

Summer Session Honours Scholarship Report 2005/06

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Introduction

The aim of my thesis is to enter the debate about Soviet foreign policy in the Stalin era. Based on the research I conducted throughout 2005, two main debates emerged within the field. The first is whether Stalin controlled Soviet foreign policy or whether it was the result of bureaucratic struggles and policy debates within the Kremlin. The second is whether Stalin was a nationalist or an internationalist. My provisional hypotheses were: (1) That Stalin was the driving force behind Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s, and; (2) That his approaches to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) indicate an important continuity in Stalin's formulation of foreign policy. In both instances, while flexible, Stalin pursued his twin goals of preserving the Soviet state and the furtherance of world revolution.

Upon my receipt of the Summer Session Honours Scholarship, I set myself a number of goals: (1) Explore just how great an impact the partial opening of the Russian-Soviet archives has had on Western academia's understanding of Stalin; (2) Develop my understanding of Stalin's proximity to the processing of foreign policy during the 1930s; (3) Broaden my knowledge of the historiography of Stalin's Marxism and his commitment to internationalism; (4) Research the methodologies commonly employed to analyse Soviet foreign policy, and; (5) Familiarise myself with the concept of 'ideology' and what role it may have played in Stalin's foreign policymaking.

My summer research benefited greatly from the financial generosity of the University. Thus, I hope that the report to follow will illustrate that I have been a worthy recipient of the Summer Session Honours Scholarship.

Stalin and the “Archival Revolution”

Over the past fifteen years, historians have been in a position to explore archival sources previously inaccessible, and re-examine topics highly politicised by the Cold War. These developments – which the historian Kevin McDermott has referred to as an “archival revolution”¹ – have facilitated timely reassessments of a number of perceptions traditionally held of Stalin; in particular, our understanding of his foreign policy, and his commitment to both Marxism and world revolution. However, the limits of this “archival revolution” must be recognised. As McDermott has commented:

There are few, if any, ‘smoking guns’; there is no Stalin diary that reveals the tyrants innermost secrets; there are scarcely any Politburo stenographic records; and there is no single batch of documents that will answer conclusively the ‘big’ questions that have plagued historians for decades.²

Additionally, the history of Russian-Soviet foreign policy remains a highly sensitive issue in Moscow. For example, the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to be a difficult place to conduct research – Western historians enjoy only limited access³ – while the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation remains “off-limits”.⁴

Furthermore, any study of Stalin continues to be a mare’s nest for the historian. Just before his death, Lazar Kaganovich suggested that: “[Stalin] must be assessed differently according to the time, the period; there were various Stalins ... I saw at least five or six different Stalins.”⁵ McDermott echoes this statement when he argues that the Russian archives reveal “several Stalins”. The concept of “several Stalins” is an important

¹ McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’: Reflections on Stalin and Stalinism’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Summer 2004), p. 7

² McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’, p. 8

³ Naimark, ‘Cold War Studies and New Archival Materials On Stalin’, *The Russian Review*, Vol. 61 (January 2002), p. 3

⁴ Pons, *Stalin and the Inevitable War, 1936-1941*, p. xiv. Furthermore, as Silvio Pons has pointed out, the publication of documents – surely incomplete due to Russian declassification practices, and undoubtedly skewed by the biases of editorship – may actually confuse rather than support historical research unless scholars are granted full access to archival collections. [Naimark, ‘Cold War Studies and New Archival Materials On Stalin’, p. 4]

⁵ Quoted in R. W. Davies (et. al.), *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence, 1931-36*, p. 1

corrective to our understanding of the General Secretary – for example, it helps explain the *ad hoc* appearance of Stalin’s foreign policy – however, it also complicates any investigation into the Soviet dictator. How many Stalin’s were there? Kaganovich claims there were “at least five or six”.⁶ What were the attributes of these “several Stalins”? When does one Stalin end and another Stalin start? Most importantly, was there a core or essence to Stalin’s thinking and actions?

The “war-revolution” model advanced by McDermott is a useful key for understanding Stalin.⁷ In his treatment of the “war” aspect of the model, McDermott argued that,

Stalin’s entire worldview was filtered through the prism of war, actual and potential, civil and international, and the dangers, hopes, risks and opportunities associated with these periods of crisis.⁸

Turning to the “revolution” half of the model, McDermott portrays Stalin as a Marxist dedicated to building socialism in Russia, and committed to the goal of world revolution. He agrees with Lars T. Lih’s argument that, for Stalin, the interests of the Soviet state and the interests of world revolution “coalesced”.⁹ As a result, McDermott argues that “[both] war and revolution were central to Stalin’s and the Bolshevik’s lived experience and had a crucial impact on their thinking, self perceptions, and actions.”¹⁰ While this understanding of Stalin will underlie my study of his foreign policy, I accept McDermott’s conditional that “even after the partial opening of the former Soviet archives we can never be sure about ... [Stalin], his mentalities, motivations, fears and aims”.¹¹

