

1983

Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis

Keith A. Dunn

Fred Halliday

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

Recommended Citation

Dunn, Keith A. and Halliday, Fred (1983) "Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 36 : No. 4 , Article 23.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol36/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.

such an inflexible strategy for any attempts to genuinely lower the nuclear threshold in Europe are clear. Suvorov does not, however, seem to realize that the theory of surprise maximum application of strength logically leads to an all-out exchange between Soviet and American nuclear arsenals, and to fundamental questioning of relevance of traditional military doctrine today.

The author's fervent faith in the offensive as the only reasonable course of military action is not totally convincing as far as consistency of Soviet military doctrine is concerned. One is left with a nagging suspicion that much of this emphasis on the offensive is an incantation designed to assure the Soviet officer corps that a repetition of the debacle of 1941 is impossible. Judging by Suvorov's own attitude this approach works and the chapter on weapons, which provides many interesting details, demonstrates again the author's belief in the strength of the Soviet military machine.

Authenticity is the most valuable aspect of *Inside the Soviet Army*: it introduces the Western reader to the mentality of a Soviet officer. The two last chapters, dealing with the situation of officers and enlisted men, are of particular interest in this respect. As General Sir John Hackett put it in his foreword to the book, these two chapters demonstrate to the reader "what it feels like inside" the Soviet Army.

We pay a price for this authenticity, however. Although thoroughly disappointed in the Soviet

system, Viktor Suvorov is still very much its product. In viewing the Soviet political system and the Soviet military, he might ignore contradictory evidence and historical facts, disregard current professional Western literature, and make the most sweeping and unproved generalizations. However, when limiting his discussion to purely military subjects, Suvorov writes, for the most part, clearly and logically. But his analyses of Soviet foreign and domestic policies are often unsophisticated and written in a bombastic style worthy of a *Red Star* editorial. Nonetheless, the reader will be well served to try to figure out Viktor Suvorov on his own, for it is a useful exercise in studying the "Soviet military mind."

MIKHAIL TSYPKIN
Russian Research Center
Harvard University

Halliday, Fred. *Soviet Policy in the Arc of Crisis*. Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1981. 143pp. \$4.95 paper

In a period when the Soviet bear is more often than not seen to be on the march, and when it is fashionable to be concerned about Soviet power projection capabilities, to reject détente as impossible with an imperialistic nation like the USSR, and to believe that Moscow is directly (or at least indirectly) involved in all events in the Third World which are detrimental to US interests, this book is a breath of fresh air. Halliday argues that the United States is not involved in a zero-sum game with the Soviet

Union where Moscow has all the advantages.

In addition, the author rejects the notion that the Soviet Union is solely responsible for the recent political turmoil which has occurred in the "Arc of Crisis," the area which the Department of Defense primarily refers to as Southwest Asia. Halliday argues that "the sources of political change within these countries lie as much in factors operating within them as they do in the operations of external states, and frequently more so." There can be no doubt that the Kremlin has taken an active role to exploit events in Ethiopia, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and Afghanistan when opportunities have presented themselves. This, however, as the author points out, is a far cry from arguing that the Soviet Union has a grand design or master plan for the region.

Halliday's comments about the effect of assumptions on the analysis of Soviet behavior in Southwest Asia are particularly interesting. Putting aside the natural tendency to agree with someone who reinforces one's own ideas, there is still a considerable amount of merit to the argument that most analyses of Soviet aggressive behavior in the Third World in general and Southwest Asia in particular, start with the assumption that Moscow is expansionistic and offensive in nature. Therefore, rather than trying to analyze events, Halliday argues that assumptions and deductive reasoning masquerading as inductive reasoning result in evidence being

prejudged according to an unstated general theory.

Assumptions are the heart of most studies. They are necessary evils, particularly when important information is lacking as it most always is when we are trying to analyze Soviet behavior. A problem is that more often than not authors do not clearly state their explicit much less their implicit assumptions. As a result, conclusions which are offered as being reached from unbiased assessments often have been determined by initial assumptions. This book may be accused of many things by some readers (e.g., being naive about the Soviet threat, being too harsh on the United States, refusing to accept that an adverse impact on a US interest is adverse even if Moscow did not cause it, etc.). It cannot be accused of failing to establish the author's assumptions early and being consistent throughout the book.

The weakest aspect of this book is that too little attention is given to proposing viable policy options to achieve US interests and objectives. Halliday devotes over 120 pages demonstrating admirably that "the events of the Arc of Crisis cannot be reduced to a simple picture of Soviet troublemaking. . . ." He, however, gives less than two pages to policy guidelines. Those guidelines that he does suggest have been covered by numerous other authors in more depth. This is a nice supplement to more academic, rigorous works such as Robert H. Donaldson's edited book, *The Soviet Union in the Third World: Success and Failure*. It is not a

replacement for such works because Halliday's study is more general and popular in nature than they are.

KEITH A. DUNN
US Army War College

Caldwell, Dan. *American-Soviet Relations From 1947 to the Nixon-Kissinger Grand Design*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981. 283pp. \$27.50.

Since the close of World War II, the American-Soviet relationship has been a dominant factor in the overall fabric of international relations. Unlike many historical analyses on that important topic, Dan Caldwell's attempts to derive a set of similarities and differences in the superpowers' foreign policy behavior patterns over the three decades following 1945. In focusing on US-Soviet performance in three vital issue areas (crisis management, trade and strategic-military affairs) during the "acute" cold war of 1947-62, the 1963-68 attempts at "limited détente," and the 1969-76 détente period, Caldwell offers an excellent analytical matrix with which to assess the tenor of that relationship at any given time during the 30 years under examination. Caldwell starts by establishing the "regimes," or functional procedures, rules and organizations, that emerged over that period to permit mutual management of US-Soviet conflicts of interest.

A potentially useful policy analysis methodology, the regimes concept was pioneered by Professor Hayward Allen and have been successfully

applied over recent years to studies on US relations with Australia and Canada by the political scientists Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. In that sense, then, Caldwell well may have succeeded in making the first "macro" application of the regimes' methodology with this work. With a close examination of formal US-Soviet treaties and agreements, official statements and observable negotiating behavior, Caldwell provides a broad, yet detailed, overview of that relationship. His portrayal of the post-1969 Nixon-Kissinger "grand design" for a new American foreign policy, which envisioned a triangular power relationship among the United States, the USSR and China, is particularly well done for its resultant implications for Russo-American ties.

The "meat" of Caldwell's work follows that broad overview and focuses on actual foreign policy behavior with a trio of comparative case studies on crisis management, trade matters, and strategic arms control. He contrasts early Soviet-American attempts at arms control talks during the 1955-57 UN Subcommittee on Disarmament talks in London with the initial round of SALT talks on 1969-72. While the London talks proved unproductive, Caldwell notes they did initiate a formalized pattern for arms control discussions that later provided common ground rules for SALT-I in the 1969-72 period. Caldwell's case study on crisis management compares Soviet and American behavior in the October 1962 Cuban Missile