

1974

## Soviet Naval Developments Capability and Context

B. M. Simpson III  
*U.S. Navy*

Michael MccGwire

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

---

### Recommended Citation

Simpson, B. M. III and MccGwire, Michael (1974) "Soviet Naval Developments Capability and Context," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 27 : No. 6 , Article 12.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol27/iss6/12>

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](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## 86 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

tranquility will be maintained by balanced weaponry rather than pronouncements of collective security and universal order. If this is true, armed involvement could be managed more effectively in terms more germane to the specific conditions of a region than general statements offered at international forums. Clearly, any path to a restoration of an ethic of warfare will result only from the input of self-interest for a particular nation rather than subscription to an idealized goal. And naturally, the question which remains is whether an appropriate forum does exist to assemble and project a realistic code of conduct universally acceptable in war.

In view of the involvement in Vietnam and current efforts to remodel the rules of land warfare, *The Nuremberg Fallacy* assumes a degree of relevancy to military professionals once reserved for studies of tactics and armaments. It provides an excellent and fascinating premise, not only to rebut rudimentary concepts in another environment, but also to establish a perspective for modernized and simplified rules of conduct in war. If the only value of the book is to raise the consciousness of the reader to reply and argue, it has served its purpose in an area currently in revision.

DAVID W. ELBAOR  
Captain, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve

ψ

McGwire, Michael, ed. *Soviet Naval Developments Capability and Context*. New York: Praeger, 1973. 467p.

In 2 years Dalhousie University at Halifax has earned an enviable reputation for sponsoring what has developed into an annual seminar on Soviet naval developments. This collection of essays is the product of the first such seminar in 1972. The impressive caliber of the participants is matched by the caliber of their contributions.

The seminar sought first to identify current trends in Soviet naval developments and then to establish a reasonably solid frame of reference in which to evaluate them. Even though the contributors disagreed in many respects, there was a fair measure of consensus on the nature of Soviet foreign policy and on Soviet attitudes toward war, peace, deterrence, and the uses of military power and force.

McGwire succinctly points out that the body of opinion can be divided into two distinct schools. The first school focuses on theater level planning. For this reason it must be primarily concerned with the capabilities of the Soviet maritime forces and on Western vulnerabilities. For contingency planning, this school must deal with the most dangerous rather than the most likely course of action.

The second school McGwire describes concentrates on the politico-strategic level. It is concerned with the main currents of Soviet naval policy and seeks to assess Soviet capacity to meet a maritime threat to the Soviet Union. It highlights Soviet vulnerabilities. For this reason, it seeks to identify the nature of Soviet intentions and the most likely course of Soviet action. Obviously, the two schools operate on significantly different planes, and in making any analysis or assessment, it is crucially important to keep in mind the distinction between them.

The individual essays in this volume are conveniently and logically arranged under general headings dealing with the background of Soviet maritime interests, specific data, Soviet naval developments, and deployments to the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean. This arrangement will be of great help to the general reader as well as to the specialist who seeks more detailed information and analysis.

Among the many themes running through this collection, perhaps the most important is that which

## PROFESSIONAL READING 87

emphasizes the highly political nature in the use of Soviet maritime forces. This emphasis on politics has its origin in the ideological perceptions of Marxism-Leninism and in many respects is very different from the Western perceptions, articulated by Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett.

Even though *Soviet Naval Developments* raises more questions than it answers, McCwire states the question that must be addressed in the immediate future: "Having been drawn forward in strategic defense, the Soviet Union is now in a position to use her warships to the West's discomfiture, and to promote her own interests in these distant areas. But, except where the security of the homeland is threatened, Soviet maritime policy continues to be more concerned with the political advantages that can be gained from the use of the sea than from the use of force at sea."

This thesis can and should be debated.

B.M. SIMPSON, III  
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

ψ

Venter, Al J. *Portugal's Guerrilla War: the Campaign for Africa*. Capetown: John Malherbe, 1973. 220p.

For those whose interests span both the political and military, Al Venter has written a book both challenging and absorbing, reminiscent of the late Dr. Bernard Fall's *Street Without Joy* for its richness of detail and description. A well-known South African journalist with ties to both NBC news and the *International Defense Review*, Mr. Venter's knowledge of military and paramilitary skills is clearly evident in a book dealing specifically with insurgency and counterinsurgency in Guinea (Bissau). There are also occasional and insightful comparisons to campaigns in Mozambique and Angola, with fleeting references to irregular warfare in Rhodesia and South-West Africa (Namibia).

Deftly establishing the sense of excitement, fear, and ennui experienced by the Portuguese Armed Forces, Venter describes not only the basic operations of the army, air force, and marines (riverine patrols), but the troublesome issue of the use of NATO weapons by the Portuguese as well. The weaponry used in the campaign is a topic that interests the author, and he provides a lucid account of armaments used by both combatants. He notes that the utilization of medium-range artillery by the FARP (the acronym for the People's Revolutionary Armed Forces) from bases in Guinea (Conakry) and Senegal suggests a level of operations advancing toward the "setpiece battle" scenario found in guerrilla manuals.

Mr. Venter was granted an interview with the then commander of the Portuguese defense forces in Guinea (Bissau), Gen. Antonio de Spínola, who later was the energizing force behind the 1974 coup in Lisbon. The interview, however, published in an appendix along with written answers to the author's supplementary written questions, is plagued by language and translation problems and detracts from, rather than adds to, the quality of the book. It would have been more useful if the Portuguese had supplied Mr. Venter with articles about the theory and practice of guerrilla warfare in Guinea (Bissau) published in Portuguese military and political journals. Such an approach would have allowed the author to trace the evolution of Portuguese counterinsurgency doctrine in the 1960's and 1970's and perhaps to have compared it with trends in official French military circles with respect to the conflicts in Indochina and Algeria. Indeed, the overall comparative utility of the book is marred by the absence of an index, a paucity of footnotes, and a bibliography satisfactory only for the general public and beginning students of guerrilla warfare and African affairs.

The author has included an insightful