Stalin and the Formulation of Soviet Foreign Policy

⁶ Quoted in R. W. Davies (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 1

⁷ McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’, p. 10

⁸ McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’, p. 11

⁹ See: McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’, p. 13, and L. T. Lih (et. al.), *Stalin’s Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936*, p. 28

¹⁰ McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’, p. 12-3

¹¹ McDermott, ‘Archives, Power and the ‘Cultural Turn’, p. 20

Pivotal to any study of Soviet foreign relations during the Stalin era is an understanding of the role Stalin played in the formulation of foreign policy. A discussion of this topic inevitably falls within the larger debate about Stalin's position within the Stalinist dictatorship. Research in this field has produced widely divergent viewpoints. One of the earliest studies was that of Leon Trotsky, who advanced the idea of the "impersonal Stalin" – a mediocrity who simply acted as a representative of the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy.¹² During the 1950s and 1960s the 'totalitarian model' largely dominated the field. The 'six-point' syndrome emphasising *inter alia* the central role of the dictator.¹³ However, culminating in the mid-1980s, 'revisionist' historians, in particular the 'conflict school', began to challenge the 'totalitarian' understanding of the Stalinist dictatorship. The detection of strong institutional interests and bureaucratic politics within the Soviet system prompted the question: Did Stalin dominate the Soviet government, or was he "embattled", as William McCagg put it?¹⁴

In response to the aforementioned "archival revolution", contemporary studies of the nature of Stalin's rule have focused on the transition from 'collective leadership' to 'personal dictatorship'. Recent investigations conducted by J. Arch Getty, Oleg V. Khlevniuk and Stephen G. Wheatcroft concur in the view that after 1930 Stalin dominated the Soviet system. However, they also argue that his relationship with the decision-making elite slowly changed. Between 1930¹⁵ and 1953, the Politburo, as a formal decision-making body, was at first displaced by what Wheatcroft has referred to as "Team-Stalin": an informal elite decision-making body, whose core membership consisted of Viacheslav Molotov, Kaganovich, and Kliment Voroshilov.¹⁶ According to Getty, the emergence of "Team-Stalin" was accompanied by the rise of "fragmented"

¹² See L. Trotsky, *Stalin: An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence* (Panther Press: London, 1969)

¹³ See C. J. Friedrich and Z. K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd Ed. (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1965)

¹⁴ See W. O. McCagg Jr., *Stalin Embattled, 1943-1948* (Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1978)

¹⁵ According to Wheatcroft: "Prior to December 1930, Stalin and the party Secretariat did not have hands-on control of the central government apparatus, which had developed its own internal bureaucracy under Lenin and Rykov. But from December 1930, when Molotov replaced Rykov as chairman of Sovnarkom and STO, hands-on control shifted to the Stalin team." [Wheatcroft, 'From Team-Stalin to Degenerate Tyranny', in Rees (ed.), *The Nature of Stalin's Dictatorship: The Politburo, 1924-1953*, p. 99]

¹⁶ Wheatcroft, 'From Team-Stalin to Degenerate Tyranny', in Rees (ed.), *The Nature of Stalin's Dictatorship: The Politburo, 1924-1953*, p. 96

decision-making”.¹⁷ “As the Politburo met less and less often in the 1930s, decisions promulgated over its name were taken by smaller, *ad hoc* groups convened for specific purposes”.¹⁸ However, in the later years of Stalin’s reign, his increased alienation from the upper elite and ailing mental health, initiated a further transition in the nature of his dictatorship: the shift “from Team-Stalin to degenerate tyranny.”¹⁹

Regardless of any particular understanding of the nature of Stalin’s power, prior to the partial opening of the archives, it was generally believed that up until the late 1930s Stalin paid little attention to matters of foreign policy. To quote Jonathan Haslam, “Stalin himself appears, at least from the documents now available, to have only rarely taken a direct hand in the day-to-day running of diplomacy; it was simply not his forte.”²⁰

However, the advent of the “archival revolution” has had a profound effect on our understanding of Stalin’s proximity to the processing of foreign policy. For example, based on Stalin’s correspondence with Kaganovich between 1931 and 1936, R. W. Davies has concluded that: “Stalin followed and took decisions on Soviet foreign relations, on matters both large and small.”²¹

Derek Watson’s study of the Politburo and foreign policy in the 1930s sheds further light on the subject. Beginning in the 1920s, Stalin had sought to dominate foreign policy through the Politburo, as he increasingly controlled this institution.²² With the withering away of the Politburo in the 1930s Stalin came to exercise control over foreign policy through his direct contact with Maxim Litvinov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov. According to existing figures, between 1931 and 1939 the abovementioned individuals consistently met with Stalin in his office in various combinations.²³ In line with Getty’s thesis of “fragmented” decision-making, the meetings in Stalin’s office appear to have

