

2009

Spying on the Nuclear Bear: Anglo-American Intelligence and the Soviet Bomb

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Recommended Citation

Greenberg, Myron and Goodman, Michael S. (2009) "Spying on the Nuclear Bear: Anglo-American Intelligence and the Soviet Bomb," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 62 : No. 4 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol62/iss4/16>

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The construct of the book is cogent. Vlahos outlines his rationale for the project before he delves into theory and definitions. He turns to methodology and research, offering guidelines for future scholarship. His content chapters, “Them,” “Us,” and “Fit,” represent the substance of the book, encompassing his analysis on the development of identity through war. Vlahos’s argument centers on the idea that the interactive nature of warfare creates, and changes, identity.

In his view, war is a “sacred ritual” that has been practiced throughout history and that in turn shapes social identity. These rituals have semireligious undertones and come to represent “humanity’s dark liturgy.” Further, war and interactive conflict shape the identities of participants, cultivating cohesion, motivation, and awareness. Vlahos argues that interaction creates common narratives and also leads to an acquisition of legitimacy. Finally, interactive conflict emerges as a central component of social identity (both national and nonstate), which shapes historical hindsight as well as future policy decisions.

This book draws on Vlahos’s extensive knowledge of history. He flows from the ancient to the contemporary with ease, drawing on past and present examples to support his arguments. In the final chapter, “Where I Come Out,” he argues that the United States is facing a crisis of identity in its own sacred narrative, as it transitions from the Cold War to something new. Finally, he suggests that the social identity of the nation will evolve as it faces the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Overall, this is an exceptional work of scholarship on the creation of social identity, as well as a critique of

American social construct. Vlahos provides an analysis of inestimable value based on an impressive grasp of history and philosophy. Written primarily for scholars, *Fighting Identity* is a modern philosophical treatise on war’s influence on the development and evolution of sacred identity. While I recommend this book for a wide audience, the subtleties of its analysis and the structure of its argument are complex and elaborate. This book is easily read but not easily understood.

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Goodman, Michael S. *Spying on the Nuclear Bear: Anglo-American Intelligence and the Soviet Bomb*. Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007. 295pp. \$50

The Cold War was a real war, marked by complexity. The nation-states making up the international system (the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union) that emerged in the wake of the atomic age were compelled to avoid a general conflict and to protect civilization from nuclear extinction. As such, a variety of instruments were utilized by these great powers. One of those instruments was the collection and analysis of intelligence and, in particular, nuclear intelligence.

The fact is, Goodman, a lecturer in the Department of War Studies at King’s College London, states, that “intelligence was in some ways the cold war waged by other means.” A little known aspect of the Cold War involved the Anglo-American intelligence communities’ intense focus on the development of Soviet nuclear weapons. Goodman’s main contention is that despite the

strictures of the American Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (the McMahon Act), which forbade the transfer of American scientific and technological knowledge of the atomic weapon to any other power, Anglo-American nuclear intelligence cooperation nevertheless went ahead. These two governments used this intelligence to predict outcomes, and what proved to be even more successful, the detection of Soviet nuclear weapons testing.

Goodman's narrative of this effort focuses on long-distance monitoring, as well as acoustic, seismographic, and electromagnetic monitoring of the Soviets' nuclear weapons program. This is, in itself, an excellent insight into the Cold War nuclear intelligence from 1945 to 1958, an invaluable mirror into these efforts.

What sets this work apart, however, is Goodman's placement of what is essentially one mirror behind another—his revelation of the strategic implications of nuclear intelligence-sharing on the Anglo-American special relationship itself, along with the impact of that relationship on the Soviet Union. To understand the dynamics involved, Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* is worth recalling, as Alice declares that it is like a huge game of chess that is being played all over the world.

But what of the Soviet Union, the conventionally understood object of all the covert intelligence monitoring and detection efforts? Goodman answers this question in his conclusion. He argues that while extensive literature exists on the Soviet threat and the American perception of it, these works often deal with what he calls an alleged "bomber gap" and "missile gap." He states that "both gaps were figments in the

imagination of the U.S. intelligence community, based in the main on overstating the Soviet potential in order to procure greater funds for military development." While this is a standard critique, Goodman applies what he terms "counterfactual history," a third look into the mirror behind the mirror. Counterfactual history, he argues, "is a tool that often can be used to great effect. The Soviet Union, it seems, would never have seriously contemplated war with the West. Given the American atomic arsenal, it is also unlikely that even if Britain had not developed a nuclear deterrent, the Soviet Union would ever have dared risk war." Goodman then measures the capabilities-to-intentions calculus so familiar to students of the Naval War College, as follows: "In the minds of those who mattered, Soviet capabilities were intimately linked to Soviet intentions. Therefore, while the Soviets were without the capability to wage war, their intentions were perceived to be far less aggressive."

Goodman has produced a definitive work, in that it validates the United Kingdom's unequivocal commitment to an independent nuclear deterrent, and by doing so he has given us a seminal work, a landmark effort in its devotion to prodigious research and commitment to truthful inquiry.

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Brannon, Robert. *Russian Civil-Military Relations: Military Strategy and Operational Art*. Farnham, Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009. 352pp. \$114.95