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Soviet Military Power

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But for those who have been at the pointy end of the spear and who have also participated in developing and choosing between "valid" alternatives competing for scarce resources, the difference between "How much is enough?" and "How much is too much?" is far from trivial. Cost-effectiveness is pertinent; yet cost-effectiveness can be illusory or transient. On balance, Mr. Epstein has provided a well-supported case study, a tool which will be useful in preparing future planners for their force planning responsibilities. At the very least, he has demonstrated the political flexibility that can be offered by military preparedness, while suggesting some of the potentially negative consequences when overestimating or undervaluing forces.

Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*. Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1987. 160pp. \$7.50

"However absorbed a commander may be in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is sometimes necessary to take the enemy into account." With these words, Winston Churchill tells us why the sixth annual edition of *Soviet Military Power* is worth our while to read and think about. It is a comprehensive treatment of Soviet military hardware, capabilities, strategies, policies, and trends.

Beginning with a chapter on Soviet strategic military policies, the authors move to strategic and nuclear forces, theater forces including naval forces, forces for readiness and sustainability, Soviet weapons research and production, and regional policies. They conclude with some brief notes on U.S. response to all this. It is well-written—better indeed than many of the classified publications—and contains more information than most of us will absorb in a single reading. Bearing in mind the readership of the *Naval War College Review*, this review will

concentrate on the Soviet strategic and naval forces.

In his preface, Caspar Weinberger makes two interesting observations. First, the West has relied on technological superiority to offset the sheer mass of the Soviet forces. This advantage is under vigorous challenge. Second, it behooves us to give some thought to why a nation with severe internal economic problems would devote 15 to 17 percent of its GNP to establishing and maintaining such a large military buildup. The authors suggest that the answer lies in a Soviet desire to achieve a military posture "that provides for absolute security as it continues to seek world domination."

In their opening analysis on the Soviet view of strategic war, the authors observe that while the Soviets recognize the catastrophic consequences of a global nuclear war, they also appear to believe that they can ultimately prevail in such a contest. Their force structure seems to reflect both a nuclear war-winning posture and, increasingly, a posture for

managing a protracted conventional war. Soviet force buildup includes weapons systems for both extended conventional war and for winning nuclear war.

Soviet strategic nuclear force modernization has focused on survivability and variety. To this end they keep an amazing number of old systems, and they dig with an enthusiasm unmatched since the demise of trench warfare. The cornerstone of these forces remains the hard target-busting SS-18 which is kept in the world's hardest silos. It is accurate and throws more warheads than most modern U.S. ICBMs. New strategic system development seems to be focused on mobile ICBMs for survivability, including the road-mobile SS-25 and the rail-mobile SS-X-24, both of which may be well-suited as reserve weapons for a protracted war.

Soviet SSBN operations also appear to be organized for survivability and reserve use. Although the SSBNs are dispersed in war, they remain where they can be protected by surface, air, and submarine forces.

Air-breathing strategic systems are a growing part of the Soviet nuclear force. The AS-15 subsonic long-range cruise missile has been on the Bear bomber force since 1984. Sea and land-launched versions are now under development and could soon appear on submarines off the U.S. coast.

For a nation so concerned about the destabilization effects of U.S. strategic defense initiatives, as the Soviets were at Reykjavik, they show

no small enthusiasm for trying to do the same thing. They have put large efforts into high-energy lasers, particle beams, high-power microwaves, kinetics, and antisatellite weapons.

Turning to the Soviet Navy, recent years seem to have been devoted to absorbing and developing the remarkable array of new platforms that they have lately introduced. Building on the largest nuclear-powered submarine force in the world, they have introduced the Mike SSN with a wide variety of weapons systems, the Sierra SSN with capabilities well beyond the not-so-old Victor III, and the Oscar SSGN with 24 antiship cruise missiles. Clearly the Soviets have undertaken a high priority national program of submarine development reflecting Admiral Gorshkov's view of the submarine as the capital ship of the 20th century.

In surface ships, the Soviets dropped the shoe with the launch, in December 1985, of their first CTOL aircraft carrier, the 65,000-ton *Leonid Brezhnev*. We await with interest the dropping of the other shoe—the deployment and operational workup of this high-value target. The mission of this ship remains to be seen. The authors of *Soviet Military Power* seem to lean towards an air defense mission, both to provide air defense for Soviet surface action groups and to extend the air defense perimeter of the homeland. However, they do not discount completely a power projection mission.

The quality of the photographs of Soviet naval ships deserves mention.

Some of them are stunning in their detail, clarity, and perspective. The absence of sailors on the decks of Soviet ships is always curious. The *Typhoon* looks as menacing as one imagines Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* did. Surely the *Typhoon* is the first real submarine with space enough for a pipe organ in the wardroom.

Readers of *Soviet Military Power* should be aware that it is not a net assessment and does not purport to tell us who might "win." No estimate is made of the quality or reliability of Soviet weapons nor of the caliber of the men who might use them. U.S. systems are shown for comparison as they are the familiar reference point. The publication should be treated only as a list of problems with which the Defense Department must deal in program planning.

At the same time, the publication can be faulted for not distinguishing clearly between matters of hard, observable fact, such as the speed of an airplane, and matters of judgment, such as Soviet political and military intent. It would have been better had the authors used the traditional intelligence analysis words such as "estimated" or "assessed," for the latter.

As noted, *Soviet Military Power* covers many areas beyond strategic and naval forces. We will leave them for the reader to discover and ponder. The authors do not paint the Soviets as 10-foot tall, just a very robust and thought-inducing 6 feet.

Kaufmann, William W. *A Reasonable Defense*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986. 113pp. \$8.95

This is the latest addition to what is arguably the most prestigious series of titles devoted to U.S. military matters, the Brookings' *Studies in Defense Policy*. The title is not only fully worthy of that honor, but it seems to this reviewer that the work is somewhat less driven by the parochial aspirations of the political party not presently occupying the White House, than have been past efforts.

Politics aside, this concise and brilliant study suffers from only one significant fault: its title is excessively bland. Mr. Kaufmann offers much more than just a few hackneyed ways to slash the defense budget and make it more "reasonable" in cost. Rather, he examines three distinctly different defense postures for America, weighing them against each other in terms which should allow vastly better *reasoning* in debates over what we buy and why. As a result, this book is already required reading for students at the Naval War College.

Mr. Kaufmann has quite a number of theses, most of which contradict rather starkly the current Pentagon wisdom. The book begins with a review of the historical trends in defense spending, debating points, and the "net assessments" which dominate the force planning process. He then evaluates three alternative (and to varying extents hypothetical) constructs as a basis for testing his arguments: the *baseline force* (predicated on what the Reagan administration