¹⁷ Getty, ‘Stalin as Prime Minister: Power and the Politburo’, in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin: A New History*, p. 89

¹⁸ Getty, ‘Stalin as Prime Minister’, p. 89

¹⁹ Wheatcroft, ‘From Team-Stalin to Degenerate Tyranny’, p. 79

²⁰ Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930-1933: The Impact of the Depression*, p. 18

²¹ Davies (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 14

²² Watson, ‘The Politburo and Foreign Policy in the 1930s’, in Rees (ed.), *The Nature of Stalin’s Dictatorship: The Politburo, 1924-1953*, p. 136

²³ Watson, ‘The Politburo and Foreign Policy in the 1930s’, p. 141

enabled Stalin, with his senior colleagues, to develop foreign policy informally. However, as Watson has argued, while “foreign policy was fashioned by Stalin and those closest to him ... Stalin’s role was decisive.”²⁴ He was, as Khlevniuk put it, “the strong dictator”.²⁵

The Historiography of Stalin’s Marxism and Commitment to Internationalism

The extent of Stalin’s commitment to Marxism and world revolution has been the subject of intense debate ever since the power struggles that transpired within the Soviet Union during the 1920s. Over the past eighty years the size and scope of the discourse has grown considerably. Subsumed within the larger discourse about the influence of ideology versus *Realpolitik* in Soviet international relations, the controversy encompasses two extreme, opposing poles and a broad range of opinion between them. At one extreme is Trotsky’s critique of ‘socialism in one country’ as a betrayal of world revolution.²⁶ At the opposite pole is R. C. Raack’s characterisation of Stalin as a “Trotskyite”.²⁷ Within these two poles falls a number of positions: E. H. Carr among others judges Stalin’s Marxism as “skin-deep”²⁸; Robert C. Tucker perceives Stalin as a National Bolshevik²⁹ whose approach to foreign policy was a unique “imperial communism”³⁰; while the more recent studies of Lih and Van Ree conclude that Stalin was a convinced Marxist committed to the goal of world revolution.³¹

Trotsky’s attack on both Stalin and his theory of ‘socialism in one country’ was most potently advanced in his publication *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is The Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* (1936) According to Trotsky the logic of ‘socialism in one

²⁴ Watson, ‘The Politburo and Foreign Policy in the 1930s’, p. 160

²⁵ Khlevniuk, ‘Stalin as Dictator: The Personalisation of Power’, in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin: A New History*, p. 109

²⁶ See L. Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What Is The Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* (Pathfinder Press: New York, 1977)

²⁷ Raack, *Stalin’s Drive to the West, 1938-1945: The Origins of the Cold War*, p. 14

²⁸ Carr, *The Russian Revolution From Lenin To Stalin, 1917-1929*, p. 169

²⁹ Tucker, ‘On Matter’s Evidential: A Reply’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Dec., 1977), p. 604

³⁰ Tucker, ‘The Emergence of Stalin’s Foreign Policy’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Dec., 1977), p. 571

³¹ See Lars T. Lih (et. al.) *Stalin’s Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1995) and Erik van Ree’s *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin* (RoutledgeCurzon: London, 2002)

country' forced Stalin and the bureaucracy into betraying the world revolution. He argued that if socialism was "realizable within national boundaries ... then the backbone of internationalism ... [had] been broken".³² He also contended that the doctrine of 'socialism in one country' was deeply flawed as it rested on the faulty assumption that socialism could be built within national boundaries as long as there was no intervention.³³

For Trotsky, this was both incorrect and counter-revolutionary. Firstly, non-intervention could not be guaranteed.³⁴ If imperialism was not "paralysed" by revolution in the west, imperialism would "sweep away" Soviet Russia.³⁵ Secondly, he argued that, if the proletarian revolution remained isolated within the Soviet Union it would "fall victim" to both its "internal and external contradictions."³⁶ In accordance with his theory of 'permanent revolution', Trotsky reasoned that the remedy for these contradictions could only be "found on the arena of world revolution."³⁷ Finally, Trotsky opined that, in an attempt to avert intervention, the logic of 'socialism in one country' compelled the Soviet leadership to "follow a collaborationist policy towards the foreign bourgeoisie." Inevitably, both the Comintern and world revolution would be subordinated to the interests of Soviet security.³⁸

