



Research Paper

The Military Strategy of the Soviet Union

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Abstract: This article is devoted to the history of Soviet military strategy and its restructuring. It provides a comprehensive examination of the major events which laid the foundation of the Soviet military. The article delves into a comprehensive description of the Soviet military thought developed under its leadership from Lenin to Gorbachev. To reconstruct the past in a systematic and objective manner, the author applies the historical research technique. This paper is divided into four sections: the first attempts to provide a brief overview of the conceptual framework imperative for understanding the concept of military strategy; the second focuses on the development of Soviet military strategy under Lenin; the third examines the developments of the Interwar and World War II periods, and the fourth discusses the development of conventional forces as well as nuclear weapons during the cold war period. The paper further attempts to answer the following questions- How Soviet military strategy was formulated during the interwar period? What factors led to the shift in military strategy during World War II? What factors were responsible for influencing Soviet military strategy during the Cold War period (1947-1991)? and Was the Soviet's military modernisation a means for gaining parity with the US? It is concluded that among several factors, two have been particularly important in contributing to the evolution of Soviet military strategy - first, the nature of Soviet leadership, and second, the expansionist policies of the United States during the cold war period.

Keywords: military strategy, historical research, World War II, cold war

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I. Introduction

Throughout the Soviet intellectual framework, the concept of military strategy has been extensively examined and intensively explored. In the context of military policy, military strategy examines the laws and mechanisms of war, the strategic nature of warfare, and the theoretical basis for the planning, organisation and conduct of various wars and strategic operations. According to Soviet theorists, military strategy is the higher form of military art and represents a system of scientific knowledge of war as an armed conflict between the interests of particular classes.

The author finds a discussion and re-examination of the Soviet Military Strategy important because Russia's current large military endowment is a legacy of a glorious past in which the Kremlin's defence capabilities stood far and above those of any other power. Additionally, the key to understanding Russia's present military strategy lies in Kremlin's historical context. The author has applied historical research technique to conduct separate searches within Soviet military journals and scholarly literature. Early Soviet writings and analyses from that period also served as a springboard for the development of terminology and its context. Although the article is not intended to be an extensive review of the literature in this field, it does leverage resources intended to be summative and comprehensive. Military dictionaries and encyclopaedias were also particularly useful for understanding complex concepts and defining key terms.

This article examines the evolution of Soviet military strategy and argues that two major factors which played a quintessential role in the development of Soviet military thought were - the Soviet leadership, and the expansionist policies of the United States during the cold war period.

Military Strategy: A Conceptual Framework

To begin with, the author attempts to distinguish military strategy from doctrine, as well as provide the broader Soviet concept of military strategy. The military policy of a state is closely interlinked with its military doctrine and military strategy. Military Doctrine is based on scientific research and is the link connecting military science and art, strategies and tactics. It is accepted as a basic guide by the armed forces for the conduct of military affairs. On the other hand, Military strategy incorporates in itself the study of -

- the laws and methods that govern the conduct of an armed conflict;
- the core principles of civil defence and military planning;
- the historical traditions of the state;
- strategic leadership and their organisational setting;
- the foreign and domestic strategies of state;
- the overall planning, preparation and conduct of war
- the scientific and mechanical support which is a pre-requisite for armed conflict;
- the capability of adversaries to conduct warfare and strategic interventions.

The purpose of military doctrine is to rationalise political efforts with the available military resources in order to secure the state. As part of military policy, it serves as the basis for developing military concepts, programs, and plans, which are analysed concretely by other government documents. It provides a typology of conflicts, as well as a phased approach to conflict (period of military danger and military threat). Furthermore, it also addresses measures intended to mitigate conflict and minimise its escalation. While on the other, military strategy is regarded as the highest form of military art, as well as a branch of military theory (under military science) that facilitates the interrelationship of other elements. In its theoretical formulation, military strategy is a set of concepts and knowledge regarding the nature of modern wars; ways to prevent them through military means; methods and forms of conducting military operations on a strategic scale and strategies for preventing wars from taking place. Additionally, military strategy is also a practical set of policies and considerations adopted by the state, particularly at the highest levels to prepare for and manage defence during peacetime and manage military resources during wartime. Therefore, military strategy constitutes a central component of broader military art (the art of war), representing its highest form, and involves planning strategic operations and conducting war in general.

