

The Origins of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939

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I. Introduction

When did the Soviet Union opt for a negotiation with Nazi Germany with an expectation to sign a political agreement that, in fact, took place on August 23, 1939? Scholars diverge in pinpointing exact timing of the Soviet decision to enter the political negotiation with Nazi Germany. Finding an answer to the question could provide a key in answering other significant historical and political questions: first, why and under what circumstances did the Soviet Union conclude a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany; and second, who was directly responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War? This paper evaluates the validity of competing interpretations about the origins of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. It thereby illuminates a larger theoretical question: the role of ideology and political realism in carrying out Soviet foreign policy.

There have been roughly three groups of literature on the timing of the Soviet decision to opt for a political rapprochement with Nazi Germany. Let me briefly introduce them here; their details will be discussed in the following three sections.¹⁾ The first group argues that the decision was

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1) See Roberts(1995, chapter 1) for an extensive literature review on these conflicting views. For a recent bibliography on the Nazi-Soviet Pact, refer to "Stalin-Hitler Pact: A Bibliograph," *Political History of Russia*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1997, pp. 289-295.

made no later than Stalin's speech on March 10, 1939. Some of this literature even stresses that Stalin had argued for talks with Germany as early as 1936. In contrast, the second group of scholars argues that the Soviet decision was not made until mid-August, and that the cause of the Nazi-Soviet pact was the collapse of the Soviet-French-British alliance negotiations. Between these two groups of scholarship, there is third group arguing an intermediary position that the Soviet decision was made to enter serious negotiations with Germany somewhere between Stalin's speech on March 10 and the Soviet Union's agreement with Britain and France in late July to enter the military negotiations.

These conflicting views lead us to different characterizations of Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s. The first view, espoused by so-called the 'German school of thought,' interprets Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s as oriented not toward collective security but toward an alliance with Nazi Germany. By contrast, the main thrust of the second interpretation argued by so-called 'collective security school' as well as Soviet officials and scholars is that, having failed to negotiate a suitable Soviet-British-French triple alliance and fearing the prospect of fighting Germany alone, Moscow turned to a deal with Berlin. Accordingly, it stresses the centrality of security concern and the improvisory character of Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s.

These competing views are based on different interpretations of key diplomatic events and meetings. The difference in the interpretations is compounded by the problem of sources: the second interpretation has mobilized the Soviet documents whereas the other hypotheses have relied mostly on western sources.

Laying aside the question of historical evidence and documentary sources, the competing interpretations are stemming from different theoretical perspectives of international politics. Indeed, the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, together with Brest-Litovsk treaty of 1918, is regarded as a classic example showing the nature of the Soviet foreign policy. Each of the above historical interpretations has been frequently exploited to support respective

theories on the nature of the Soviet foreign policy and international relations.

Of several factors that have been thought to affect the Soviet foreign policy, political realism and ideology have been focal points of the debates. The arguments about the roles of these factors in conducts of Soviet foreign policy can be located on a spectrum running between two extreme perspectives.²⁾ One perspective regards ideology — Bolshevism and/or Russian nationalism — as the main factor in guiding the Soviet behavior in the international realm.

The other perspective, the (neo-)realist view, considers the Soviet Union as a rational actor in pursuing her respective national interests; in this, an ideology is no more than a *post facto* justification of a foreign policy motivated by other considerations. As concisely expressed by K. Waltz, “the Bolsheviks were socialized to the system” (Waltz 1979, p. 127). (Neo)-realists expect that even a revolutionary state will be domesticated as a normal state through a learning process. In other words, the Soviet Union, constrained by her position in the anarchic realm of international politics, has engaged in balancing or bandwagoning for her survival.³⁾

Further, within the neo-realist tradition, scholars differ in their views of origins of alliances: whether a state forms alliance in response to other states’ power (capabilities) or threats; and whether a state seeks alliance against a threatening power or with the most threatening state (Walt, 1987). Another issue is what motivates a state’s bandwagoning with the foreign power that poses the greatest threat. Walt identifies two distinct motives for bandwagoning. First, bandwagoning may be a form of appeasement to avoid an attack by diverting it elsewhere. Second, a state may align with the threatening power in wartime to share the spoils of victory.⁴⁾

2) For these debates, see Fleron, Jr., Hoffmann and Laird eds.(1991), particularly the editors’ Introduction and articles by Hunt, Sharp and Lowenthal, Ulam, Adomeit, and Smith.

3) Balancing is defined here as allying with others against a threat; bandwagoning means aligning with the source of danger. See Walt (1987), p. 17.

4) Walt asserts that Stalin’s decision to align with Hitler illustrates both motives.

An attempt to resolve these theoretical disputes through a single case study is obviously problematic. Instead of making such attempt, this paper has a modest aim to add as a supplement the case study of Nazi-Soviet Pact to the larger debates. In the next three sections, I will identify the discrepancies between western and Soviet materials, and reexamine the competing interpretations of diplomatic events leading to the conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. Analysis will be made not on the whole process of the Nazi-Soviet negotiations, but will be limited only to key diplomatic events and encounters in the Soviet relations with Germany in three phases: (i) after Munich crisis until March 10; (ii) from mid-March to late July; and (iii) from late July to late August. The analysis on the three phases will be used to evaluate each of the above three different historical interpretations respectively. Besides secondary works, the analysis relies primarily on two Soviet publications of documents and records: Soviet Peace Efforts on the Eve of World War II (abbreviated as "SPE") published in 1976 and God Krizisa (Year of Crisis, abbreviated "GK") released in 1990.

II. Soviet-German Relations after Munich Agreement until March 10, 1939

There are a number of hypotheses supporting the argument that the Soviet Union's decision for a rapprochement with Germany was made on March 10, 1939 or even earlier. The argument asserts that before WWII the USSR strived not for an alliance (collective security) against Hitler but for the reconstruction of the 'Rapallo' relationship with Germany. Three variants — what D. C. Watt called 'Molotov,' 'Potemkin' and 'Stalin's speech' hypotheses⁵⁾ — put emphasis on Soviet decision makers' statements made in 1936, 1938, 1939 respectively.

However, this paper shows that the defensive motive was primary in Stalin's decision.

5) See Watt (1974) for a critique of these hypotheses.

