

1982

China, the Soviet Union, and the West: Strategic and Political Dimensions in the 1980s

James John Tritten
U.S. Navy

Douglas T. Stuart

William T. Tow

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Tritten, James John; Stuart, Douglas T.; and Tow, William T. (1982) "China, the Soviet Union, and the West: Strategic and Political Dimensions in the 1980s," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 35 : No. 4 , Article 23.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol35/iss4/23>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

the most thorough effort to date that has attempted to capture the scope and thrust of Soviet politico-military activities. For that reason, and because the USSR will probably continue its pattern of "short of war" efforts for the foreseeable future, the work makes a valuable contribution towards an increased Western awareness of that multifaceted global campaign.

JOSEPH E. THACH, JR.
Office of the Assistant
Secretary of Defense
for Public Affairs

Stuart, Douglas T. and Tow, William T. eds. *China, the Soviet Union, and the West: Strategic and Political Dimensions in the 1980s*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982. 309pp. \$13.95 paperback.

The papers in this book are from a conference on Sino-Soviet relations held during May 1980 in Garmisch, West Germany. The authors include academicians, researchers, government officials, and journalists from both sides of the Atlantic.

The book opens with an extensive examination of the basis of Soviet and Chinese relations. Professor Vernon V. Aspaturian of Pennsylvania State University has written an essay entitled "The Domestic Sources of Soviet Policy Toward China" which could easily serve as a primer in comparative foreign policy. Aspaturian points out that the opinions and preconditioned stereotypes held by Soviet bureaucrats and other Soviet elites became self-sustaining as polemicists both developed vested interests in their positions and lost sight of the original causes for their inspirations. Thus he believes that in their view of China the important people in the Soviet Union are trapped by their Marxist ideology; they cannot escape feeling that

the PRC will develop and in doing so pose a threat to themselves.

Other authors in the opening section deal with the internal factionalism and economic constraints of both nations, the need for the West to plan for all possible contingencies, and the unimportance of ideology in Sino-Soviet relations.

The second section considers military matters. All authors discount the immediate possibility of any serious military actions between the USSR and the PRC, for inherent vulnerabilities and limitations would tend to make the military option too risky for either side.

William Green of the Heritage Foundation and David Yost of the US Naval Postgraduate School argue that the Soviet Union could succeed in military operations against the Chinese which would gain them additional territory. They outline the cases for an attack on the Chinese buffer areas, for a strike against Chinese nuclear forces, or for a "genocide" attack aimed at reducing China to chaos.

Professor Don Daniel, also of the Postgraduate School, argues that the Chinese Navy is and will remain essentially a coastal defense force with modest local interdiction and strategic nuclear capability. Other authors examine the internal Chinese debate between upgrading their forces with modern technology or retaining a defense posture based upon a traditional "people's war." There is also an analysis of the role of the US Seventh Fleet in bolstering China vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

The third section deals with PRC-USSR competition in certain of the world's regions. The general thesis is that each side is maneuvering forces and states to contain the other side. A number of authors discuss the support of Nato by China. Soviet inducements to maintain détente and cooperation with Western

Europe are seen as a move by Moscow to discourage Western ties with China.

In the final section, Drew Middleton of *The New York Times* reviews recent American attempts to "play the China card" and respond to the invasion of Afghanistan. He does not foresee a return to US-USSR détente. Colonel William V. Kennedy, US Army Reserve, a civilian strategic research analyst, suggests that the US should shift from a Nato-first strategy to one centered on the Far East. He outlines a series of force readjustments which could be undertaken within existing budget constraints.

Edward N. Luttwak, affiliated with the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, analyzes the problems facing the Politburo and concludes that the time may be ripe for the Soviets to exercise the military option against China. He states that China is probably not destroyable but it is divisible. Finally, Jonathan Pollack, a Rand Corporation analyst sums up the main thrust of the book by reminding the reader that both the Soviets and the Chinese may find it beneficial to have a cooperative future. He suggests that the West prepare for all, including this possibility.

The essays are generally well written, footnoted, and concise. Some improvements in organization could be used and the larger implications of Colonel Kennedy's paper should have been addressed by the editors. The book is indexed.

JAMES JOHN TRITTEN
Commander, US Navy
University of Southern California

Gann, Lewis H. and Henriksen, Thomas H. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: Battle in the Bush*. New York: Praeger, 1981. 154pp. \$19.95.

Although a great deal is written about

the military stature and policies of the superpowers, at the present time little public attention is focused on the pursuit of guerrilla warfare. The authors, both historians at the Hoover Institution, have served in the British and American armed forces. Guerrilla warfare has its theoreticians, practitioners, and apologists, and yet, particularly in a Third World setting, it is difficult to study from the perspective of either a social scientist or a military affairs expert. Nevertheless, it is the sort of conflict social scientists and their counterparts in the armed forces should study with care (as they once did, particularly in the Kennedy era) lest they unwittingly prepare themselves for yesterday's wars.

A gifted writer, Dr. Gann is a student of Rhodesian (or Zimbabwean) history who is closely identified with the Eurocentric approach to African history. Besides his African histories, he wrote a broadly comparative study, *Guerrillas in History*. His co-author, Dr. Henriksen, has also written both on African history and guerrilla war. Dr. Henriksen's writings are characterized by an obvious familiarity with infantry tactics and considerable sophistication in Marxist-Leninist theory and practice. The two thus make an excellent pair of authors for a volume on insurgency and counter-insurgency in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe from 1964 until 1980, when the nation achieved internationally recognized independence under African majority rule.

A useful point of departure is the author's designation of the white Rhodesians as the "white electorate in arms" and the African insurgents as "labor migrants in arms" and they point out that the former were unable to coopt the bourgeois components of the African population because of the institutionalized, pervasive pattern of racism that undermined the self-esteem of these