A comprehensive understanding of Soviet Military Strategy can be found in the monumental work *Strategy* of the early Soviet theorist A. Svechin. According to Svechin, military strategy is a continuation, a part of politics of the contemporary affairs. Since the highest state power conducts war, therefore, Svechin believed that both an integral strategy (both military and political) and an integral strategist are requisite in the formulation of military strategy. Historically, Soviet military doctrine was categorised as having socio-political and military-technical components, but these components were rarely in alignment or accord, as the former was set by political leadership while the latter was driven primarily by military considerations. The basic tenets of the Soviet military thought within which the Soviet Military Strategy evolved and continued to expand were - First, a commitment to maintaining balance among the different military branches and services for a synchronised and systematic operation in the battle; Second, less dependence on the operation of any single weapon system and service branch; Third, thrust on mass concentration of forces and weapons; Fourth, strong tendency to seize the opportunity and employment of offensive military operations and Fifth a strong predisposition to conduct geographically extensive and highly mobile operations.

Soviet Military strategy under Lenin

The fundamental influences on the origin and development of Soviet Military Doctrine were - the imperial Russian tradition, the Marxian legacy, the early military experiences of the Bolshevik revolutionaries notably in the Civil and Polish wars from 1918 to 1921, foreign military influences particularly the ideas of Clausewitz - *On War* and the strong influence of Clausewitz's work on Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. The Marxist-Leninist military doctrine and policy shaped the Red Army after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. During the civil war when internal strife and foreign intrusion posed a major threat to the existing Bolshevik regime, this military doctrine was further developed. Political power was ruled by the Bolshevik (Communist) party, which wielded an authoritative position in military development. Lenin was the main interpreter of Marxism and his significant works were associated with "the study of the political struggle of the working-class, armed putsch and proletarian revolution laid the basic foundation of Soviet Military Strategy".

Lenin recognised "war as a continuation of politics by other armed means". In developing and defining concretely the concepts of Marxist theory of armed conflict, Lenin developed "the doctrine of just and unjust wars and of the change of an imperialist war into a civil war, into a war of the workers against the exploiters, thus arming the working class and its vanguard - the Communist party - with a clear program of action in the struggle for the liberation of the working class from capitalist slavery". Offensive combat operations along with defence and retreat were also followed during the civil war. A decisive characteristic of offensive operations was the combination of successive operations accompanied by an overall strategic effort in a particular direction, in which each individual operation served as a link in the chain leading towards the accomplishment of the ultimate objective.

However, the defensive operations of the red army were characterised by active counterattacks and decisive actions. Their main target was to exhaust and destroy the adversary, eliminate his manoeuvre skills and

prepare the ground for a counterattack. These defensive operations were further supported by the deployment of “cavalry armies, artillery, infantry and air force to initiate powerful offensive assaults on the adversary. Thus, the chief characteristic of the civil war was high competence and coordination of the military activities of the red army. It was a war for the political survival of the Bolsheviks and the legacy of Lenin became the basic foundation of future Soviet Military Doctrine”

Following the end of the civil war, the Soviet armed forces developed in a peaceful manner. But from 1918-1921, Lenin's program of “War Communism” resulted in the militarisation of the entire nation and mobilisation of the nation's limited economic power for war. Consequently, in response to the poor economic conditions, “Lenin's New Economic Policy” was viewed as a major attempt to address all facets of national reconstruction as a whole. However, the whole of the Soviet Union was progressively brought under the control of the state as a step towards the attainment of Socialism.

Soviet military developments of the Interwar and World War II periods

The Soviet leaders recognised in the late 1920s that some radical reforms were necessary for the economic and political strengthening of the Soviet state. “Red army strength had fallen to 562,000 men, the cadre territorial system of manning the military had not produced a proficient fighting force, and everywhere advanced weaponry was in short supply. Thus, a large scale and exorbitant military modernisation program was undertaken to transform the army into a modern force”. Such massive modernisation required a strong industrial base in addition to a large supply of financial and manpower resources. This could only be accomplished by launching a “new social revolution against the landed peasant class that would destroy the older institutions and enable the peasants to become industrialised and contribute to the industrialisation of the Soviet state” . In November 1927, through the launch of two notable goals for Soviet domestic policy, Joseph Stalin began his revolution from above. These goals included - Rapid Industrialisation followed by Collectivisation of Agriculture. In his view, his primary objective was to eradicate all signs of capitalism from the New Economic Policy and rebuild and re-equip the Soviet Union into an industrialised and socialist state.