Others trace long-term evolution of the Soviet diplomacy and define the Nazi-Soviet Pact as a fruition of Stalin's long term diplomatic policy. The conspicuous representative of this view is Robert C. Tucker. He has long argued that the Nazi-Soviet Pact, though not consummated until 1939, was implicit in Stalin's plans by 1933 or even earlier. His emphasis is placed mainly on ideological determinant of the Soviet foreign policy that is the perception of 'hostile capitalist encirclement' and 'inevitability of new imperialist wars,' while he also incorporates Russians' realist calculation for expansion (Tucker 1990, 1992).

In contrast, Kolasky (1990) views the Nazi-Soviet Pact as a product of Stalin's realism since 1935 rather than that of ideology. Tolstoy considers Stalin's diplomacy as two pronged, and asserts that rapprochement with Germany was the Soviet leadership's favored option and their actions in this period led directly to the adoption of the pact with Nazis in 1939 (Tolstoy 1981, particularly chapter VI). Hochman (1981) is also suspicious of the Soviet Union's sincerity since the mid-1930s. He argues that the Soviet Union's long favored option was to establish a 'developed form' of political relations with Germany. Still, others regard the Nazi-Soviet Pact as the result of mid-term maneuvering of the Soviet diplomacy after Munich isolation. Haslam (1984) characterizes the period immediately after Munich as one marked by Moscow's determined efforts to re-establish reconciliation with Berlin.

Despite their difference in many details, these hypotheses agree that the Soviet Union no longer committed herself to collective security policy after the Munich agreement and this culminated in Stalin's report to the 8th Party Congress on March 10.

The Soviet documents analyzed below challenge these views. Despite her skepticism of 'appeasement policy,' the Soviet Union made far more official contacts with Britain and France than with Germany. And the Soviet Union had not abandoned her hope of constructing collective security system with western democracies at the time. For example, in November 1938 Litvinov told Jean Payart, the French chargé d'affaires in Moscow, that "they

(Germany, Italy and Japan) will present their claims in turn, and Britain and France will offer them one concession after another. I believe, however, that they will reach the point where the peoples of Britain and France would have to stop them. Then they will probably have to turn to the old path of collective security, for there is no other way to organize the peace" (SPE no. 25).

There are two kinds of Soviet documents from this period which directly deal with Germany. One strand of the documents is compilation of contacts between the Soviet Union and Germany. These documents show that even after the Munich agreement official contacts between the two countries were limited only to trade and credit negotiations and there were no discussions or hints about the possibility of improvement in political relations between the two countries.⁶⁾ Moreover, the trade negotiations were far from satisfactory on the part of the Soviet Union. In January, Germany agreed to the Soviet proposal to continue the trade negotiations in Moscow by sending Dr. Karl Schnurre to Moscow (GK no. 117). But, in February, Schnurre's mission to Moscow was canceled immediately after Georges Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, visited Berlin (GK no. 137),⁷⁾ and the German Ministry of Economics refused to give proposed credits to the Soviet Union (Watt 1974, p. 158; Watt 1989, p. 111). These developments in February increased the Soviet suspicion of Germany.

The other strand of the documents is made up of reports by the Soviet Embassy in Berlin to Moscow on German situation. These reports were usually made by Astakhov, the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Berlin during the winter of 1938-39, and were mainly concerned with rumors about Germany's aspiration for eastward expansion, particularly to the Soviet Ukraine. The rumors were widely circulated among western diplomats and press

6) Some scholars indicate that Hitler made a favorable gesture to the Soviet Union at his New Year Reception in January. But, according to the Soviet record (GK no. 110), at the reception, conversations were limited to general greetings, and conversation with Hitler was made without a translator, though Merekalov, the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, was not proficient in German. Also see Watt (1974).

7) The Soviet Union believed that this was due to British and French interference.

during the winter. However, Soviet documents on the rumors show that the Soviet Union believed at that time that the rumors were intentionally circulated by western powers and had no real ground. Further, they predicted that in the near future the German expansion would be made toward west and colonies rather than east or the Soviet Ukraine (GK no. 81, no. 84, no. 86; SPE no. 41, no. 100). A brief report dated March 11 by the Soviet Embassy in Berlin on the political situation in Germany in 1938 summarized the Soviet understanding of the rumors: "It is doubtful that Berlin was then contemplating any immediate serious steps as regards the Soviet Ukraine. This was most likely a case of the French wishes to see German expansion directed eastwards... On the other hand, the colonial aspirations of German policy were becoming more and more obvious... The gradual shift of emphasis of German policy to the westerly direction was seen in the acceleration of the construction of fortifications on the western frontier" (SPE no. 100).

On March 10, against this background, Stalin made a report to the 8th Congress of the Communist Party on the work of the Central Committee. He presented guiding principles of the Soviet foreign policy. The most important two tasks were defined: "to be cautious and not to allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them" while "continuing and strengthening business relations with all countries" (Stalin, p. 346). These phrases have been widely interpreted as the signal of the Soviet preparation for a rapprochement with Germany.⁸⁾ One of the most powerful supports for this interpretation comes from Molotov's statement made immediately after signing the pact that it was Stalin who, through his speech in March which was well understood in Berlin, brought about the reversal in political relations (Tucker 1990, p. 597; Watt 1989, p. 111). The validity of this interpretation needs to be reevaluated by careful examination

8) This interpretation is strongly supported by Tucker and Kolasky, and partially shared by Deutscher. Deutscher (1967, p. 429) sees Stalin's address on March 10 as "a rare masterpiece of double entendre."

of the environment in which Stalin's report was made and the content of Stalin's report *per se*.

There are much counter-evidences against the above interpretation. As Watt indicated, Stalin's address was not followed by dismissal of Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet Foreign Minister and architect of the collective security strategy. Also, as stated above, the speech was delivered when the German-Soviet relations were at a very low ebb (Watt 1974, p. 156). Moreover, in his address Stalin was still justifying the policy of collective security. For instance, Stalin warned that, despite its weakness, the League of Nations should not be ignored. He also urged for Soviet efforts to expand mutual assistance with several states against possible aggression. Indeed, Stalin did not hide his preference for alliance with western democracies to that with Germany, making the following statement: "Is it (absence of resistance against aggressor states) to be attributed to the weakness of the non-aggressive states? Of course not! Combined, the non-aggressive, democratic states are unquestionably stronger than the fascist states, in terms of both economic and military power" (Stalin, p. 341). The Stalin's sentiment expressed was shared widely among the Soviet leadership as Molotov's address made in November 1938 showed (Roberts 1989, p. 117).