In contrast to Trotsky's political appraisal of Stalin, Carr analyses Stalin and his system from an historical perspective. Carr sees Stalin, not as the betrayer of the revolution, but as the individual who completed Lenin's revolution, albeit on a national scale.³⁹ However, as mentioned above, Carr claims that Stalin's Marxism was only "skin-deep".⁴⁰ For Carr, Stalin was a "Russian Patriot"⁴¹: Stalin's doctrine of "socialism in one country

³² Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p. 55

³³ Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p. 61

³⁴ Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p. 40

³⁵ Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?*, p. 227

³⁶ Quoted in F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform, Part One: The Crisis of the Communist International*, p.47

³⁷ Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p. 40

³⁸ Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, p. 61

³⁹ Carr, 'Stalin', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Jul., 1953), p. 3

⁴⁰ Carr, *The Russian Revolution From Lenin To Stalin*, p. 169

⁴¹ Carr, 'Stalin', p. 4

... perfectly fitted the man ... It enabled him to match professions of socialism with Russian nationalism, the only political creed which moved him at all deeply.”⁴²

In the realm of international relations, Carr argues that during Stalin’s reign the goal of world revolution was gradually displaced. Under Lenin, the future of the Russian revolution had been considered dependent on the development of world revolution. Stalin repudiated Lenin’s programme, his theory of ‘socialism in one country’ reversing the priorities of Soviet foreign policy.⁴³

Soviet security and Soviet prosperity [became] the theme of Soviet diplomatic relations ... World revolution entered into the picture in so far as it contributed to the realization of these aims, and was now recognized as being itself dependent on their realization.⁴⁴

According to Carr, Stalin had “no faith in the worker’s movement in the western countries, and regarded the European communist parties with scarcely veiled contempt”.⁴⁵ In short, world revolution was reduced to a mere “secondary factor in the formulation of Soviet [foreign] policy.”⁴⁶

Tucker’s assessment of Stalin marked a significant movement away from the platforms of both Trotsky and Carr. His point of departure was the rejection of the “unreal antithesis of ‘Russian Nationalism’ versus ‘world revolution’” as a base for examining Stalin and his foreign policy. For Tucker, this incorrect dichotomy was responsible for the erroneous portrait of Stalin’s foreign policy as one having “jettisoned” the goal of “international Communist revolution”.⁴⁷ In addition, it had “blocked an understanding of Stalin’s foreign policy as a subtle amalgam of both [Marxism and nationalism]”.⁴⁸ Tucker

⁴² Carr, *The Russian Revolution From Lenin To Stalin*, p. 170

⁴³ Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929*, Vol. III, Part I, p. 122

⁴⁴ Carr, *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926*, Vol. III, Part I, pp. 19-20

⁴⁵ Carr, ‘Stalin’, p. 6

⁴⁶ Carr, *Foundations of a Planned Economy*, Vol. III, Part I, p. 122. Kennan takes Carr’s argument about Stalin’s perception of foreign communist parties one step further by suggesting that Stalin not only possessed an “aversion” to revolutions abroad, but, “feared” foreign socialist and communist movements. [Kennan, *Russian and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*, pp. 250-51]

⁴⁷ Tucker, ‘The Emergence of Stalin’s Foreign Policy’, p. 568

⁴⁸ Tucker, *Stalin In Power: Revolution From Above, 1928-1941*, p. 223

characterises Stalin as a National Bolshevik⁴⁹; a nomenclature Erik van Ree aptly defined as a “radical tendency which combines a commitment to class struggle and total nationalization of the means of production with extreme state chauvinism.”⁵⁰ In addition, Tucker argues that “to understand Stalin as a political thinker” historians must also “see him as a man whose thinking was strongly influenced by perceived parallels between present and past.”⁵¹

In his examination of Stalin’s foreign policy, Tucker’s discussions of “intervention” and ‘socialism in one country’ generate conclusions very different to those of Trotsky. He argues that from Stalin’s point of view, as long as “capitalist encirclement” existed, the danger of “intervention” remained.⁵² Hence, the recognition of the possibility of an isolated socialism did not make world revolution redundant. As a result, Stalin’s “socialism in one country ... laid heavy stress on the continuation of the international Communist revolution as the necessary precondition for making the victory of socialist construction in the USSR a ‘final’ one.”⁵³

According to Tucker, Stalin pursued a line of “to revolution through war”⁵⁴; world revolution meant using the Red Army to establish a protective glacis around the USSR. This “socialist encirclement” would act as a defence against “capitalist intervention”. In an attempt to create the best conditions for Soviet expansion, Tucker argues that Stalin hoped to facilitate the outbreak of a fraternal war between the capitalist powers. To do this, Stalin would use “divisive diplomacy”⁵⁵ to exploit the contradictions inherent within

⁴⁹ Tucker, ‘On Matters Evidential: A Reply’, p. 604

⁵⁰ Van Ree, ‘The Concept of ‘National Bolshevism’: An Interpretive Essay’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2001), p. 281