By implementing Stalin's FiveYear Plans, the Soviet Union was able to achieve rapid industrialisation within a short period of time, which enabled it to develop and strengthen its defensive capability. There have been significant changes in the - First, level and quality of combat training; Second, quantity and quality of weapons and military equipments; Third, organisational structure of the defence forces and fourth, scientific development of the Soviet Military Strategy. This pre-war period also witnessed the development of increased strategic cooperation among various services of the armed forces in terms of purpose, time, and location. During this period, the massive ground forces played a significant role - “large infantry contingents, supported by artillery and armoured units, as well as numerous tactical (frontal) aviation units intended to serve as airborne artillery, played a significant role in Soviet military striking power” .

As for the scope of future war, the Soviets believed - First, it would be long-lasting and extremely manoeuvrable; Second, large armies, accompanied by huge pressure on economic and organisational forces; Third, primarily a war characterised by an alliance between capitalist countries and the Soviet Union that would result in a series of continuous and uninterrupted campaigns and operations. The Soviets clearly outlined the essence of their mobile and manoeuvrable future war in the Field Service Regulations of 1939, which marked the beginning of a systematic mechanisation of troops and the start of offensive combat operations. The Field Service Regulations said, “the USSR will respond to any enemy attack with a crushing blow involving all might of its armed forces. If an enemy unleashes a war on us, the workers and peasants of the red Army will be the most offensive-minded of all the attacking armies that ever existed”. However, despite the prominence accorded to offensive combat in the 1930s as a definitive method of conducting armed conflict, the Soviet Union also endorsed defensive warfare as an integral component of warfare.

On the nuclear front, though Soviet scientists were aware of the military potential of nuclear energy since the late 1930s, the development of nuclear weapons before World War II was on a small scale and weakly supported by the government. Early on, Stalin demonstrated an intentional refusal to embrace the nuclear revolution as a part of Soviet policy. Soviet military doctrine remained based on the concept of permanent operating conditions, a traditional policy emphasising troop morale, divisions and weapons quantities and quality. However, attitudes began to change as war approached and German nuclear weapons development was suspected.

Soviet Military Strategy in World War II was based on a combination of offensive combat operations at the outset. The main characteristics of these strategic offensives were - “to destroy the major groups of the adversaries within one or two critical sectors; to liberate productive and politically important regions; to overpower the coalition partners of fascist Germany - Finland, Romania and Hungary - and finally to liberate the subjugated people and territories of the Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe from the clutches of fascist Germany”. Nevertheless, following the 1939 Soviet - “Japanese battle at KhalkhinGol”, the Soviets prevented the application of offensive strategies in 1941-42, during the first two years of the war with Germany.

The Barbarossa campaign of 1941 took the Soviets by surprise, leading to heavy losses. Nevertheless, the weak planning and execution of the German army and staunch and powerful resistance from the Soviets allowed USSR to cease the advancement of the German forces at the periphery of Moscow and Leningrad. This military campaign was based on a series of defensive battles and forced retreats in the face of superior German forces. The Soviets undertook “a massive operation to move the economic capacity from the western areas that were about to be overrun, to eastern regions in the Urals and Central Asia that were out of reach of the Germans”. Thus, the methods used by the Soviets in their combat against the German forces were based on “the strategy of attrition”- which involves the commitment and participation of a vast sum of soldiers and equipments to battle, taking advantage of the climatic condition, physiography and vast size of Soviet Russia to wear down and exhaust the German forces. This strategy became effective and by 1943, the USSR was confident of the final triumph.