Furthermore, Stalin's guiding principle — "to be cautious and not to allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them" — should be considered in the context of the rumors about the Soviet Ukraine. It was no more than a criticism of the perceived attempts by western democracies to incense the Soviet Union against Germany under the guise of appeasement policy. Just before presenting the guidelines, Stalin said, "The Germans have cruelly 'disappointed' them (western countries) because, instead of marching farther east against the Soviet Union, they have turned to the west and are demanding colonies." He went on to warn, "The big and dangerous political game started by the supporters of the nonintervention policy may end in serious fiasco for them" (Stalin, p. 344). This

kind of criticism had been repeated a number of times since the Munich agreement.

III. Soviet-German Relations from Mid-March to Late July, 1939

Some scholars contend that the Soviet decision was made after the 'Stalin's speech' on March 10, but no later than the agreement to enter the military negotiations with Britain and France in late July. This implies that, with increasing distrust in Britain and France, the Soviet Union decided to adjust her foreign policy to new international constraints and actively pursue balance of power. Watt (1974; 1989, chapter XIV) further expounds details that the USSR began to approach Germany in mid-April and decided to enter a negotiation with Nazi-Germany in May. Watt supports his argument by pointing to the following evidence: (i) the statement of April 17 made by Merekalov, the Soviet Ambassador in Berlin, to Baron von Weizsacker, the German State Secretary, which reads, "There are no reasons that Russia should not live with (you) on a normal footing. ... The relations might become better and better"; (ii) replacement of Litvinov by Molotov on May 3; and (iii) Molotov's talk about 'political base' on May 20. I will trace below the evolution of the Nazi-Soviet relations in this period.

A day after a meeting with Weizsacker on April 17, Merekalov sent a telegram to Litvinov. A Soviet official document of the meeting shows that Merekalov made statements that were not instructed by Moscow. Merekalov met Weizsacker for a specific trade issue related to a Skoda factory contract. Although the main object of the meeting was trade, they exchanged some political statements specifically concerning Poland. Weizsacker said, "Recently the Soviet Union behaved more correctly than Britain. Germany has principal political disagreements with the USSR. However, Germany wants to develop economic relations with the Soviet Union" (GK no. 279). It was Weizsacker that first touched on a political issue, and the above statement by Merekalov seems to be no more than passive *ad hoc*

response, without any instruction from Moscow, to the Weizsacker's words.

On May 3, Litvinov was replaced by V. Molotov.⁹⁾ Hitler later told his generals that "Litvinov's dismissal had been decisive" (Kolasky, p. 40). The Litvinov's dismissal hypothesis may be supported by two diplomatic encounters on May 5 and May 15. Main actors of the encounters were Schnurre and Astakhov, the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Berlin, who became a major actor in the Soviet diplomacy after Merekalov was recalled by Moscow.

The first Soviet-German contact after the dismissal of Litvinov was made on May 5. According to Schnurre, "Astakhov touched upon the dismissal of Litvinov, ... and tried to learn whether this event would cause a change in our position toward the Soviet Union. He stressed very much the great importance of the personality of Molotov ... who would be all the importance for the future of the Soviet foreign policy."¹⁰⁾ Astakhov's record on this meeting is not available. However, we can see that in this period Astakhov's general perception of Germans was marked by suspicion. On May 8 Astakhov introduced a Tass representative to the press department. According to his note, "After short usual greeting words to Philipov, Baron von Stumm, deputy head of the German foreign ministry's press department, unusually went over to conversation on the general policy, particularly to the German-Soviet relations." Stumm revealed German interest in the dismissal of Litvinov; "Stumm did not restrain himself... to express that Litvinov's departure would usefully influence Soviet-German relations." But, the meeting was characterized by Astakhov's negative response to Stumm's mentioning signs of improvement in the Soviet-German relations e.g. changes in attitude of the German press. Astakhov's perception was:

9) After Britain had notified Litvinov she had not made a decision yet regarding the Soviet proposal, Litvinov was summoned to the Kremlin, where he received a thorough critique of the collective security policy (Phillips, pp. 166-7).

10) *Nazi-Soviet Relations* (New York: Didier, 1948), p. 3, cited from Roberts (1989), pp. 145-6.

"Concerning signs of the improvement which Stumm mentioned... even conditionally admitting some of them, we cannot for a while give them any serious meaning which goes beyond the limits of temporary tactical maneuver" (GK no. 329). In his letter to Vladimir Potemkin on May 12, Astakhov repeated his suspicion of the "superficial and non-committal" character and "obvious" motive of change in the tone of the German press (GK no. 341).

After the meeting with Astakhov on May 15, Schnurre recorded, "Astakhov stated in detail that there were no conflicts in foreign policy between Germany and the Soviet Union, and that therefore there was no reason for any enmity between the two countries... he commented on the Anglo-Soviet negotiations to the effect that under the present circumstances the result desired by Britain would hardly be achieved..." (Nazi-Soviet Relations, p. 4, cited from G. Roberts 1989, p. 147). But, Astakhov's record reads, "After that (the discussion over the trade issue), it was Schnurre who touched on the theme of improvement in the Soviet-German relations... Schnurre confirmed the absence of aggressive orientation on the part of Germany in relationship with the USSR, and asked what would be necessary in order to disperse our distrust." Astakhov replied, "the bad relationship between us and the Germans was created not by us but by the Germans" (GK no. 349).

Astakhov's perception was shared by Molotov. On May 20 Friedrich von Schulenburg, the German Ambassador in Moscow, paid a visit to Molotov. When he requested Molotov to accept Schnurre's visit to Moscow, Molotov responded: "We hear several times about Schnurre's visit to Moscow. Schnurre already departed for Moscow but his trip was postponed. Recently economic negotiations with Germany started several times, but produced nothing... The German government plays a sort of game instead of business-like economic negotiations... The USSR will not participate in that kind of game... We arrived at the conclusion that an appropriate political base needed to be created for the success of economic negotiations. Without such a political base... it is impossible to resolve economic questions" (GK

no. 362).

The document shows that Schulenburg was immediately impressed by Molotov's mentioning 'political base.' Molotov continued, "To Schulenburg's question, how to understand the words of 'political base,' I answered that both we and the German government should think about it." Toward the end of the meeting, the German Ambassador again very much rushed to receive further explanation about what Molotov implied by using the words 'political base,' but Molotov digressed from the question (GK no. 362).

