boding ever more serious problems for Western military planners.

The author is careful to note that Soviet security strategy is not focused exclusively on the United States and NATO, but takes China into con-

\*Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1967*. New York: Praeger, 1968.

\*In a lecture at the Naval War College, 29 March 1978.

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sideration in a major way. Although Brezhnev's Asian Collective Security System has never been fulfilled in a single regional treaty organization pointed against China, Haselkorn deduces that Moscow nevertheless has constructed a makeshift alliance through a series of bilateral treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with nations around the Asian periphery. One is reminded of a much earlier Soviet assertion that if China did not return to the fold, the Soviet Union would know how to handle the situation.

Having developed his case, Haselkorn calls for U.S. actions to counteract Soviet momentum. It is almost an anguished call for an "American policeman" to wake up and return to his world patrol: "How many doors is the hotel burglar planning to break into, as opposed to where he has already tested the handles?" But what should America do to thwart Soviet ambitions? This is the disappointment in the book. There are no prescriptions. Having suggested that all our previous policies and strategies are outmoded, the author suggests no replacements. Each reader, I suppose, could develop his own new strategy—perhaps some readers will. Perhaps Haselkorn will draft his own recommendations in a sequel. He argues for global rather than regionalized strategic planning, a valid position, but one difficult to carry from concept to implementation because of area idiosyncracies.

Haselkorn's thesis is that the Kremlin indeed has orchestrated a global strategy and is implementing it successfully despite occasional setbacks. If they can do it, we must be able to, also. This is where many readers of the book will part company with the author. Even the introduction by Leo Cherne notes gently that the book is "overschematized." It is possible that Kremlin planners will be flattered at being credited with a grand design envisaging a

great Socialist (Communist) world system, with regional subsystems and intra- and intersubsystem strategic mutual support. Certainly they have had their problems. Certainly they have been reactive to outside events. But perhaps, through perseverance, they have developed a master strategy. We cannot be sure the Haselkorn design attributed to Communist *éminences grise* is in fact an official Soviet plan. If we could, our own counterplanning would be easier.

However, to deny the formal Soviet strategic orchestration postulated by Haselkorn is not to deny that Moscow has evidenced a strong consistency of purpose, achieved a formidable military buildup, and often shown deftness in policy and strategy coordination. In fact, these characteristics were visible well before the 1965-75 period. Discrete analytic periods in international affairs always carry the cognitive danger of not recognizing the influence of precursors or past experience. This is a weakness in Haselkorn's presentation.

He picks 1965 because that was the first full year of the Brezhnev government, and credits the new group with initiating the strategy and the military buildup to implement it. This does not give adequate weight to several factors:

(1) It is known that the Soviet Military Establishment in part was responsible for Khrushchev's ouster; Khrushchev had been hard on it. It is likely that Brezhnev and Kosygin had certain understandings with the military as to their future relationships, favorable to the latter's plans and programs. It is almost certain that the new party leadership was cautious about crossing military concerns. In short, the military was more likely to have its own way.\*

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\*Roman Kolkowicz, "Interest Groups in Soviet Politics: The Case of the Military," in Lenard J. Cohen and Jane P. Shapiro, *Communist Systems in Comparative Perspectives* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1974), pp. 317-34.

(2) There was a military buildup in progress prior to 1965. For instance, the major Soviet Navy ship construction program is known to have been given great impetus immediately following the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962. However, it is possible to track its genesis into the late 1950s. A similar time progression can be drawn for Soviet missile forces.

(3) On the political side, much emphasis is placed on the spate of Soviet bilateral treaties of friendship and cooperation signed during the 10-year period. In perspective, this may not be too significant. The Soviet Government always has tended to operate abroad under treaty aegis. In the 1920s, the Lenin-Stalin regime negotiated a phenomenal number of treaties, agreements, and understandings. Diplomatic effort is a Soviet penchant; written agreements a standard *modus operandi*. To imply a sinister design to recent activity, without saying it is standard procedure and reminiscent of the 1920s, may be to stretch the point.

Given these caveats, however, Haselkorn's book is nonetheless recommended for politicomilitary planners. His diligent research effort and consequent strategic conceptualization provide food for thought.

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Hooper, Edwin Bickford, et al. *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict: Vol. I, the Setting of the Stage to 1959*. Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Navy, Naval History Division, 1976. 419pp.

Prepared by the Navy History Division, this is "the first of a planned series on the United States Navy and the Vietnam conflict." When completed, that series should be of great value to students both of naval history and of the wars in Vietnam. If that objective is to be fully achieved, however, subse-

quent volumes (number and nature as yet unspecified) must be better defined and prepared than is this one.

This first volume is designed to give a general survey of developments in Vietnam prior to active American involvement (whenever one wants to date that), and to provide background for the rest of the series. While the book is unquestionably useful and will be a valuable resource for later historians, as a self-standing historical work, it suffers in a number of respects.

Vice Admiral Hooper, former Director of Naval History, explains in his Preface that "the volume is the product of a team effort within the Naval History Division." Unfortunately the book shows it. Many of us have reservations about the abilities of committees to do much of anything, much less such a difficult, and indeed idiosyncratic, task as writing history. In this case the product might have been more satisfactory had the responsibility for authorship been assigned to a single individual, as has been the case with the best of the various military history series. Indeed, Admiral Hooper's own book about logistics in Vietnam (*Mobility, Support, Endurance: A Story of Naval Operational Logistics in the Vietnam War 1965-1968*, Washington: U.S. Dept. of the Navy, Naval History Division, 1977) is a far more successful historical work even though it treats a subject with much less general appeal.

The problem of multiple authorship is compounded by the stated objective of providing simultaneous treatment of three interrelated but nonetheless distinct threads. While the quality varies considerably among the three threads, none is very well done and the cutting back and forth succeeds primarily in confusing the reader.

As one thread the book treats the historical background and context of developments in Vietnam as a whole. While certainly of relevance to an understanding of the specific involvement of