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## Perestroika and Soviet National Security

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employs the source material to indicate how Soviet theorists came to adopt a defensive, reactive strategy, belatedly recognizing new political, military, and economic realities in Europe. He asserts that the reformist leadership succeeded in reorienting Soviet strategy from an offensive concept geared to the achievement of military victory to a defensive one designed to rebuff any attack and quickly achieve war termination. Finally, he illuminates the resultant transformation of their approach to controlling and terminating superpower conflict should deterrence fail.

The study is not without limitations and provocative theses. Many readers will find themselves at odds with Garthoff's perspective on the historical role of deterrence in Western strategy. One might counter that the requirements of deterrence were based on Soviet capabilities rather than intentions precisely because there was no consensus on actual Soviet intentions. Deterrence became the centerpiece of Western strategy as the one concept around which domestic and alliance consensus could be built, and provided a doctrinal anchor and common touchstone during turbulent times.

There are other problems attending reliance on these official sources. First, even articles appearing in the confidential issues of *Military Thought* must be regarded only as indicators of underlying processes which remain largely unknown. Publication in such an organ serves many purposes, only one of which is face-value discussion or promulgation of policy and doctrine. Second, the author does not distinguish sufficiently between the positions of civilian and military spokesmen. The differences among the bureaucratic and political interests of the military establishment and state or Party institutions are never made clear. Third, Garthoff discusses only meagerly how the deterministic, quantitative approach to military science and art colors Soviet perceptions of the strategic relationship. Neither does he identify which remnants of this bias are likely to remain in the post-Cold War period.

These minor concerns aside, Garthoff's presentation of the evolution of Soviet strategic doctrine and his informed perspective on mutual misperceptions in the strategic relationship will make this book well worth study for a long time to come.

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McCWire, Michael. *Perestroika and Soviet National Security*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1991. 510pp. \$18.95

As the winds of change swept through the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s much of the world's

attention was riveted by the series of unbelievable events: the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, *glasnost'* in the Soviet Union. The decline in East-West tensions generated euphoria in the West. That

feeling intensified when it became clear that the Soviets were not only withdrawing from Cold War military competition, but were also making serious attempts to restructure their communist state. Although much was written about *perestroika* and its effect in and out of the Soviet Union, Western analysts offered few satisfactory explanations of why these seminal changes occurred. The conventional theory is that the Reagan administration's anti-Soviet policies, with their heavy investment in defense, were instrumental in forcing the Soviets to withdraw from the Cold War. However, in this study, Michael MccGwire disputes the conventional theory and fills an important gap in Western understanding of Soviet actions in the 1980s.

Through careful and painstaking analysis, MccGwire presents an exceptionally clear argument that the radical shifts in Soviet domestic and international policy were undertaken not in response to specific pressures from the United States, such as the Reagan defense build-up, but as the result of a fundamental and revolutionary change in the Soviet view of the possibility of war between communism and capitalism.

MccGwire arrived at his conclusion by focusing on Soviet military doctrine as an analytical vehicle. He asserts that the political impulse for *perestroika* had been building for years, but was held back by the leadership of older men who were guided by the doctrinal assumption that world war was likely because of the fundamental

differences between socialism and capitalism. That assumption generated a core military requirement that the Soviets maintain the ability to fight such a war. The essential point in MccGwire's analysis is that the Soviets absolutely wanted to avoid war, but if war occurred they could not afford to lose it. This opinion remained at the heart of Soviet military doctrine until 1986, when Mikhail Gorbachev concluded that war could and would be averted by political means.

Those in the West who have for two generations focused on preventing the spread of Soviet-led communism will have particular difficulty believing that the Soviets were not seeking war, but only preparing not to lose it. But MccGwire provides a stringent analysis of the rational and historical genesis of the change in Soviet policy. Using the advantage of hindsight, he has developed his case by reconstructing Soviet logic to document the lengthy gestation of the policy that Gorbachev implemented.

An important conclusion of the author's analysis is the refutation of the theory that the Reagan policies were in any way responsible for the changes in the Soviet Union. MccGwire points out that the confrontational policies of the first Reagan administration actually endangered the emergence of trends favorable to political settlement of system conflict. In short, rather than decreasing the possibility of war by increasing U.S. military strength, Reagan's policies generated fear in the Soviet leadership and actually lowered the threshold.

Understanding how this is possible is an essential lesson that must be learned by all segments of the national security community.

*Perestroika and Soviet National Security* is a compelling and extremely important book. It is informative, easy to read, and offers the impression of participating in a fascinating conversation. Whether one is attempting to understand the complexities of the economic or military restructuring implicit in *perestroika*, or merely trying to put recent Soviet actions into perspective, Mike McGwire has provided a ready tool. More importantly, he has posed a most important question for the makers of U.S. foreign policy: If the political decisions that formed the basis of our defense policies for the last forty years were based on fundamental misunderstandings, how can we be certain that in the post-Cold War world we are making the right decisions?

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Burgess, William H., ed. *Inside Spetsnaz: Soviet Special Operations, A Critical Analysis*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1990. 308pp. \$24.95

As the cold War ends, finally there arrives a book on Soviet special forces that is not based on rumor and speculation. Grounded in solid historical research, this collection of fourteen essays by scholars, intelligence analysts, active duty army

officers, and a civilian "anti-terrorist consultant" definitely lives up to its reputation as the "most definitive work on Soviet special operations currently available."

*Inside Spetsnaz* analyzes all the known campaigns of troops of "*spetsialnogo naznacheniya*" (special designation), including operations in the Spanish Civil War, the Petsamo-Kirkenes (Murmansk) and Manchurian battles of the "Great Patriotic War" (World War II), Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan. This is no breathless exhortation on the Soviet special forces threat. Quite the contrary, the theme is that spetsnaz units are not "ten feet tall." The editor has characterized recent articles on spetsnaz as the promotion of a "Great Spetsnaz Scare of the 1980s . . . a Cold War misadventure cut from the same cloth as the Bomber Gap and the Missile Gap." The authors of these essays treat spetsnaz forces as but one small facet of the overall Soviet military apparatus: important, but not very effective in historical terms.

The Soviets themselves refer to their elite fighting units with a bewildering array of descriptive titles: "special designation," "special reconnaissance," "diversionary reconnaissance," and "special groups." More confusion arises in that spetsnaz-like units appear to be attached to the K.G.B.—ostensibly a "civilian" intelligence organization—as well as military intelligence (G.R.U.) and regular military and naval commands. One virtue of the book is the development of a coherent definition as to