Some argues that Molotov intentionally raised the question of 'political base' as a sign of change in the Soviet diplomacy with Germany. We cannot say for sure whether this is true or not. However, one can deduce from the records that Molotov's attitude shown in the meeting was negative rather than positive encouragement. Schulenburg himself confirmed this point. After the meeting with Molotov, Schulenburg related to Potemkin that Molotov viewed Germany's dealing with the USSR in economic negotiations as a 'play.' Then, Schulenburg complained that the Soviets mistakenly did not consider 'improvement of atmosphere' in Berlin. He even expressed his uneasiness about how to inform Berlin that Molotov refused to permit Schnurre's visit to Moscow (GK no. 363).

Moreover, there were no hints of change in either Astakhov's or Molotov's skepticism. On May 27, Astakhov continued to express his skepticism: "But, of course, it is certain that this continued tactic of press by itself does not bind the Germans to anything, they can change the tactic at any moment, and the tactic cannot serve as an evidence of serious change in their relations with us if they do not support it with any further concrete measures. Do they do this?" (GK no. 382). Furthermore, Molotov's report on May 31 expressed a renewed hope for alliance with Britain, France and Turkey. He said, "...certain changes toward resistance to aggression are also becoming discernible in the policy of the non-aggressive states of Europe. It remains to be seen how serious these changes are... However, there seem to be some signs that the democratic countries of Europe are coming to realize more and more clearly the failure of the non-intervention policy and

the need for more serious search for ways and means of creating a united front of peace-loving powers against aggression" (SPE no. 232).

But, the Germans were impressed regardless of whether their perception was correct or not. On May 30 Weizsacker invited Astakhov to get Moscow's interpretation of 'political base', and expressed Germany's wishes to improve her relations with the USSR. However, all he heard from Astakhov was the repetition of the words, "the choice does not depend on us but Germans."¹¹ In June, Germans tried to get Soviet intention and waited for Soviet response. When trade negotiation continued in Moscow on June 2, Gustav Hilger, German commercial attaché in Moscow, told Mikoian that "they were waiting for an answer from Moscow, but did not receive it" (GK no. 388).¹²

On June 17, Schulenburg referred to Berlin's impatience in waiting for Soviet response to the question raised by Weizsacker: "Schulenburg confirmed that Weizsacker's conversations with me should be understood as the German government's first attempt to exchange opinions about improvement of relations. Now the German government does not decide to go to this direction further in fear of meeting negative attitude from the Soviet side." Confidentially referring to his own conversation with Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, Schulenburg confirmed that the atmosphere had ripened for the improvement of relations and that both sides should show resoluteness in order to use it (GK no. 413).

11) GK no. 384. Weizsacker said, "Molotov stated to Schulenburg that development of economic relations would be impossible without improvement in political relations. This undoubtedly contradicts what we heard from Merekalov who stood on the point of view that economic relations by themselves would not depend on politics. This is what Merekalov repeated to us several times, and we came to the negotiations from this departing point. Between then and now we have heard the opposite, and received that the Soviet Union generally takes a negative attitude toward both settlement of economic relations and Schnurre's visit... the choice depends on the USSR..."

12) On June 17, Mikoian himself warned against the possible German trick to use the current economic negotiations as a 'political game' (GK no. 412).

On June 28 Schulenburg told Molotov that the German government wanted not only normal but also improved relations with the USSR. He said further that this statement was made in following Ribbentrop's instruction and Hitler's approval. In Schulenburg's words, Germany already informed the Soviet Union of her own desire to normalize relations with the USSR. Schulenburg also answered that "one should not return to the past" in a response to Molotov's mentioning of past German hostile actions toward the Soviet Union such as Anti-Comintern Pact and the military-political alliance with Italy (GK no. 442).

To sum up, the above analysis shows that (i) Germany, impressed by dismissal of Litvinov and Molotov's statement of 'political base,' began to approach actively the Soviet Union, and this change in the Germans' attitude toward the USSR was well-reported to Moscow; but, (ii) that the Soviet Union, being skeptical of the sincerity of the German approach, did not respond to the German initiative. Molotov's mentioning of 'political base' was not followed by any visible change in the Soviet diplomacy, although it is still unknown why he used those words at that time. Then, what accounts for the Soviet Union's skepticism to improving relations with Germany? It can be explained by the Soviet Union's renewed hope for an alliance with Britain and France and suspicion of the Germans' intention to derail the Soviet-British-French negotiation.¹³⁾ Additionally, it also can be explained by the Soviet perception of the situation. On June 19, Astakhov reported to Molotov that "...serious movement of troops in Germany was not noticed... All this could be well characterized as temporary tactic in the relations with us..." (GK no. 485).

13) The most controversial question of to which countries a French-British-Russian alliance might give guarantee against aggression (SPE no. 246, no. 255, no. 267) was finally settled to Soviet satisfaction in mid-July (SPE no. 279, no. 287). Concerning another crucial issue of defining 'indirect aggression', Molotov seemed to assume that if military plans to accompany an alliance could be devised, then perhaps it could be more easily resolved (Dukes, p. 311). See Appendix at the end of this paper for a brief history of the triple alliance negotiation.

IV. Soviet-German Relations from Late July to Late August, 1939

The second group of literature introduced in Introduction argues that the Soviet decision to opt for political rapprochement with Germany was not made until mid-August, and that the immediate cause of the Nazi-Soviet pact was the collapse of the triple alliance negotiations among the USSR, Britain and France. This view is shared by some western scholars including A. J. P. Taylor (1961), G. Roberts (1989, 1992) and J. C. Dukes (1985) as well as Soviet officials and scholars including A. A. Gromyko (1981, chapter XI) and V. Ya Sipols (1989). It is also shared by revisionist left including Medvedev (1989, p. 727), who maintains, "A collective security treaty among all the anti-fascist powers would have been far preferable... The Soviet Union was forced to choose the lesser of the two evils." This perspective implies the USSR's continued preference for the collective security system and passive attitude of the Soviet government in the process of negotiation with Germany.

Although this view is more convincing than others examined above, it also seems to be inaccurate in some points. Concerning the timing of the Soviet decision, it is more likely that the Soviet decision to opt for political rapprochement with Germany was made just before the beginning of the military negotiations, rather than after the failure of the military negotiations. The following analysis suggests that in early August the Soviet Union recognized sincerity of German offer, and, during this very short period, deliberately played a double game in order to hedge against the risk of the failure of the military negotiations. This caused a rapid change from passive to active diplomatic behavior on the part of the Soviet Union. I will first analyze documents on the triple military negotiations, and then move on to the Nazi-Soviet relations.