⁵¹ Tucker, ‘The Emergence of Stalin’s Foreign Policy’, p. 563. Also see the section entitled “Learning From Russia’s Past” in R. C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: Revolution from Above, 1928-1941* (W. W. Norton & Company: London, 1990), pp. 50-58

⁵² Tucker, ‘The Emergence of Stalin’s Foreign Policy’, p. 570

⁵³ Tucker, ‘The Emergence of Stalin’s Foreign Policy’, p. 569

⁵⁴ Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, p. 45

⁵⁵ Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, p. 47

the capitalist camp.⁵⁶ However, rather than internationalist, Tucker argues that Stalin's foreign policy program might be more correctly described as "imperial communism"⁵⁷:

[Stalin's] vision of future Communist revolutions was Russocentric. Because his revolutionism was blended with his Great Russian nationalism, the further progress of Communist revolution was associated in his mind with the future extension of the international power and dominion of Soviet Russia and its territorial aggrandizement.⁵⁸

Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936 (1995)⁵⁹ and Lih's interpretation of the manuscripts it contained signalled a turning point in our understanding of Stalin and his approach to foreign policy. Lih's assessment of Stalin's attitude towards Marxism and international communism is based largely on his interpretation of the letters Stalin composed during the revolutionary upheavals in England and China in 1926 and 1927. Was Stalin a convinced Marxist? According to Lih, the picture that emerges from the letters is one of Stalin the "believer".⁶⁰ Did Stalin abandon world revolution in the interests of building up the Soviet state? In light of Stalin's letters, Lih doubts the correctness of approaching the abovementioned question in "either-or terms: either the interests of world revolution or the interests of the Soviet state."⁶¹ Analogous with Tucker, Lih seeks to re-frame the investigation: "we should rather seek to understand how the two *coalesced* in Stalin's mind."^{62*}

Lih's suggestion that Soviet state interests and revolutionary interests possibly "coalesced" in Stalin's thinking is supported by a number of Stalin's pronouncements concerning the international significance of building 'socialism in country'. For example, in 1926, Stalin argued that, "the interests and tasks of the USSR are *interwoven* and *inseparably* connected with the interests and tasks of the revolutionary movement in all

⁵⁶ See: R. C. Tucker, 'The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy', pp. 563-589, and R. C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power: Revolution From Above, 1928-1941*, pp. 45-50

⁵⁷ Tucker, 'The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy', p. 571

⁵⁸ Tucker, 'The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy', p. 570.

⁵⁹ Lih, L. T. (et. al.), *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936* (Yale University Press: London, 1995)

⁶⁰ Lih (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 62

⁶¹ Lih (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 28

⁶² Lih (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 28

* Emphasis added.

countries.”^{63*} While Lih is unable to provide a detailed account of how state and revolutionary interests amalgamated in Stalin’s mind, his arguments are nonetheless noteworthy. Quoting Lih:

Stalin’s intense involvement [in the revolutionary stirrings in England and China] belies the image of an isolationist leader interested only in “socialism in one country”. The letters show us that Stalin did not make a rigid distinction between the interests of world revolution and the interests of the Soviet state: both concerns [were] continually present in his outlook.⁶⁴

Taken as a whole, Stalin’s remarks concerning the British situation in 1926 indicate that he genuinely desired a more radical outcome. “The situation in England is serious, and it obliges us to make serious ‘sacrifices’.”⁶⁵ Stalin’s comments on the situation in China show he was willing to make further “sacrifices” to assist the Chinese Communists.⁶⁶ Thus, according to Lih, “the letters refute the Trotsky-derived interpretation of ‘socialism in one country’ as an isolationist rejection of revolution elsewhere.”⁶⁷ Stalin’s enthusiasm for the revolutionary prospects in England and China also challenges the assertion that he possessed an “aversion” to revolutions abroad.⁶⁸ Rather, the letters reveal a Stalin who believed that “as first servant of the [Soviet] state, he was also first servant of world revolution.”⁶⁹

Van Ree’s *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study In Twentieth-Century Revolutionary Patriotism* (2002) provided a further corrective to our appreciation of Stalin. Based largely on the research he conducted while enjoying privileged access to Stalin’s private library and his hand written marginal notes, Van Ree’s argument

⁶³ Stalin, ‘The Seventh Enlarged Plenum of the E.C.C.I., November 22 – December 16, 1926’, in Stalin, *Works*, Vol. IX, p. 29

* Emphasis added.

