Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Red Forge: Soviet Military Industry since 1965 by Peter Almquist

The Political Economy of Soviet Military Power by Leo Cooper

The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Personalities and Politics by Dale R. Herspring

Gorbachev and His Generals: The Reform of Soviet Military Doctrine by William C. Green; Theodore Karasik

The Political Economy of Soviet Defence Spending by R. T. Maddock

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Soviet-based findings into the theoretical mainstream.

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Red Forge: Soviet Military Industry since 1965. By Peter Almquist. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. 227p. $35.00.

The Political Economy of Soviet Military Power. By Leo Cooper. New York: St. Martin's, 1989. 263p. $49.95.

The Soviet High Command, 1967-1989: Personalities and Politics. By Dale R. Herspring. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. 322p. $39.50 cloth, $14.50 paper.

Gorbachev and His Generals: The Reform of Soviet Military Doctrine. Edited by William C. Green and Theodore Karasik. Boulder: Westview, 1990. 239p. $26.50 paper.

The Political Economy of Soviet Defence Spending. By R. T. Maddock. New York: St. Martin's, 1988. 224p. $49.95.

In recent years traditional Kremlinological approaches to Soviet security policy have come under challenge from scholars who emphasize the importance of economic and organizational factors grouped loosely under the rubric *political economy*. Life itself, as Mikhail Gorbachev is fond of saying, has reinforced this trend. The coincidence of internal Soviet economic crisis and external retrenchment—including withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Central Europe, unilateral force reductions, and major concessions in arms negotiations—calls attention to the importance of economic conditions for understanding Soviet security policy. Yet despite the popular wisdom, there is nothing inevitable or deterministic about the relationship between Soviet economic stringency and the apparent end of the Cold War. Attention to the *politics* of Soviet security policy is still warranted. The traditional focus on coalition building, civil-military conflict and collaboration, and the interplay of personalities within the Soviet political elite has a lot to contribute to understanding both the origins and prospects of the current trend in Soviet security policy.

Among the works under review, Dale Herspring's book and the collection of essays edited by Green and Karasik represent the traditional approach. Both books do touch on the links between the economy and security policy, especially on competing views about how much is enough to spend on the military, yet they present no systematic assessment of the way economic conditions affect Soviet policy. The books by Cooper and Maddock, by contrast, identify themselves explicitly with the political economy school and take an interdisciplinary approach to Soviet security policy. Peter Almquist's book offers an innovative mix of the two approaches by analyzing the role of individuals in the Soviet military-industrial sector to evaluate the extent to which they constitute a "military-industrial complex." Comparing the books within each approach is as revealing as comparing the two approaches themselves: authors who adopt the same method or framework do not necessarily draw the same conclusions.

Dale Herspring seeks to place his book in the tradition of works by Kolkowicz, Colton, Odom, and Warner and to bring the study of Soviet civil-military relations up to date. For his conceptual framework and the justification for his focus on individual personalities, Herspring draws loosely on Robert C. Tucker's work on Soviet political culture and leadership. He traces the views of all of the individuals who have served as defense minister and chief of the Soviet general staff from 1967 to 1989 and shows how those views correspond to the policies promoted by the top Soviet leaders—mainly, the general secretaries of the Soviet Communist party. Herspring does not devote equal attention to each person; he relies mainly on the published articles, books, and speeches of his subjects, some of whom had more to say about security policy than others.

Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, chief of the general staff from 1977 to 1984, clearly emerges as the hero of Herspring's story. The author portrays Ogarkov as a kind of John the Baptist to Gorbachev's Jesus, although he admits that there is no evidence of a personal tie between the two and that Ogarkov's tenure as chief did not overlap with Gorbachev's job as top leader. Nevertheless, in Herspring's view, both men shared a concern about the state of the Soviet economy, both could be considered "technological determinists," both emphasized the role of individual initiative and responsibility (pp. 169, 178, 189-92, 293). "One can-

not help but wonder," he writes, "what the situation would have been like if Ogarkov had been ten years younger and had appeared on the scene at the same time as Gorbachev. . . . [Ogarkov] would have been faced with a general secretary who was everything he had been seeking in the late 1970s" (pp. 292–93).