The Soviet documents of this period show the ambivalent and mysterious attitude of the Soviet Union toward the triple military negotiations. On the one hand, the Soviet Union well perceived foreboding failure of the military negotiations. The British and French delegations were composed of relative

unknown personnels. Instead of flying to Moscow, the joint British and French delegation was dispatched by sea, which could be seen as a strategy to delay a military agreement with Russia. Both the Soviet Embassies in London and Paris reported to Moscow their skepticism of sincerity of the British and French delegation. For instance, Ivan Maiski, the Soviet Ambassador in London, reported, "I think that judging from the posts they hold officially, the delegates will not be able to make any decision on the spot and will have to refer everything to London. It is also suspicious that... the members of the delegation will be able to stay in Moscow indefinitely (delaying any agreement)" (Roberts 1989, p. 141).¹⁴⁾ Those symptoms were later substantiated by the Britain's unpreparedness.

On the other hand, the Soviet records on the proceeding of the military negotiation confirm the USSR's serious commitment to the negotiation.¹⁵⁾ Some scholars deny the sincerity of the Soviet commitment to the negotiations; for example, Dallin (p. 275) points out that the Soviet Union raised new demands at each critical points of the negotiation. But, contrasting to the British and the French delegations, the Soviet mission was composed of the highest officials in the country. And importantly, the Soviet delegation came with a detailed military plan. The Soviet Union's sincerity as such was extensively confirmed by the French and British participants and observers of the negotiations.¹⁶⁾ How can we account for the fact that the

14) Similar reports from the Soviet Embassy in Paris are found in GK no. 303 and no. 304, which read: "One's first impression is that the French mission, made up of little known men, does not look much impressive. Except for Doumenc, there is not a single name known outside a narrow circle of experts"; "Doumenc was not pleased with the instructions he was given at the Quai d'Orsay prior to his departure... The impression is that the English will be at the helm of both military and political negotiations."

15) For the triple military negotiations in Moscow, see Appendix at the end of the paper. The general atmosphere of the negotiations was that Marshal Voroshilov, the head of the Soviet delegation, was becoming increasingly angry at the unpreparedness of the British and French delegation whereas General Drax, the head of the British delegation, was embarrassed and busy making excuses because he did not have any credentials and detailed military plan.

Soviet Union was well prepared for the military negotiations in spite of the perceived risk of the failure? One possible answer may be obtained by disregarding the documents on the Soviet perception of the negative symptoms while stressing only the documents showing the serious preparedness of the Soviet delegation. This is exactly what the second group of literature tells us. It interprets the above reports by the Soviet Embassies in London and Paris only as evidence of unwillingness of Britain and France to ally with the Soviet Union (Roberts 1989, pp. 140-1; Gromyko, p. 357; Sipols). But, these reports should also be recognized as evidence that the Soviet Union was aware of the foreboding failure of the Moscow negotiation. Although we do not know how Stalin and Molotov specifically reacted to these reports, it is implausible to imagine that, despite those visible negative symptoms, the Soviet Union was still sure of the success of the military negotiations. The USSR seems to have deliberately played a double game while spinning the negotiations out to raise German bids. Now, I would like

16) General Doumenc, the head of the French military mission, reported to the War Ministry of France as follows: "The fifth meeting on August 15 was devoted to a detailed survey of the Soviet Armed Forces and plans, with account being taken of various possible alternatives and of the highly effective assistance which they are fully determined to give to us. The main condition concerning passage of troops through Polish territory... is still being defined. I would like to note the great importance, from the standpoint of removing Polish fears, of the fact that the Russians are very strictly limiting the zones of entry by the Soviet troops, taking an exclusively strategic viewpoint" (SPE 320). Also, according to a letter from the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, "Far from seeking to exploit the negotiations in order to obtain our effective support in the west in exchange for limited support on her part in the east, the USSR is offering us, in M. Naggiar's (French Ambassador in Moscow) opinion, quite definite assistance in the east, without advancing additional demands in the west... One could hardly find anything to counter this (the USSR's) statement..." (SPE 326). This perception was also shared by Seed, the British Ambassador, who already reported on August 13, "All indications so far go to show that Soviet military negotiators are really out for business." On August 15 Seed urged his government to come to terms with the Soviet Union as soon as possible (Dukes, p. 314).

to turn to documents on the Nazi-Soviet relations from late July to late August.

The Soviet documents of late July confirm two facts: (i) that the Soviet Union had not responded to Germany until late July; and (ii) that in late July the Soviet Union began to seriously consider the Germany's offer. After almost a month of retreat, Germany again approached the Soviet Union with an attractive offer in late July. On July 24, a day after Molotov's proposal for immediate military talks was accepted by Britain and France, Schnurre presented Astakhov with Ribbentrop's three stage plan to improve relations with the USSR: (i) completion of trade and credit negotiation; (ii) normalizing relations in the areas of media and culture; and (iii) improvement in political relations. Schnurre said, "Unfortunately, the German side's repeated attempt to discuss this theme did not receive any answer. Molotov did not tell Schulenburg anything about this theme. If the Soviet side does not believe the Germans' sincere intention, let her (the Soviet Union) say what evidence is necessary... In the Baltics and Rumania, Germany has no intention to do anything that may affect the USSR's interests." Schnurre even added that Anti-Comintern pact was against Britain, not against the Soviet Union. "Schnurre also stated a little about our negotiations with Britain, expressing his belief that... all the burdens of responsibility must fall on us while Britain's obligation will be minimal." (GK no. 494, no. 503) On July 26, a day after Britain accepted Molotov's proposal for convocation of the triple military negotiations, Schnurre repeated statements of above nature to Astakhov and asked, "What evidence do you want?" In response to Astakhov's concern with the Baltics and Rumania, Schnurre answered, "The Baltic sea, in my opinion, must be the open (sea). Specifically concerning Baltic states, we are ready for the relations with them like that with Ukraine... Relatively much easier is discussion about Poland." Astakhov, feeling that "conversation began to go too far," changed the topic because Schnurre's offer was, even in Astakhov's view, "much new and unusual" (GK no. 503).