⁶⁴ Lih (et. al.), *op cit*, pp. 5-6

⁶⁵ See “Letter 23” in Lih (et. al.), *Stalin’s Letters to Molotov*, p. 119

⁶⁶ See “Letter 33” in Lih (et. al.), *Stalin’s Letters to Molotov*, p. 137

⁶⁷ Lih (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 36

⁶⁸ Kennan, *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*, p. 250

⁶⁹ Lih (et. al.), *op cit*, p. 36

complements Lih's position. While Van Ree sees Stalin as a Marxist⁷⁰, he acknowledges that nationalism was also present in Stalin's political thought. For Van Ree, Stalin's nationalism was of the "revolutionary type". He absorbed it partly from the Marxist tradition, and partly from the nationalism of nineteenth-century "revolutionary democrats".⁷¹ However, rather than a National Bolshevik, Van Ree describes Stalin's mode of thinking as "revolutionary patriotism".⁷² The idea that a nation's interests are best served by Marxist revolutionary change.⁷³

Did Stalin betray the world revolution? Van Ree argues no. However, he states that, "Stalin found proletarian revolutions possible and desirable only under strict conditions."⁷⁴ Van Ree's point of departure is his interpretation of 'socialism in one country'. Emphasising the demarcation of the "complete victory" and "final victory" of socialism within Stalin's theory, he argues that for Stalin, "socialism in Russia was no 'goal in itself' because it could only be finally victorious if the present capitalist encirclement was replaced by a 'socialist encirclement'."⁷⁵ Revolutions in the fundamental countries of capitalism remained necessary. Hence, while "'socialism in one country' made world revolution less urgent", it did not make it "superfluous".⁷⁶

The foundation of Stalin's foreign policy, according to Van Ree, was the premise that the preservation of Soviet Russia was pivotal for the future of world communism.⁷⁷ From this principle, the three directions of Stalin's foreign policy emanated. The first and

⁷⁰ See E. Van Ree, 'Stalin as Marxist: The Western Roots of Stalin's Russification of Marxism', in Davies and Harris (eds.), *Stalin: A New History* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005), pp. 159-180

⁷¹ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 17.

⁷² Van Ree's argument that Stalin was a revolutionary patriot has been taken from his 2002 study *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*. However, in his 2005 essay 'Stalin as Marxist', Van Ree's position appears to have evolved: "Stalinist ideology contained little that was not prefigured in the Western revolutionary movement; but at the same time perfectly adapted to Russian traditions of authoritarianism, bureaucratic etatism, and patriotism ... I know of no other ideology preserving both Marxism and radical patriotism in almost unalloyed form and combining them boldly into a new, almost incoherent whole. This was a 'national bolshevism' in the fullest sense of the word." [Van Ree, 'Stalin as Marxist', p. 180]

⁷³ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 278

⁷⁴ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 229.

⁷⁵ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 210

⁷⁶ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 210

⁷⁷ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 208

“overriding goal” was to protect the USSR and prevent the capitalist powers from forming a united front against the Soviet Union. The second was to “set the imperialists against each other in a fraternal war”⁷⁸ – i.e., “divisive diplomacy”. This situation would provide the USSR and the Red Army with opportunities to create and expand a defensive glacis around the Soviet Union. However, such expansion could never take place while the imperialist camp was at peace, as this would unite the imperialists against the USSR, and hence, contradict Stalin’s first foreign policy objective.⁷⁹

The third direction was to assist foreign communist parties bring about revolution in their own countries. However “this was, again, only considered a valid goal provided that it did not provoke the imperialists against the Soviet Union.”⁸⁰ These three foreign policy goals constitute what Van Ree describes as “Stalin’s Foreign Policy Doctrine”. His argument shares many similarities with Tucker’s “to revolution through war” thesis. However, in contrast to Tucker, Van Ree argues that, “Stalin could never expect his troops to conquer the whole world and thereby finally liquidate the danger of intervention by world capitalism.” Hence “the ‘real’ world revolution could not be avoided.”⁸¹ Returning to the notion of “revolutionary patriotism”, Van Ree outlines how this concept influenced “Stalin’s foreign policy doctrine”:

Patriotism, in the sense of the preservation of the Soviet state was Stalin’s main foreign policy goal. But it remained part of a world revolutionary process, without which the preservation of this state lost its significance.⁸²

Lying outside the mainstream of the historiography of Stalin and his foreign policy are the works of Raack and Viktor Suvorov.⁸³ Writing within the context of Stalin’s role in the coming of World War Two, both authors see Stalin as a convinced Marxist whose

⁷⁸ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 211

⁷⁹ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 211

⁸⁰ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 211

⁸¹ Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, pp. 210-11

⁸² Van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin*, p. 211

⁸³ See R. C. Raack, *Stalin’s Drive to the West, 1938-1945: The Origins of the Cold War* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), and V. Suvorov, *Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?* (Hamish Hamilton: London, 1990). Also see: E. Topitsch, *Stalin’s War: A Radical New Theory of the Origins of the Second World War* (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1987), and A. L. Weeks, *Stalin’s Other War: Soviet Grand Strategy, 1939-1941* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Lanham, 2002).

