The present study has been an effort to understand the formulation and the development of Soviet strategic doctrine. It is clear from the above study that contrary to the popular assumption, that was current in the West, Soviet strategic doctrine evolved with remarkable 'flexibility' keeping in mind the changing threat perceptions and the qualitative development of weapons technology. Soviet strategic doctrine, as it evolved, was not a 'loosely organized body of thinking'. It was, on the other hand, an unique set of official views about the Soviet world view of future war, which encompassed, inter alia, the military strategy and the war tactics. Indeed, the discussions on strategic doctrine was used more precisely and presented lucidly in Soviet military writings than in Western military literature.

The Soviet strategic policy as it evolved over the years was the product of the interplay of the various institutions of which the roles of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) and the military were the most important. The Soviet military were represented in various organs of the Government and the Communist Party. Hence, the role of the military in the formulation of strategic doctrine was important. But it is obvious that the CPSU was virtually the moving force behind all the policy decisions in the erstwhile country and, therefore, had the
most important voice in the formulation of the Soviet strategic policy. Our research established that there was a certain degree of rift between the political leadership and the military ranks, which inspired differential perceptions among these interested parties. But at the same time, it is clear that the military was not always at loggerheads with the Party leadership. The Malenkov-Khrushchev struggle in the early 1950s saw the military supporting Khrushchev, which enabled him to become the undisputed leader in Soviet Union till he was ousted in the mid-1960s. Thus, in spite of the rift between the Party and the military the latter enjoyed a high degree of participation in the fortunes of the Soviet strategic policy, except during the leadership of Stalin and Gorbachev. Under Gorbachev the military as an 'interest' group lost most of its vigour that was evident during the Khrushchev era and the major part of Brezhnev's rule.

The present study has found conclusively that till Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet strategic policy was virtually engrossed in the thesis which assumed that the Soviet Union being a socialist country would be perpetually engaged in unavoidable wars with the capitalist world. Indeed, the evolution of Soviet military doctrine which got a tremendous boost with the Frunze-Trotsky theoretical debate of the early 1920s (which resulted in the formulation of the 'Unified Military Doctrine') received a
setback during the Stalin era. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to underscore that the sustenance of the Stalinist orthodoxy meant that the fame of the Soviet military was attributed to Stalin's so-called military genius. He regarded the 'five permanently operating factors' as evidence of his contribution to the grand military theories. Unfortunately, the cult of personality that developed during the Stalin era overshadowed the 'window of vulnerability' faced by Soviet Union as a result of the technological superiority of the United States in the field of armaments. This particular factor was completely neglected in the military theory of the Stalinist era, which was more or less based on the military experience of the pre-nuclear age. The modifications in the strategic policy of Soviet Union, in the light of the new dynamics of international security regime, were initiated during the Khrushchev period.

The Stalinist period overlooked the fact that any new weapon could change the basic nature of war. After Stalin's death, there was a serious effort to bring about a new thesis which accepted that a new world war would destroy the world civilization. This was the result of a re-evaluation of strategic doctrine which took place for several years after Stalin's death in the midst of the 'revolution' in military affairs brought about by the advent of nuclear weapons, which offered the unprecedented
capability to destroy targets anywhere in the world within a short span of time. During the Stalin period, war between capitalism and socialism was regarded to be both inevitable (because of inherent 'aggressive' nature of capitalism) and instrumental (because socialism was a more 'developed' form of society). This thesis was rejected after an intense debate, and it led to the adoption of a new strategic doctrine which was based on the premise that war between socialism and capitalism was no longer inevitable. In spite of the formulation of this new thesis, Soviet Union prepared itself for any future war because they still believed that the aggressive nature of capitalism did not change. Indeed the new thesis argued that a War between socialism and capitalism would inevitably become a nuclear war, and would result in the destruction of the imperialist powers.

The advent of nuclear weapons changed the Soviet view of the nature of warfare. Accordingly, it was emphasized that 'massed nuclear strikes' could accomplish the desired strategic objectives in the initial stages of war by the quick destruction of enemy targets. This pragmatic military consideration outweighed the attainment of strategic goals in a pre-nuclear war through a relatively slower and sequential destruction of enemy targets. Indeed, the core of the strategic doctrine during the Khrushchev era was formed around the massive use of nuclear
weapons against the enemy targets. This was substituted with a new version in the mid-1960s, which put the emphasis on the possibility of avoiding the use of nuclear weapons (which would result, otherwise, in mutual destruction). Thus, from the late 1960s, Soviet nuclear weapons' role developed to a more defensive direction as a result of the rejection of the concept of nuclear pre-emption. But, at the same time, it is clear that during the latter half of 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet force posture was increasingly geared towards an effort to reach parity with the United States vis-a-vis nuclear weapons -- both qualitatively and quantitatively. As the study shows, the qualitative development of armaments were invariably initiated by the United States, and followed 'religiously' by Soviet Union. Indeed, it was the United States which began the arms race and the Soviet Union followed its lead, thus imperilling its domestic economy.