In his note to Molotov, Astakhov wrote, "We have answered nothing to

Weizsacker, and Schulenburg received no recent definite answer from his conversation with Molotov" (GK no. 503). Also, in his letter to Potemkin on July 27, Astakhov stated, "Such motive of Germans' tactics is apparent... But, in any case, I could note that Germans' rush to improve relations with us brings sufficient firmness... I do not doubt that if we wanted to, we could have engaged the Germans in far-reaching negotiations while receiving a number of confirmations on questions in which we have interests... In any case, Germans' readiness in improving the relations needs to be considered. Maybe it might be necessary to give a little heating to them in order to keep in our hands aces which can be used in urgent situation. From this point of view, maybe, it might be useful to tell them anything, to posit some questions, in order not to lose clues, which, ... if we carefully use, never give us any harms... We refused it in the past with polite excuses. Now do we need to continue this tactic when announcement and accusations against us are no longer expected?" (GK no. 504). Astakhov concluded his letter with a request for instruction from Moscow. On July 28 Molotov sent Astakhov a short telegram, which reads, "In limiting yourself to Schnurre's statements and sending them to Moscow, you behaved correctly" (GK no. 510). On July 29, in his telegram to Astakhov, Molotov admitted that there were improvements in economic relations, but emphasized, "Only Germans can say whether improvement in political relations can be concretely expressed... but Schulenburg... did not want to suggest anything concrete or clear" (GK no. 511). While not having responded to the German initiative, the Soviet Union became interested in what would be the Germany's detailed offer.

In this period the Germans believed that the conclusion of the triple alliance was imminent. In early August, based on such perception, Germany reinforced her pressure on the USSR, proposing a more detailed offer on the one hand, and stressing the imminence of war with Poland on the other. On August 2, Ribbentrop stated to Astakhov, "We consider there is no contradiction between our countries in all areas from the Black to Baltic sea. We can agree on all these questions, if the Soviet government shares

these prerequisites, then we can exchange opinions more concretely" (GK no. 523). On August 3, Schnurre asked for more direct response from the Soviet side and suggested that the negotiation proceed in Berlin because "Ribbentrop and Hitler are directly interested in them" (GK no. 524). On the same day Schulenburg repeated what Ribbentrop and Schnurre told Astakhov. Molotov's reaction remained same as before (GK no. 525). Schulenburg reported to Berlin as follows: "It was evident that the Soviet government was more prepared to improve the German-Soviet relations, but that the old distrust toward Germany persists. My overall impression is that the Soviet government is now determined to sign with Britain and France, if they fulfill all Soviet wishes... it will...take considerable effort on our part to cause the Soviet government to swing about" (Nazi-Soviet Relations, pp. 39-41, cited from G. Roberts 1989, p. 152). This perception caused Germany to make a wide range of offers to the Soviet Union.

In early August, the Soviet Union began to respond to the German offer without quick resolution. On August 4, Molotov gave instructions to Astakhov to continue to exchange of opinions, making it clear that a trade-credit negotiation was the precondition of improving political relations (GK no. 528). On August 5, Schnurre proposed a communiqué or secret protocol that would confirm the wishes to improve relations before signing credit agreement, which Molotov declined as inappropriate (GK no. 529, no. 532). On August 8, Astakhov reported on a set of Germans' concerns including the question of updating Rapallo and other political agreements or replacing them with new agreements, or by mentioning protocol.¹⁷⁾ He added, "I just think that in near future they will consider it possible to reach a certain agreement..., by paying this price, in order to neutralize us in case of war with Poland" (GK no. 534). On August 8, Schnurre again stressed the need to improve the Nazi-Soviet relations in regard to the Polish question and inquired about what would be the USSR's reaction in case of a war with

17) Other German concerns included the questions of press, radio-propaganda, arrested Germans, opening a German consulate in the USSR, and cultural agreement (GK no. 534).

Poland (GK no. 538).

On August 11, the very day that the British and French joint delegation arrived in Moscow, Molotov gave instruction to Astakhov: "List of objects indicated in your letter dated the 8th of August interests us. Conversations about them demand preparation and some transitional stages from trade-credit agreement to other questions. We prefer to conduct negotiations on these questions in Moscow" (GK no. 539). On August 12, following Molotov's instruction, Astakhov transmitted to Germany the Soviet desire for "step by step" approach. He also informed Molotov that the German offer of the Baltic, Bessarabia and eastern Poland was "minimum at given moment" (GK no. 541) and that "conflict with Poland was ripening at much faster tempo" though "it was not possible to decide whether this would be in the end of August or mid-September" (GK no. 542).¹⁸ On August 13, Schnurre said to Astakhov, "The German government... wants to enter the negotiation as soon as possible," and accepted the Soviet proposal to negotiate in Moscow (GK no. 549). On August 15, Schulenburg handed a memorandum, which reads, "The German government stands on the viewpoint that between the Baltic and Black sea there is no problem that cannot be solved to the full satisfaction of the two countries. Here questions are related with the Baltic states, Poland, South-East etc... Ribbentrop is ready to go to Moscow for a short time..." (GK no. 556).

On August 17, Molotov handed a memorandum to Schulenburg, which stated that the first step toward such improvement would be the conclusion of trade-credit agreement, and the second step would be the conclusion of a non-aggression pact or reconfirmation of 1926 neutrality pact with a special protocol (GK no. 570). On August 19, Schulenburg again insisted on Ribbentrop's immediate visit to Moscow on the ground of the urgent Polish question. Molotov told Schulenburg that Ribbentrop might come to Moscow on 26th or 27th of August after publishing a trade-credit agreement. But, in fact, the trade-credit negotiation was concluded at mid-night on the same

18) Astakhov had already reported rumors about movement of German troops as early as August 2 (GK 520).

day. On August 21, Hitler himself sent Stalin a letter, in which, emphasizing again "intolerable tension" between Germany and Poland, he requested Stalin to accept Ribbentrop on August 22 or no later than August 23 (GK no. 582). On August 23, the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact with a secret protocol was finally signed (GK no. 602).