The Battle of Stalingrad in 1943 was a major turnaround event in World War II for the Soviets. “A cumbersome but nonetheless powerful Russian steam-roller gradually ground down German resistance and moved westward in a series of massive offensive thrusts that culminated in the occupation of Eastern Europe and the defeat of the Nazi regime”. The strategic offensive operations method was also successfully used by the Soviets in the Far East opposition to the Kwantung Army of imperialist Japan. Thus, the Soviet armed forces faced their greatest test during World War II (1939-45). Lenin's concept of “defence of the socialist motherland”, was the guiding principle that determined the military-political goals of war and inspired the soldiers and people of the Soviet Union for a just war. The most important defensive operations during the war were performed by the ground troops which comprised “80 to 86 per cent of the entire personnel of the armed forces”. As the war progressed various branches of ground troops like the infantry, armed troops and artillery were instituted, especially along the lines of enhancing their striking power, firepower and manoeuvrability. The air force was the second pivotal service of the armed forces during the war and they were extensively used for conducting both defensive and offensive operations. Air forces were also used to conduct aerial operations. They were directed to help the ground troops for the successful implementation of their operations and for the demolition of enemy's personnel and equipment on the battlefield. The navy which was another active component of Soviet armed forces was designed for the defence of the sea boundaries. The navy extensively used surface vessels, as the major means effective for resolving basic combat operations on the sea. Therefore, Soviet's wartime strategy placed great importance upon the policy of Strategic cooperation.

Soviet military strategy during the Cold War period (1947-1991)

The period following the end of World War II represented an exceedingly turbulent period in the development of Soviet military in many respects. By 1948 Joseph V. Stalin on one hand had reduced USSR's “armed forces to about 2.8 million men and had given priority to reconstruction of the domestic economy, with the objective of reaching the pre-war level by 1950” while on the other, he also emphasised on the development of those military technologies in which the Soviet Union had been most deficient: nuclear weapons, radar, missiles, and jet engines.

Soviet scientists initially developed both implosion-type and gun-type nuclear weapon designs, however, the latter project was abandoned by mid-1948 due to the low efficiency of gun-type devices. Both weapon design and manufacturing technologies had been completed by 1949. As part of the government's special decision, a site for testing was selected in the Semipalatinsk area in Kazakhstan, and on 10 August 1949, the site was approved for use. Following three trial runs on 14 August, 18 August, and 22 August, the first Soviet nuclear explosive device RDS-1 (also known as Izdeliye 501 and First Lightning) was successfully tested with a yield of 22 kilotons on 29 August 1949. Essentially, the RDS-1 was an exact copy of the Fat Man bomb of the United States. But the task set by Stalin, liquidating the U.S. nuclear monopoly and developing the Soviets' own nuclear arsenal, was finally accomplished on 12 August 1953, when the USSR successfully tested the first Soviet thermonuclear bomb, the RDS-6. This bomb was in development since 1948, and Stalin only survived by five months to witness its triumph.

Following Stalin's death in 1953, the military thought of the Soviet Union began its adaptation to the nuclear era and a discussion on the implication of nuclear weapons for the Soviet Military Strategy was initiated. During the mid-1950s, Soviet strategic bombers equipped with intercontinental missile ranges began entering service. The Soviet Union had a program to “examine missiles derived from the wartime German V-1 cruise missile and V-2 ballistic missile. Series production of the R-1, a copy of the German V-2 began in 1950 and was followed by improved types such as the R-2 (SS-2) and R-5 (SS-3). The R-5, the first indigenous Soviet design, was also the first Soviet missile armed with a nuclear warhead and was deployed in 1956”.

During the initial years of Khrushchev's ascendancy, Soviet defence outlays were reduced by about ‘one billion rubles’ during the period 1955-58 by cutting manpower, scrapping Stalin's conventional navy plans and shifting the USSR's defence effort towards missiles, electronics and nuclear weapons. Khrushchev was of the view that the standard of living of a nation suffers when the budget of its country is overburdened with

grants to an unproductive branch of consumption i.e. armed forces. During the first three years of Khrushchev's ascendancy, "military outlays declined from about 12 per cent to about 9 per cent, whereas consumption actually rose from about 60 per cent to about 62 per cent of Soviet GNP". In January 1960, speaking before the Supreme Soviet he emphasised on the adoption of a minimum deterrence strategy. In the Soviet view, deterrence relied heavily on the military balances of forces and upon the retaliatory capacity of nuclear armed strategic missiles as the foundation of its security rather than relying upon the powerful ground troops and their massive offensive operations.

In its first and most important duty, the USSR was to prevent any U.S. nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union, as well as to impede any plans of the United States to resort to nuclear weapons if a local conflict escalated into a war. A major catalyst in this regard was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which revealed Moscow's internal weaknesses regarding nuclear policy. In response to this event, a major change in Soviet Military Policy was initiated through the adoption of a new Soviet Military Doctrine and Nuclear Strategy. A major part of this revolution is associated with the large-scale production of nuclear weapons as well as fusion weapons; the deployment of large-scale strategic ballistic missiles for the formation of a new branch of the Soviet military, known as the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF), as well as the introduction of nuclear weapons into the arsenals of all other Soviet armed forces services, thus requiring internal reorganisation.

