

Letters

Perfumes and Preference

I found the report by Thomas J. Fillion and Elliott M. Blass (14 Feb., p. 729) that, in rats, suckling-associated odors can influence adult male sexual behavior enticingly intriguing.

If the same phenomenon holds for humans, we might expect to find, after appropriate investigation, that men marry the women they do because they smell like their mothers. However, the mother's odor is not always her own, and a woman who has set her cap for a particular man might do well to ask his mother what perfume she favored when he was an infant, or even what aftershave his *father* wore when he held the bottle.

Even more intriguing are the hypotheses that we might now frame about why some males grow up to prefer members of their own gender as sex objects: (i) They were bottle-fed babies, and their fathers held the bottle as often as or more often than their mothers did. (ii) Their fathers had a tendency to cuddle their mothers more than usual, perhaps especially just before or during nursing, thus "contaminating" the situation with their male odor.

I eagerly await the reaction of the feminist press to the implication that fathers should *never* bottle-feed their male children!

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The Soviet "Empire"

Charles Wolf, Jr., in his article "The costs of the Soviet empire" (29 Nov., p. 997), has provided an interesting look at what seems almost certain to become an important issue before the end of the decade, namely, the role that the developing economic crisis in the Soviet Union will play in Soviet foreign policy and, therefore, our own. He leaves unexplored some points that appear to be relevant to predicting Soviet policy behavior and appropriate U.S. policy response in the future.

First, what would an analysis comparable to Wolf's show for the economy of the United States? Are U.S. activities in maintaining strategic relationships around the world a substantial drain on our own economy? This question is especially relevant as we contemplate the expected use of the Strategic Defense Initiative and other offshore military procurement as a means of

acquiring political support from our allies. This policy has both immediate and potential long-term negative effects because it involves the transfer of both large amounts of money and state-of-the-art technology into western European economies that compete with the United States in the world marketplace.

Second, to what extent do Soviet imperial expenditures control U.S. aid levels in troubled regions of the world, for example, Central America, Afghanistan-Pakistan, and the Mideast? Does the Soviet Union get more of what they want for their money in such places than we do for ours? For example, if they can spend \$500 million in a region and in so doing induce the United States to spend \$2000 million in response, it may be that it is not their economy that will suffer the most.

Third, it seems likely that many of the items counted as costs in Wolf's analysis contain a large benefit component. That is, a national security expenditure provides employment, advances science and technology, reinforces social cohesion, and may lead to future business exchanges in the civilian sector. (All these benefits have been claimed for U.S. national security expenditures; presumably they apply as well to Soviet expenditures.) In analyzing the "costs" of an empire it seems appropriate to try to include a cost-benefit ratio for each type of expenditure. It probably makes a great deal of difference whether x rubles are spent on bombs that are exploded or on building a railway to a uranium mine in a developing country.

Wolf is to be commended for attempting to analyze Soviet imperial expenditures, a subject that seems initially to be straightforward, but which upon deeper consideration reveals itself to be a morass of complex interrelationships, unverifiable assumptions, and unmeasurable quantities.

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Wolf says the word "empire" is "explicitly defined" as follows: "generically, the term implies a special degree of influence, control, or constraint exercised or imposed by the imperial power over the component parts of its empire." A further definition of the phrase "Soviet empire" extends to "more or less friendly and cooperating regimes." The definition is so broad that it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that at least some nations belong to the United States' empire, but the possible scope of the U.S. empire is not very clear, since, for example, the words "empire" and "regime" are both pejoratives. Is this *Science*?

Wolf writes that the Soviets have expanded previous czarist influence in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan "to a point of effective control." Why, then, has the war in Afghanistan continued, despite the heavy weapons on the Soviet side? Was the United States in "effective control" of South Vietnam in the 1960's? The foreign policy of Rumania has for some years disagreed remarkably with that of the Soviet Union on some issues.

Some Warsaw Pact nations have chosen leaders of their Communist parties contrary to the wishes of the Soviet Union. Sometimes there were Soviet invasions (in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968) but sometimes not, as with Gomulka in Poland some decades ago (1, p. 79). Although certainly their freedom of action is circumscribed, such leaders are hardly exemplars of Soviet "effective control."

The highest-ranking Soviet defector as yet, although strongly opposing what he calls the Soviet leaders' "plans for world domination" (1, p. 279), nevertheless writes, "The Americans consistently exaggerated the degree of Soviet influence on the Vietnamese and on Soviet Arab clients" (1, p. 199). It seems that Stalin himself had greatly exaggerated expectations of Chinese Communist cooperation with the Soviet Union (1, p. 290). I fear that the word "empire" will feed, rather than correct, such exaggerations with regard to some countries that currently receive Soviet aid.

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REFERENCES

1. A. N. Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (Knopf, New York, 1985).

Wolf estimates the costs incurred by the Soviet Union in acquiring, maintaining, and expanding its empire. The focus is on the two external parts of the empire, the first part being made up of the satellite countries of Eastern Europe: Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Rumania, and Bulgaria. According to the author: "The countries of Eastern Europe were traditional areas of Russian influence under the czars but the Soviets have expanded this influence to a point of effective control."

This sweeping statement is incorrect, particularly with regard to the Russian influence under the czars. It is especially irrelevant for East Germany and Hungary.

After the collapse of the Hitler Reich, Germany's eastern provinces were turned over to Poland, with the exception of the northern half of East Prussia, which went to the Soviet Union. The remaining country