In summary, the preceding analysis of the Soviet documents shows that the Soviet decision to opt for political rapprochement with Germany might have been made in early August. Germany, in perceiving the imminence of a triple alliance, offered the Soviet Union a wide range of concessions pertaining to the region from the Baltic to Black sea. Such offer was exactly what Britain and France had refused to give to the Soviet Union. The sincerity of the German offer had been recognized by the Soviet Union since late July. On the other hand, the Soviet Union well perceived foreboding failure of the military negotiations. At the same time, Germany intentionally dropped hints of imminent war with Poland. As shown by Molotov's instruction on August 11, the Soviet Union deliberately engaged in a balancing game to hedge against the risk of the failure of the military negotiations. However, the Soviet Union wanted a "step by step" approach; particularly, the Soviet Union wanted Ribbentrop to come to Moscow after the results of the triple negotiation became clear. According to Dukes(p. 316), this move was made with the intention to buy extra time to secure Polish cooperation while keeping the Germans temporally "on the hook."¹⁹⁾ During this very short period, the Soviet Union was no longer passive in her diplomatic behavior.

V. Conclusion

Analysis in the previous sections denies the validity of the first and third

19) However, it is still unknown whether or not the Soviet Union expected positive answer from Poland. Ulam (1968, p. 275) maintains that the Soviet leaders knew Poles would not agree to the passage of the Soviet troops.

groups of hypotheses on the origins of Nazi-Soviet Pact and modifies some aspects of the second hypothesis. Nevertheless, some critical questions still remain unresolved: why did Molotov use the words 'political basis'; and what was the reaction of Stalin and Molotov to the reports made by their Embassies on the British-French military delegation? Since we do not know answers to these questions, the conclusions made in this paper remain tentative.

With these limitations considered, the findings of the present study are summarized as follows. First, even after the Munich agreement, the Soviet Union did not immediately withdraw her commitment to collective security system. Until March, 1939 there had been no significant attempt made — either from the Soviet Union or from Germany — to improve political relations between the two countries. Second, Germany, impressed by Litvinov's dismissal and Molotov's mention of 'political basis' in May, took the initiative to improve her relations with the Soviet Union; however, contrary to Watt's view, the Soviet Union did not respond to it before late July. Third, in the very short period from late July to late August, the Soviet Union actively and deliberately engaged in a double game. It is more likely that the Soviet decision to opt for political rapprochement with Germany was made just before or around the beginning of the triple military negotiations in Moscow (rather than during the negotiations or after the suspension of negotiations); and, the Soviet decision was made possible by recognizing the sincerity of the German offers and imminence of German-Polish war, and foreboding failure of the triple negotiations.

Overall, these findings confirm the strong realist, rather than revolutionary, tendency of the Soviet foreign policy, which stretches back to the signing of Brest-Litovsk peace with Germany in 1918. As (neo-)realists contended, ideology was less important than balancing or bandwagoning as a motive for alignment. The Soviet Union eventually abandoned the collective security policy even though she had ideologically preferred it over a deal with Fascists. She could not but act rationally to survive in the anarchic international realm.

However, the process in which the Soviet Union changed her policy warns against such simplification. It should be noted that the Soviet ideology was flexible enough to embrace both the collective security policy and the renewed Rapallo relationship with Nazi-Germany. As the above analysis points out, it was 'diplomatic perception' (Jervis, 1976) at critical events and encounters that guided the uncertain navigation between the two orientations.

Finally, concerning the debates on the origins of alliance within (neo-) realists perspective, the Nazi-Soviet Pact is another case that supports Walt's argument that alliances are formed in response to threats rather than capabilities of foreign states. As Stalin also repeatedly admitted, "the non-aggressive, democratic states are unquestionably stronger than the fascist states, both economically and militarily" (Stalin, p. 341), but the Soviet Union eventually opted to ally with more threatening Nazi Germany. Of the two — defensive and offensive — motives for bandwagoning, the Soviet decision was the defensive one, finalized in fear of isolation.

***Appendix: The British French-Soviet Negotiations in 1939**

After Germany occupied Czechoslovakia, Seeds, the new British Ambassador, called on Litvinov on March 18, 1939, to inquire what the Soviet position would be if Germany declared ultimatum on Rumania. By that evening Litvinov called in Seeds and proposed the immediate convocation of a conference of representatives of the USSR, Britain, France, Poland and Rumania. But this proposal did not materialize as Britain rejected it as premature (SPE no. 108, no. 109). On April 5 and 7, Bonnet raised to Jacob Suritz, the Soviet Ambassador in Paris, the question of assistance to Poland and Rumania in case of German attack. On April 10, Litvinov telegraphed Suritz instructions to ascertain whether Bonnet had any concrete proposals to make. Bonnet replied on April 14, proposing an agreement whereby the two states would render assistance to Poland and Rumania. On April 17, Litvinov handed Seeds an eight-point proposal for a three power mutual security treaty (SPE no. 171).

After the proposal for French-British-Soviet mutual security treaty was made by Litvinov in April, a number of proposals and counterproposals were exchanged during May, June, and early July. Agreement was relatively easily reached on some matters e.g. the question of a separate peace and of cooperation with the League of Nations. The most tricky issue was of the principle of reciprocity and equal obligations, that is, to which countries a French-British-Russian alliance should give guarantee against aggression (SPE no. 246, no. 255, no. 267). Much time was spent on this question and the issue was finally settled to the Soviet satisfaction in mid-July (SPE no. 279, no. 287). However, there still remained another issue i.e. the question of how to define the 'indirect aggression.' The Soviet definition of 'indirect aggression' maintained that the Anglo-Franco-Russian alliance should become operational not only if one of the guaranteed states should be attacked, but also if an internal coup should give Germany a control of the country in question. The bloodless acquisition of Czechoslovakia by Germany made this Russian demand necessary. As Britain refused to accept

the Soviet definition, the negotiations seemed deadlocked.

On July 23, the stalemate was finally broken when Molotov's proposal for immediate military talks was accepted by Britain and France (SPE no. 294). Anglo-French proposal was to first agree on the 'political' part of the treaty and then turn to military agreement; but, the Soviet considered that "a military pact would be an inseparable part of a military-political agreement... if the overall agreement should not include an absolutely concrete military agreement as an integral part, the treaty would be nothing but an empty declaration..." (SPE no. 287). Molotov seemed to assume that if military plans to accompany an alliance could be devised, then perhaps political questions such as the definition of 'indirect aggression' could be more easily resolved (Dukes, p. 311).