A collection of ideas about international politics was presented by Brezhnev, Podgorny and Kosygin when they came to power, which was consistent with Marxist-Leninist ideologies. Brezhnev, as Vozd, prioritised military production by prioritising the production of advanced tanks, aircraft, and artillery equipment, downplaying the needs of the consumer economy in contrast to Khrushchev and Kosygin. Under Brezhnev, two major ideologies guided the development of Soviet military and nuclear policies between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s. First, the notion of an international system structured along class lines; and second, the idea that socialism and capitalism have fundamentally irreconcilable interests.

The period following the ascendancy of Brezhnev in 1964 was characterised by a commendable growth in Moscow's military fortunes. By the mid-1960s the production of hydrogen bombs, essential for achieving parity with the US in the nuclear arms race, was well underway. Besides a significant increase in the number of Soviet strategic nuclear weapons, the Soviets also introduced advanced technologies such as multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), mobile missile launchers, and sophisticated stellar navigation systems as part of a major qualitative up-gradation. But by the late 1960s, despite the immense investments the Soviets lagged well behind the United States in most of the areas of technology and its shipyards and air defences could not compete with that of the US.

As a consequence, there was another upgradation in the military procurements of the Soviet Union, by the end of 1970s. Under Brezhnev, "the total expenditure and the procurement of military outlays grew faster than other components. The Soviet economy performed well from 1965 to 1970 and the military expenditure expanded particularly fast. By 1970 defences accounted for about 12 to 13 per cent of GNP, as compared to about 9 per cent only one decade earlier". Thus, by the early 1970s, the Soviet Union stood at the zenith of its political and strategic power in comparison to the United States. The signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) of May 1972 led to the establishment of parity in nuclear weapons between the two superpowers. This was followed by further negotiations on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which culminated in 1972.

During the mid-1970s the Soviets developed three essential Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) technologies that were completely lacking at the beginning of the SALT - "First, a small and movable phased array radar for local defences; and Second, two new ABM missiles, including one comparable to the U.S sprint designed for atmospheric interceptors; and the Ryad computer, reportedly similar to the U.S IBM 260/370 series". Therefore, by the time the SALT II agreement (June 1979) was signed between President Carter and Brezhnev, "Moscow's arsenal of long-range silo-based missiles had grown to some 1,400 (down from a high of 1,618 in 1975), outfitted with roughly 6,000 warheads". Military expenditures in the USSR grew rapidly as "a percentage of their Gross National Product (GNP) from 12-13 per cent in 1970 to approximately 18per cent in 1980".

Yuri Andropov who took over from Brezhnev on 12 November 1982 initially promised to attend to the considerable needs of the Soviet armed forces. But by late 1983, he began to hedge a bit on his support for the military. Under Andropov, the emphasis placed on economic reforms further emphasised the leadership's desire to return to the detente of mid-1970, particularly with respect to intermediate-range missile forces, where the Soviets had acquired tactical advantage through the development of SS-20 missiles in western Europe.

Konstantin Cherenkov who acceded Andropov on 13 February 1984 represented a return to the policies of the late Brezhnev period. He emphasised on the Soviet military and its role in safeguarding the gains of socialism during his brief tenure of thirteen months as general secretary. In addition to Chernenko's pre-occupation with - the US position on arms control issues and missiles in Europe, the Soviet leadership repeatedly returned to the question of the militarisation of space, an issue that had occupied centre stage since President Reagan's proposal for the so-called Strategic Defence Initiatives (SDI), also referred to as Start Wars

in March 1983. Chernenko's stance on the Star Wars program is further highlighted by Robert C. Toth, who argues, "Soviet President Konstantin U. Chernenko, disputed Reagan Administration's claim that the Star Wars space program is a defensive effort and harshly attacked the plan as an offensive and aggressive concept whose aim is to achieve U.S. superiority over the Soviet Union".