The spiralling arms race drove home the point that for Soviet Union the race was proving to be far too costly than envisaged. And, hence, the Soviets tried to achieve parity with the United States through arms control and disarmament measures, which it more or less failed through competition. Albeit, it can be said conclusively that the arms control regime during the Brezhnev period lacked the decisiveness and foresightedness of the Gorbachev era, it still managed to nullify the American advantage in nuclear weapons by
'capping' the spiralling arms race. But the rot that had set in the economy of Soviet Union was not understood in the right perspective. In spite of arms control measures the qualitative and quantitative developments of nuclear weapons were not neglected, which proved to be the bane of Soviet Union in due course of time. Indeed, by the time Gorbachev was at the helm of affairs in Soviet Union the country had already reached the apogee of its military power and strength (which, incidentally, provided Soviet Union with the superpower status) and, in a way, the country had also reached its nadir as far as its economic vitality was concerned because of the so-called 'military-overstretch'. It was left to Gorbachev to initiate a new and meaningful strategic order in Soviet Union.

The so-called 'Gorbachev revolution' in Soviet foreign policy from the mid-1980s proved to be a crucial event in changing the forces of correlation in international affairs. His revolutionary initiatives unleashed surprising changes in the Soviet strategic regime. The new perception posited from a new thinking and a fresh look at the domestic and the international order. This new and holistic thinking became inevitable because Gorbachev believed that people were wary of 'confrontation' and yearned for a 'reliable world'. From the very beginning Gorbachev and his 'new thinkers' advocated exceptional ideas concerning
national security, whereby economic issues became as important as military security. Thus, his new thinking envisioned radical changes not only in the strategic doctrine but also in the economy and society, at large.

According to Gorbachev, the new strategic order was based on the following assumptions:

(1) The use of nuclear weapons was suicidal;

(2) Nuclear war cannot help in the achievement of any goals;

(3) Nuclear War and arms race are equally unwinnable and, therefore, undesirable.

(4) Security cannot be achieved by military means;

(5) Security is indivisible - either equal security or none at all.

(6) Realization of the minimum amount of armed forces and armaments which is reasonably capable of defending the country.

This new doctrinal thinking was desired as a tool to help in the achievement of Gorbachev's political objectives, viz., reducing the threat; reducing the need to compete by retarding Western force modernization and development of new weapons of mass destruction, etc. The changes unleashed by Gorbachev created a new basis for the definition of 'peaceful co-existence', which emphasized
'peaceful interstate relations' irrespective of the politico-economic system. A natural concomitant of this new world view was the development of a defensive military doctrine, which negated the offensive character of the Soviet military. The veritable peace blitzkrieg leading to the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force Treaty (1987) transcended the typical mind-set of the 'cold warriors' (for whom the arms race was an irreversible process) and provided a positive strategic regime which ushered in the dawn of a world without nuclear weapons. But, unfortunately, the regime of glasnost and perestroika initiated by Gorbachev proved to be his undoing. He was unable to halt the fast deterioration of Soviet economy due to years of costly military expenditure. The openness in Soviet polity and society opened the floodgates of pent up frustrations of the people at large. Coupled with the ethnic chaos the disintegration became inevitable and, mostly, irreversible. No doubt one of the important causes for the disintegration of Soviet Union, and hence; of the monolithic structure, was the burden that the Soviet economy had to bear because of the arms race. Probably the rejection of irreversibility of arms race should have been done much earlier. In other words, a meaningful arms control regime should have been initiated by the Soviet Union in the 1970s -- the one started in the 1970s failed to generate much impact because of the lack of political
foresight -- which could have halted the arms race and its negative impact on the Soviet economy. It is beyond doubt that what Gorbachev accomplished in his short tenure was certainly possible in the period of his predecessors. Unfortunately, they lacked the political sagacity of Gorbachev and, therefore, ironically helped in turning a superpower into an erstwhile country.