foreign policy was aggressive and ultimately aimed at world revolution. This assessment of Stalin forms the foundation of their platform that the Soviet dictator sought a second world war to facilitate his expansionist and revolutionary aims. Thus, Raack and Suvorov repeat the argument that “divisive diplomacy” was both an important, and belligerent aspect of Stalin’s foreign policymaking. For Raack: “Stalin was a man captive to several traditions”; these included “Russianness”, the tradition of “Tsarist expansionism”, and the Bolshevik commitment to “world communism”.⁸⁴ In fact, while Stalin’s internationalism was tempered by “caution”, Raack argues that he was “effectively a Trotskyite”.⁸⁵

The literature examined above offers a number of divergent understandings of Stalin’s political thought. Based on Lih and Van Ree’s extensive archival access, their appraisal of Stalin as a convinced Marxist, albeit in Van Ree’s case, a revolutionary-patriotic one is an important corrective to conventional accounts of the General Secretary. Tucker’s thesis that Stalin “perceived parallels between present and past”⁸⁶ is also notable as it adds further depth to our appreciation of Stalin’s political thought. Furthermore, I believe Lih was essentially correct when he argued: “Stalin did not see revolutionary interests and state interests in either-or terms.”⁸⁷ Most importantly, both Lih and Van Ree impart Stalin and his theory of ‘socialism in one country’ a unique internationalist quality.

Despite these conclusions, Western literature’s understanding of Stalin’s foreign policy remains largely unsatisfactory. Firstly, Lih’s request that we should seek to understand how state and revolutionary interests “coalesced” in Stalin’s mind, has for the most part, been unanswered. Secondly, while Tucker, Lih, Van Ree, Raack and Suvorov all see Stalin, in one way or another, dedicated to world revolution, excluding Lih, all their positions rest on the premise that Stalin employed “divisive diplomacy” as an “offensive” diplomatic weapon.⁸⁸ However, a strong case can be made that Stalin, like Lenin, saw the

⁸⁴ Raack, *Stalin’s Drive to the West, 1938-1945: The Origins of the Cold War*, pp. 13-14

⁸⁵ Raack, *Stalin’s Drive to the West*, pp. 14-15

⁸⁶ Tucker, ‘The Emergence of Stalin’s Foreign Policy’, p. 563

⁸⁷ Lih (et. al.), *Stalin’s Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936*, p. 62

⁸⁸ Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, p. 47

exploitation of inter-capitalist discords as a purely defensive device.⁸⁹ Such an argument would sever their proposed link between Stalin's foreign policy and his approach to spreading the communist revolution.

My thesis is intended to address the gaps in existing Western literature. My argument will be that Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country' is an example of how he amalgamated state and revolutionary interests. Furthermore, it will be argued that a re-examination of Stalin's writings on the topic offers a number of additional insights into Stalin's approach to foreign policy.

Methodology and 'Ideology'

Academics have long been divided over what framework best facilitates an explanation of the processing of Soviet foreign policy. Scholars have traditionally worked within one of two competing frameworks: *innenpolitik* or *aussenpolitik*. Throughout the 'Cold War', *innenpolitik* formed the basis of the 'totalitarian' understanding of Soviet foreign policy. Concentrating on the unique nature of the Soviet system, this framework stressed Bolshevik ideology as a key to understanding the USSR's aggressive external behaviour.⁹⁰ The *aussenpolitik* framework is most commonly associated with the 'revisionist' understanding of Soviet foreign policy. In contrast to the 'totalitarian' position, 'revisionists' perceived Soviet foreign policy as mainly reactive, and the Kremlin as a flexible agent, able to adapt to the unpredictability of international affairs.⁹¹

⁸⁹ See C. R. Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917-1991*, pp. 37-47

⁹⁰ Kennedy-Pipe, *Russia and the World, 1917-1991*, p. 2. A further variant of the *innenpolitik* viewpoint is the position taken by Alexander Dallin. He argues that it is impossible to understand the characteristic traits of Soviet foreign policy without analysing their "domestic roots". These include, Kremlin politics, the given status of the soviet economy, and Moscow's perception of the global military-strategic balance. [See A. Dallin, 'Domestic Aspects of Soviet Foreign Policy', in Gorodetsky (ed.), *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1991: A Retrospective*, pp. 209-15]

⁹¹ Kennedy-Pipe, *op cit*, p. 2. Present within the *aussenpolitik* position is another group of scholars who emphasise the continuity between Tsarist and Soviet foreign policy. They argue that a shared geography, culture and historical experience, define the basic interests of a nation's foreign policy regardless of ideology. These academicians emphasised Russia's traditional search for security as the overriding goal of Soviet foreign policy. [MacKenzie, *From Messianism to Collapse: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1991*, p. 2.] Also see: C. E. Black, 'The Patterns of Russian Objectives', in Lederer (ed.), *Russian Foreign Policy: Essays in Historical Perspective* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1967), pp. 3-38; A. J. Rieber,

In short, the debate has functioned within the dichotomy of ideology versus *Realpolitik*. While both approaches have their virtues, R. N. Carew-Hunt has pointedly argued that there is no contradiction between ideology and *Realpolitik*.