On this central contention Herspring fails to convince. The differences between the preferred policies of Ogarkov and Gorbachev far outweigh the superficial similarities Herspring identifies. Most analysts agree that Ogarkov was fired by Gorbachev's predecessors in 1984 for insisting on immediate increases in military spending (also a militarization of scientific research) and comparing the international environment to that of the 1930s—among other reasons. Gorbachev, by contrast, sought to portray the Reagan administration in a favorable light in order to justify reducing the military budget and reorienting the Soviet economy to focus on civilian needs. Ogarkov, as Herspring discusses, was a highly innovative military theorist; he anticipated a new revolution in military technology that would put demands on Soviet armed forces to execute high-speed offensive operations throughout the entire depth of the enemy's territory. Gorbachev has undermined the basis for Ogarkov's military plans in almost every respect by promoting a posture of "nonoffensive defense," by seeking to curtail the technological arms race through negotiation, by unilateral reductions in troops and military spending, by overseeing the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the pull-back of Soviet forces. Ogarkov, despite his prescient understanding of the implications of future military technologies and his sometime support for modest measures of arms control, was by no means an adherent of Gorbachev's "new thinking" in foreign policy.

Herspring argues that Ogarkov's successors as chief of the general staff, as well as the current defense minister, have all supported Gorbachev's policies of reform. This contention is crucial to the author's attempt to relate his work to current policy concerns. Herspring mocks Western analysts "who see Gorbachev as a modern-day Sir Galahad out to slay the evil military-industrial complex" and maintains that "despite some occasional disagreements, the West is confronted with a relatively united national security apparatus in the Soviet Union" (p. xi). Thus, his policy prescription consists of a warning that "unilateral concessions to the Soviet Union aimed at strengthening Gorbachev against hard-line marshals would be self-defeating" (p. xi). (Of course, any conciliatory U.S. responses to Gorbachev's initiatives could not be called *unilateral* concessions, given the extent of the previous Soviet concessions.

In the wake of Eduard Shevardnadze's December 1990 resignation as Soviet foreign minister, it is easy to criticize Herspring's insistence on a harmony of views between the civilian reformers and the military hierarchy. Military officers and hard-line communists had accused Shevardnadze—the main executant, and perhaps architect, of the new thinking—of "appeasement" and the selling-out of Soviet interests. Yet long before Shevardnadze gave up the fight against the "reactionaries" (as he called them), many Western analysts had identified sharp debates within the Soviet security policy community on fundamental issues. These debates are described in several of the essays in the Green and Karasik volume (the contributions by Thomas Nichols are particularly valuable). Most of the authors posit the existence of several competing viewpoints on Soviet security policy. In his interesting discussion of the future of Soviet nuclear strategy, for example, Daniel Gouré identifies three groups: reformers, modernists, and conservatives. The contributors are not all of one mind, however. A couple of the volume's authors are closer to Herspring's position that the Soviet military recognize the need for a "breathing space" to repair the economy and that the political leadership looks forward to meeting the military's every requirement once perestroika succeeds. The evidence for this interpretation is rather thin, however, and depends on two dubious assumptions: (1) that Soviet commanders are willing to take the long view and tighten their belts rather than succumb to the immediate parochial interests (like increasing their budgets) that are typical of most bureaucracies and (2) that Soviet political leaders would gladly squander the fruits of economic reform, if ever it succeeds, on a new arms race.

The ability of the Soviet Union to sustain an arms race with the United States is a central focus of the works by Cooper and Maddock; and on this relationship between the economy

and Soviet security policy, the books diverge sharply. Cooper argues that "the defence burden does not appear to be a vital issue in Soviet political and economic analysis of the present situation" (p. 12). He draws this conclusion on the basis of a reasonable assumption that it is unlikely that "the Soviet leaders themselves are aware of the real cost of the military effort and of the extent of the defence burden that these costs entail" (p. 96). Furthermore, he argues that "transferring resources from military purposes to civilian use will not materially improve the economic situation because of the inefficiencies that are inherent in the Soviet system"; and that therefore, the Soviet leaders won't do it (p. 225). Finally, he notes that Western intelligence assessments of Soviet military spending during the first years of Gorbachev's tenure suggested an increase, rather than a decrease.

Again, it is easy to criticize an author for faulty predictions (an occupational hazard of Sovietology these days). Since 1988, Gorbachev has cut the Soviet military budget considerably and launched a major campaign for conversion of Soviet military facilities to civilian production. Although we may excuse Cooper for not having foreseen these particular developments, we should still consider why his analysis led him to dismiss their likelihood. The main problem is his failure to understand the link between Soviet military spending, productivity, and economic performance. Cooper recognizes that the decline in the Soviet growth rate owes mainly to declining factor productivity (a given input of labor or capital produces less output per unit than it used to do). Therefore, he argues, Soviet leaders will gain more for the economy by improving productivity than by decreasing military spending. Yet military spending itself affects productivity by diverting capital investment from the civilian sector to the military. Resources that could be used to boost productivity by improving transportation and infrastructure, for example, are used unproductively for military purposes, thereby lowering the overall growth rate.