The British and French joint delegation arrived in Moscow on August 11. "After a wonderful reception accorded by the Soviet side," the negotiations began on August 12 "invariably in a very cordial atmosphere" (SPE no. 337). Procedural matters were easily settled as soon as the first session opened. However, it soon became evident that both sides had very different approach toward the negotiations. The British and French delegations wanted to discuss the 'principles' whereas Russians, assuming that the principles and aims of the negotiations were already clear, wanted to work out details of military plans (SPE no. 315). British and French Ambassadors in Moscow as well as the Soviet delegates expected that the question of how to define 'indirect aggression' would be the most difficult issue of the negotiations (SPE no. 305). However, as the military negotiations began, the question of the definition of 'indirect aggression' was laid aside by fundamental difference between the two parties, which became clear on the third day (August 14) of the negotiations.

The Soviet Union emphasized that she had no common border with either Britain or France. Voroshilov said, "We can, therefore, only take part in the war on the territories of neighboring states, particularly Poland and Rumania." Because the Soviet Union had no military agreements with Poland and Rumania, she regarded these countries' agreement to the passage of the

Soviet troops as the prerequisite for her military plan. Britain and France at first avoided answering the question by regarding it as a question of concentration of troops and communication. As Voroshilov again demanded a direct answer, Admiral Drax, the head of the British delegation, repeated his 'personal opinion': "If the Soviet Union, France and Britain are allies, then Poland and Rumania will ask for help, and it would be necessary to approach Poland and Rumania to obtain satisfactory answer." Thereafter, the same arguments were repeatedly exchanged. British and French joint delegation stated, "Poland and Rumania are sovereign states... therefore authoritative answer should come from the two governments. However, if Russia wishes, we are prepared to refer to London and Paris to ask them the question" (SPE 317).

After the session of August 14, France and Britain made attempts to secure a tacit agreement from Poland to enable the French-British delegation to discuss military matters without officially involving the Polish government (SPE 318, 337). On August 15, the Soviet delegation presented its military plan for eastern front while awaiting reply. But, as Poland refused to accept Britain and France's recommendation, the Soviet Union declared on August 17 to withdraw indefinitely from the negotiations, and the military conference officially adjourned indefinitely on August 21. On 22nd of August, in response to General Doumenc's request to resume the negotiation, Voroshilov demanded official replies from Poland and Rumania. He also added, "Please allow us to wait until the situation is clear, that is to say, until we have the British government's reply and until the position of Poland and Rumania seems clear to us... France and Britain have allowed the political and military discussions to drag on too long... Let us wait. The sooner we have the reply, the quicker we shall be able to decide definitely how to act in the future" (SPE 342). But, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was concluded the next day.

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국문요약

1939년 독-소 불가침 조약의 기원

임 경 훈

이 논문은 소련이 어느 시점에서 나치 독일과의 정치적 협력을 선택하였는가의 문제에 대한 외교사적 연구이다. 이 진문은 단순한 사실 규명의 차원을 넘어 제 2차 세계대전의 발발을 국제적 노력으로 저지하지 못한 책임 문제와 연결되어 있고, 소련 외교의 본질을 이해하는데도 매우 중요하다.

소련이 나치 독일과 협력하기로 결정을 내린 시점에 대해서는 세 가지 부류의 설명들이 있어 왔다. 첫째는 늦어도 스탈린의 제 8차 당대회 보고 연설이 있는 1939년 3월 10일 또는 그 이전이라 해석이다. 이 입장은 독일과의 협력관계를 회복하는 것이 소련 지도부의 오래된 목표였다는 견해로서, 제 2차 대전 발발에 대한 소련의 직접적 책임론을 제기한다. 둘째는 독일에 대항할 영국, 프랑스, 소련 사이의 군사협상이 실패한 1939년 8월 중순 이후이라는 주장이다. 이 견해는 집단안전보장 체제의 구축이 소련의 목표였으나, 이러한 희망이 좌전되자 불가피하게 독일의 군사적 위협을 회피하는 수단으로써 독-소 불가침 조약을 체결하였다는 주장이다. 이 견해에 따르면 제 2차 대전 발발에 대한 영국과 프랑스의 책임이 상대적으로 크게 부각된다. 제 3의 설명은 이 두 주장의 중간 입장으로 소련의 결정이 스탈린의 연설 이후 삼국 군사협상이 개시되기 전 사이의 시점에서 내려졌다는 것이다. 본 연구는 이러한 주장들을 공개된 소련 외교 문서에 대한 분석을 통하여 비판적으로 검토한다.

필자는 대체로 두 번째의 관점이 설득력이 있다고 보지만, 소련이 기존의 집단안전보장의 추구로부터 독일과의 제휴로 정책방향을 전환한 시점은 1939년 8월 초순의 후반, 늦어도 군사협상 개시 시점 또는 그 직전이었을 것으로 추론한다. 이러한 추론의 근거는, 7월말 이후 소련이 독일이 제시한 구체적 양보들

의 성실성을 인정하였고, 독일과 폴란드의 전쟁이 임박한 것으로 인지한 가운데, 영국, 프랑스, 소련의 군사협상이 실패할 징후가 이미 농후해졌기 때문이다. 8월 중순 모스크바에서 열린 영-불-소의 군사협상은 이미 예상된 실패를 확인하는 것뿐이었다. 따라서, 8월 초순에 이르러 소련은 독일의 압박에 대한 새로운 위협회피 방안을 선택하지 않을 수 없었을 것이다.

이러한 결론에 따르면, 소련 외교 정책에 대한 (신)현실주의적 설명이 궁극적으로 타당하다. 결국, 이데올로기보다는 국가 생존의 문제가 소련으로 하여금 현실주의적 대외 정책을 실행하도록 강제하였다. 그러나, 소비에트 이데올로기는 집단안보체제와 독일과의 제휴 모두를 정당화시킬 정도의 유연성을 확보하고 있었고, 소련 외교의 현실주의적 행태가 도출되기까지의 과정도 단순화시킬 수 없는 '외교적 인식(diplomatic perception)'에 의해 구성되었다는 점도 강조되어야 한다.

아울러 이 연구는, 동맹 결성에 관한 신현실주의자들의 설명들 중에서, 국가들이 '세력(power)'보다는 '위협(threats)'에 대한 대응으로서 동맹을 형성한다는 월트(S. Walt)의 주장이 독-소 불가침 조약의 경우를 적절히 설명한다고 판단한다. 독-소 불가침 조약의 체결은 소련이 위협에 대항하는 '세력균형(balance of power)'을 추구하기 보다 위협 원천에 '편승(bandwagon)'한 결과이다. 다만, 이러한 '편승'은 '공격적'이기보다는 '방어적' 동기에 의한 것이었다.