[Soviet leaders] claim a theoretical justification for the basic principles in which they believe. But these principles must be translated into appropriate action; and action, if directed by the rulers of a powerful country like the Soviet Union, will take the form of *Realpolitik*. There is no yardstick which permits a measure of the exact relationship between power politics and ideology in the policies which result; but surely neither factor can be ignored.⁹²

Nearly fifty years after Carew-Hunt advanced the argument cited above, Odd Arne Westad has argued that newly released materials from the Russian archives indicate, “Ideology may have played a fundamental role in determining the framework for foreign policymaking throughout the Soviet experiment.”⁹³ Furthermore, if “the foreign policy of a nation”, as Alexander George contended, “addresses itself not to the external world, as is commonly stated, but rather to ‘the image of the external world’ that is in the minds of those who make foreign policy”⁹⁴, then in light of the recent appraisals of Stalin as a Marxist, and internationalist, a reassessment of ‘ideology’ is of increased importance. Yet, assessing the role ‘ideology’ played in Stalin’s foreign policymaking is a formidable task. The problem is two-fold: Firstly, one must attempt to evaluate how Stalin’s beliefs affected his actions, and secondly, one must try to unearth exactly what elements constituted Stalin’s worldview or ‘ideology’. An evaluation of the former depends solely on ones understanding of the latter.

In order to establish ‘ideology’ as an effective component in a study of Stalin’s foreign policy, the concept needs to be placed within its Soviet context. As Teddy J. Uldricks has

‘Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy: An Interpretive Essay’, in Ragsdale (ed.), *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), pp. 315-59.

⁹² Carew-Hunt, Sharp, and Lowenthal, ‘Ideology and Power Politics: A Symposium’, in Fleron, Hoffmann, and Laird (eds.), *Soviet Foreign Policy: Classic and Contemporary Issues*, p. 223

⁹³ Westad, ‘Secrets of the Second World: The Russian Archives and the Reinterpretation of Cold War History’, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring 1997), p. 264

⁹⁴ George, ‘The “Operational Code”’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Jun., 1969), p. 191

argued, defining 'ideology' within the narrow terms of Marxism-Leninism is insufficient.⁹⁵ Following Westad:

It is necessary [in the study of the international relations of the Soviet Union] to establish a wider and more useful definition of ideology, encompassing not only a written tradition of authoritative texts and their exegesis but also credenda formed by personal and historical experience. In the case of the Soviet foreign policy elite, such a definition would cover Marxism (primarily in its Stalinist form), as well as the Soviet experience in international affairs and Russian traditional perceptions of themselves and others.⁹⁶

This broad definition of 'ideology' is particularly useful when assessing Stalin and his foreign policy. It accommodates an understanding of Stalin as a Marxist, a revolutionary patriot, and a man who thought in "Russian historical terms."⁹⁷ Moreover, it recognises Soviet experiences, such as the October Revolution, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and capitalist intervention during the Russian Civil War, as additional factors that may have influenced Stalin's attitude towards the outside world.

Conclusion

Over the duration of my Summer Session Honours Scholarship I have researched a number of topics pivotal to my thesis. Overall I have arrived at a number of valuable conclusions, all of which will contribute to the foundation of my thesis. Firstly, throughout the 1930s, Stalin was in control of the processing of Soviet foreign policy. Secondly, with the advent of the "archival revolution", Stalin has emerged from the archives as both a Marxist, and internationalist – albeit a unique one. Finally, in light of both McDermott's "war-revolution model", and Van Ree's analysis of Stalin's political thought, any assessment of Stalin's foreign policy is unable to proceed without paying significant attention to the concept of 'ideology'.

⁹⁵ Uldricks, *Diplomacy and Ideology: The Origins of Soviet Foreign Relations, 1917-1930*, p. 143

⁹⁶ Westad, 'Secrets of the Second World', p. 264. Uldricks shares a similar position. He argues, "The tenets of Marxism-Leninism are obviously not the only elements forming the *Weltanschauung* of the Soviet diplomat ... Many other influences (nationalism, idiosyncratic prejudices, non-Marxist conceptions of foreign affairs etc.) contribute to the particular intellectual framework with which each Soviet diplomat approaches his tasks." [Uldricks, *Diplomacy and Ideology*, p. 143]

⁹⁷ Tucker, 'The Emergence of Stalin's Foreign Policy', p. 563