Unlike Cooper, Maddock understands and explains the relationship quite well. He is particularly sensitive to the opportunity costs of diverting spending from consumption and investment to the military sector and his frequent comparisons of the Soviet experience to that of the United States and Japan are instructive. Maddock highlights the extent to which the nature of the Soviet economy (especially its reliance on investment as the main source of growth) exacerbates the trade-offs between military and civilian spending. By robbing the civilian sector of needed capital investment, high military spending contributes directly to a long-term secular decline in Soviet growth rates. In particular, Maddock argues, much of the capital investment in machine tools necessary for production of modern military weapons is precisely what the civilian sector needs to boost factor productivity in the absence of additional inputs such as labor. Thus, with Maddock's framework, we can understand Gorbachev's incentives for seeking an end to the Cold War and the arms race. There is nothing deterministic about his argument, however. He maintains that the military's hold on the centrally planned Soviet economy contributes to long-term secular decline; but he does not say at what point Soviet leaders would try to stem that decline by reallocating resources to the civilian sector and decentralizing the economy. That, as Maddock understands, is a matter of politics—in both its internal and external dimensions.

One prominent political explanation for how the defense sector has maintained its dominant position in the Soviet economy focuses on the role of a Soviet military-industrial complex, the subject of Peter Almquist's book. Almquist attempts to discover whether it makes sense to speak of a military-industrial complex (managers of enterprises that produce military goods, weapons designers, and officials of the defense industrial ministries) that exerts influence on Soviet security policy on behalf of its component members. He seeks to ascertain whether representatives from these groups promote policies that favor the military-industrial sector and whether they collaborate with the military to secure political support for such policies. His main means of addressing the question is an extensive search of the published writings of the members of these groups and a tracing of their career paths (summarized in two highly informative appendices), combined with an understanding of political and economic structural characteristics of the Soviet system. In sum, Almquist produces "negative evidence" that

runs contrary to what is probably the common wisdom about the Soviet military-industrial sector. He finds that members of the hypothesized military-industrial complex in their public writings tend to focus on day-to-day issues of management relevant to their narrow technical expertise and rarely venture into policy advocacy in the broader strategic issues which are the purview of the political leadership. Nor do the careers of the officials examined suggest anything resembling the "interlocking directorates" of a military-industrial complex. These conclusions and the author's method make this an original and interesting work.

Although there may be no Soviet military-industrial complex, in the sense that Almquist defines it, there is certainly a powerful constituency in the Soviet Union for maintaining the existing system with its high-priority status for the defense sector. That is why, as Almquist points out, Soviet reformers frequently employ the expression *military-industrial complex* as an epithet against their opponents. In their view, representatives of the heavy industrial ministries, the armed forces, and the party apparatus have a stake in the perpetuation of the highly centralized, party-dominated economic system, without which the skewed distribution of resources to the military sector would have been unlikely. Elucidating the symbiotic relationship between the system of central planning and Soviet militarization is a key contribution of the political economy approach to Soviet security policy. Yet without the insights of traditional Kremlinology, it would be difficult to understand the zigzags and reversals that frequently characterize Soviet foreign and security policy.

Consider the case of Gorbachev. When his main constituency was the reformist intelligentsia and his adversaries were the conservatives, he promoted decentralization and demilitarization. By the fall of 1990, however, having alienated his reformist supporters and unlocked a Pandora's box of ethnic unrest, Gorbachev began to seek support from the military and the upholders of the status quo. During 1991, he turned to the reformers again and attempted to work out an agreement with leaders of the 9 (out of 15) republics that might be willing to remain in, and reconstitute, the Soviet Union. Economic pressures undoubtedly played some role in Gorbachev's recent policy initiatives and reversals. It is of considerable relevance, for example, that the conservatives offered no compelling solution to the economic crisis. Yet why Gorbachev chose a particular course and certain allies at a given point in time cannot be reduced to economics. Much less can the implications of those choices for foreign and security policy be understood solely on economic grounds. An analysis of economic conditions must be combined with an understanding of Gorbachev as politician, as well as the influence of the international environment.

Both traditional Kremlinology and the political economy approach offer important insights into Soviet security policy. The task for future research is twofold. First, Kremlinology must take greater advantage of the existing political science literature on coalition politics. Fortunately, this process is under way and is well represented by the work of Richard D. Anderson, James Richter, and Jack Snyder, among others. Second, Sovietologists must begin to bring economic factors systematically to bear on their analysis of Soviet politics, including Soviet security policy. As economic considerations come to play an increasingly explicit role in Soviet foreign and security policy, political scientists must be prepared to integrate them into their theories of Soviet politics and international relations.

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