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Russian Civil-Military Relations: Military Strategy and Operational Art

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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

Kremlinologists were noteworthy for describing decision making in the USSR as comparable to cats fighting under a large rug in a dark room—the only thing the outside world could clearly and correctly see was the emerging winner of the struggle. Robert Brannon's *Russian Civil-Military Relations* suggests that while Russia's transition from autocracy to nascent democracy has offered observers more transparency, some of the byzantine intrigues remain.

While Brannon summarizes his hypothesis on the evolution of Russian civil-military relations using political-science theoretical literature, this book is all about the three case studies that Brannon brings to life, using his professional notes, along with interviews of the principals and of experts on the subject. The author was in position to know many of the study's protagonists, serving as the U.S. naval attaché to Russia from 1998 to 2001. His proximity to his subjects, however, does not blur his vision. If anything, his harshest appraisals are directed at his closest Russian counterparts.

Brannon illustrates his understanding of Russian civil-military relations by examining the Russian race to Pristina during the Kosovo conflict (1999), the second Russian intervention in Chechnya (1999), and the tragic sinking of the submarine *Kursk* (2000). His writing style enables the casual reader to follow the exciting plots of the episodes with relative ease, each building on the previous story. Some of the juiciest material is in the footnotes, in which Brannon recounts personal tales of harrowing experiences in exotic Russian locales.

This is a book about a subject never widely discussed in the Western press.

During the Bolshevik and communist eras, the Soviet military was slavishly controlled and obedient to domineering and "intrusive" civil authorities, rendering most civil-military discussions irrelevant. However, the relationship of Russian political and military leaders after the fall of the Soviet Union is at best problematic and at worst threatening. Samuel Huntington (the famous American political scientist) held that for a military establishment to act as a profession, it must possess expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.

Brannon argues that the Russian military leadership, while often both incompetent and deceptive, has consistently held to the belief that Russia should be suspicious of American and NATO intentions, whereas the Russian military itself remains strong and assertive, possessing the power to influence international affairs. In other words, with all its flaws, it is a distinct professional organization. However, the author makes a persuasive critique of Russia's political leadership in the 1990s. The military adventurism documented in the three case studies may have been caused largely by the Boris Yeltsin administration's fecklessness while facing budding national security struggles. Military men may simply have been acting as Russian patriots in the face of a political vacuum.

However, the book comes up short in two areas. First, because Russia is unique, it is questionable whether its experience sheds much light on the development of civil-military relations in other postcommunist societies. Second, one of the book's central messages is that the Russian military is in need of reform. Yet as the United States has witnessed over the last decade, terms

like “reform” and “transformation” mean different things to different parties. Brannon never makes clear what he means by his Holy Grail of “reform.”

Brannon sees in Vladimir Putin (and the Dimitri Medvedev–Putin team) the political leadership missing in the 1990s. He suggests that the military is more likely to give its aggressive support and obedience to decisive nationalists who support military reform. This may be both the good and the bad news of this provocative study.

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Evans, Richard J. *The Third Reich at War*. New York: Penguin, 2009. 926pp. \$40

This final volume of Richard Evans’s trilogy on the Third Reich (the earlier titles being *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 2003, and *The Third Reich in Power, 1933–1939*, 2005) is a disquieting masterpiece of scholarship. Although many of the events recounted here will be familiar to most readers, Evans accomplishes the seemingly impossible by merging both the high politics (if one can use that term in describing Hitler’s Germany) with the best in contemporary social history of the Third Reich. This sordid story has never been told so powerfully or from so many different perspectives. The voices of the victims, perpetrators, and bystanders, along with those of the architects of the conquest and genocide, are all heard in chilling detail.

Evans notes that Hitler’s Operation T-4, his “euthanasia action” program, directed against disabled, mentally ill, and incurably sick Germans, laid the

foundation for the more dramatic, Europe-wide extermination programs. To relieve the sense of despair that permeates this book, one searches for heroes, but they are few in number. The sporadic camp and ghetto uprisings were clearly heroic, as was the resistance by such tiny groups as the “White Rose” movement. Although the Roman Catholic bishop Clemens von Galen led the effort to halt the T-4 program, Evans notes that the bishop was silent when it came to the regime’s treatment of Jews and Gypsies. Hitler learned a valuable lesson from the T-4 episode: limit the paper trail and speak in euphemisms when dealing with state-sponsored extermination programs. There was, of course, resistance to Hitler among some members of the officer corps, men whose sense of honor led them to recoil from the atrocities they witnessed in the war in the East. Another group, composed of theologians, lawyers, and some socialist politicians, known to the Gestapo as the Kreisauer Kreis (Kreisau Circle), failed to merge with the military resisters, thus further diminishing the already long odds that Hitler could be deposed.

Unfortunately, more often than not, ordinary Germans reveled in Hitler’s early victories and seemed to endorse, or at least tolerate, Hitler’s annihilation policies. The notion that ordinary Germans were unaware of the atrocities committed in their name is laughable. For instance, in the fall of 1939 German officers and enlisted men wrote home of the incredible “dirt” and “filth” they encountered among the “subhuman” Poles; they began to exterminate parts of the population within days of the