During the 1980s, the leaders of the Soviet Union became conscious of the fact that they had locked the USSR into a draining military competition with the economically and technologically superior west, a competition that was gradually weakening the overall economic and security position of their country. The new leadership that came to power in 1985 under Mikhail Gorbachev alleged that rather than facilitating and securing Soviet interests, the previous regime's excessive dependence on the military as an instrument of policy had done irretrievable harm to the country, by aggravating tensions with the opponents, straining ties with allies and intimidating virtually everyone else. Therefore the political leadership sought to redefine security in terms of emphasising defensive themes and war prevention.

Gorbachev's ideology enshrined in the Twenty-Seventh Congress of the Communist Party, reflected his pragmatic thinking as he emphasised the philosophy of ensuring security in the nuclear age with an overall agenda for action aimed at creating a peaceful world. His concept of comprehensive universal security had four major dimensions - military, political, economic and humanitarian. The main contribution of Mikhail Gorbachev to the Soviet Security Policy are the three arms control negotiations that the Soviet Union concluded with the United States and NATO countries between 1987 and 1991: First, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) of December 1987; Second, the treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) of November 1990; and third, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START Treaty) of July 1991. These agreements revolutionised the security relations between the two superpowers and emphasised the reduction of hundreds of missiles and thousands of warheads on both sides. The agreements also opened new avenues for future negotiations by legitimising the inspection regime in order to assure compliance and build mutual trust. However, Gorbachev's further endeavours like the de-Sovietisation and de-communisation of Eastern Europe and unification of Germany in 1990 yielded major shifts in the geopolitics between 1989 and 1991, marked by an end of the cold war era.

Though Soviet decline occurred because of Gorbachev's failure to accomplish the goals for the reform of Soviet security policy notably the restructuring of the armed forces as well as his profound miscalculation about the integral role of the Red Army in maintaining the communist order within Eastern Europe and the USSR itself, still Gorbachev's approach to security has its own relevance. It brought an end to the Cold War in the most peaceful manner possible and contributed to global peace. Russia's (true successor state of the USSR) security system is also constructed on the broader framework of this security system with very few modifications to meet the need of the time.

II. Conclusions

Thus, the study on the history of the Soviet military strategy allows us to draw two major conclusions. First, there has been a continuum of leadership characteristics throughout the history of the Soviet Union, each contributing to the realisation of the military philosophy. For example, Lenin's works concerning the analysis of political struggle of the working class, armed coup and proletarian revolution formed the basic foundation for Soviet military strategy. Another notable example is of Stalin's Five Year Plans, which helped Soviet Union achieve rapid industrialisation within a short period of time, thereby enhancing its defensive capabilities. In addition, Stalin's Field Service Regulations of 1939 marked the beginning of a systematic mechanisation of troops, as well as an offensive combat strategy. Khrushchev belief that a nation's standard of living suffer from spending on an unproductive branch of consumption - the military, was clearly reflected in the first three years of his presidency when military outlays declined from about 12 per cent to about 9 per cent. Brezhnev's ambition to significantly increase Moscow's military power was clearly evidenced by the commendable growth in its military capacities. The imprint of ideology of Soviet leadership on its military policy is also reflected in Gorbachev's Military Strategy of the 1980s, which focused on ensuring world security in the nuclear age by implementing a comprehensive plan for creating peace in the world.

Second, conclusive argument that can be drawn from the paper is the role that US played in the modernisation of the Soviet military arsenal. By the late 1930s, as part of its efforts to achieve parity with the United States, the Soviet Union developed an extensive military-industrial complex managed by highly qualified scientists and professionals. Towards the end of World War II, it was the Stalin's official policy to catch up with the United States in every stage. That was evident from the first successful test of an atomic bomb, followed by the first thermonuclear device test. To maintain military equilibrium against the US, the Soviet deterrence system under Khrushchev, relied heavily on the balance of forces between the military and nuclear armed strategic missiles as retaliatory means, rather than strong ground forces and massive offensive operations. A priority was given to the superiority of the strategic rocket forces (SRF), their decisiveness, and the prospects for a relatively short conflict. The Soviet modernisation program of the 1960s occurred

simultaneously with the modernisation of U.S. strategic forces and by the early 1970s, the Soviet Union was finally able to accomplish strategic parity with the United States by developing the heavy R-36 (SS-9) missile and the lightweight UR-100 (SS-11) ICBM. This military symmetry was ultimately the impetus for both Russia and the United States to sign various arms control treaties in the future.

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