

Reagan and the Soviet Union:

Competing Military Strategies, 1980-1988

David M. Glantz

This essay evaluates the policies and military strategy introduced by U.S. President Ronald Reagan vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, within the context of over forty years of intense strategic competition called the Cold War. The Cold War remained “cold” because the two competing countries emerged from the World War as victorious superpower with unchallenged military capabilities and unprecedented territories either under their control or within their spheres of influence. Despite sharply differing ideologies and political systems, the United States and Soviet Union understood the risks and potential costs of war, especially after both became atomic powers by the late 1940s. Both recognized that deliberately unleashing a world war was no longer a rational act.

Given this unique constraint, the ensuing competition became a prolonged game of strategic “cat and mouse,” as the two countries jockeyed with each other for a more advantageous position militarily, politically, and economically. The instruments of this game were specific military strategies governing the nature of the competition and setting limits on the countries’ military actions, all of which acknowledged that the nuclear balance was quite literally a mutually-recognized balance of terror.

David M. Glantz, “Reagan and the Soviet Union: Competing Military Strategies, 1980-1988,” Essay, Enduring Legacy Project, John A. Adams ’71 Center for Military History & Strategic Analysis, Virginia Military Institute, 2014.

Conventional wisdom concerning the Cold War maintains that this “cat and mouse” game played out successfully, that is, relatively peacefully, because neither side was willing to violate the constraints imposed by this balance of terror. However, while this “wisdom” is generally correct, detailed examination of opposing Cold War strategies indicates that, at one point during the Cold War, the Soviet Union developed a strategic concept founded on the belief that large-scale conventional war could indeed be fought within a nuclear context with a reasonable chance that escalation to a global nuclear exchange could be avoided. Specifically, from roughly 1977 through 1984, Marshal of the Soviet Union Nikolai Vasil’evich Ogarkov, the chief of the Soviet General Staff, articulated a concept by which the Soviet Union could wage conventional war in theaters of military operations—the so-called “theater-strategic offensive”—and began structuring the Soviet armed forces to satisfy the requirements of that concept. Further, it is now clear that the dangers inherent in Ogarkov’s reforms, in particular, the risk of unintentionally igniting a general nuclear war, were avoided, first, because of unexpected and ultimately catastrophic political and economic decay within the Soviet Union, and second, because of the forceful military, political, and, ultimately, diplomatic measures undertaken by President Ronald Reagan in partnership with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

A brief review of military strategies pursued by the United States and Soviet Union during the period from 1950 through the late 1970s reveals several distinct stages in this game of “cat and mouse.” The first stage is best defined by a term introduced by Soviet Premier Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev in 1960, when he announced publically that a revolution had occurred in military affairs. Essentially accepting the rationale the United States had advanced in 1954 when it articulated its military strategy of “massive retaliation” [*massirovannii vozmezdnie*], Khrushchev turned traditional Soviet military strategy on its head by acknowledging the preeminence of nuclear weapons in future war and the single “nuclear” option for waging war.¹ Henceforth, he declared, the Soviet Union would rely on its Strategic Rocket Forces (RVSN) as the most powerful and instrumental component of its armed forces rather than its traditionally dominant ground forces.

Although most senior Soviet military leaders acknowledged the impact of nuclear weapons on war, they viewed Khrushchev’s reforms as nothing short of heresy and recoiled in horror over the prospect of reducing the ground forces’ role in future war to the task of clearing up the detrital from the battlefield after a nuclear exchange. Their opposition to Khrushchev’s reforms increased in

1961 with U.S. announcement of a new strategy of “flexible response” [*gibkii reagirovanie*], which argued that nuclear parity between the U.S. and USSR had created opportunities for fighting large-and medium-scale conventional wars in a nuclear context without escalation to a general nuclear exchange.² Many senior Soviet military leaders believed “flexible response” literally “stole the march” from the USSR in regard to opportunities to keep future war conventional at a time when Khrushchev’s “revolution” had left the country with no other option but conducting all-out nuclear war. In turn, this led Soviet military theorists to search for their own version of “flexible response.”³ In fact, Khrushchev’s ouster as General Secretary in October 1964 was at least part associated with military opposition to his reforms.

Khrushchev’s replacement by Leonid Brezhnev as Communist Party first secretary and Aleksei Kosygin as premier coincided with a new stage of Soviet strategic development characterized by a quest for a conventional-nuclear (dual) option in future war. Although the “nuclear genie” could never be put back into its bottle, from 1965 through the early 1970s, the Soviet General Staff began reassessing Soviet military doctrine and strategy, in what amounted to a prolonged but determined search to escape the nuclear “straightjacket” of the single nuclear option and to redefine the ground forces’ role in a dual option future war.

Although competent General Staffs conduct discussions on military strategies within a tight cloak of secrecy, controlled-access, open-source, and historical publications indirectly and imperfectly mirror the nature of these debates. In short, while pursuing a “dual option,” Soviet military theorists and historians searched for, identified, discussed, and ultimately recommended adopting strategic, operational, and tactical techniques designed to make it difficult, if not impossible, for any opponent to employ nuclear weapons in future.⁴ As a result, by the mid-1970s, while retaining a nuclear context, these writings focused increasingly on conventional matters.⁵

The third stage of Soviet strategic development in the Cold War, specifically, the period from the early 1970s and to roughly 1979, which amounted to a virtual “counterrevolution in military affairs,” culminated two years after Marshal Ogarkov was appointed as chief of the Soviet General Staff in January 1977. This period was characterized by political stability within the USSR and its satellites as Brezhnev consolidated his power, but with worsening economic conditions in the country. Externally, this period saw increased tensions with China, perceived U.S. weakness in the wake of the Vietnam War, and an atmo-

sphere of détente [*razriadka*], as both sides sought modest rapprochement to soften the sharp edge of confrontation and exploit their opponent's perceived weakness.⁶ However, all of this ended abruptly with Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and the ensuing U.S. grain embargo and boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

Militarily, Brezhnev's defense team identified concepts and force structures they believed capable of conducting either nuclear war or conventional using strategic, operational, and tactical techniques that would reduce or preclude the likelihood of war becoming nuclear.⁷ By thorough study of military experience, the capabilities of modern weapons systems, and technological developments, Brezhnev's team ultimately formulated the concept of the "theater-strategic offensive." In reality a strategy, this concept involved conducting theater-strategic offensives in specific theaters of military operations (or TVDs) by employing new forms of echeloning forces and operational and tactical maneuver techniques and forces specifically designed to make it difficult if not impossible for the enemy to employ nuclear weapons.⁸ In effect, this concept sought to remove the linkage between conventional combat and escalation to global nuclear war.

The theater-strategic offensive also sought to create centralized, automated, reliable, and survivable command and control by employing information-computation systems and mathematical modelling at all levels of command, to improve force survivability by "hardening," "streamlining," and tailoring forces, and to increase force mobility, fire power, and survivability by conducting extensive operational and tactical maneuver.⁹ Ogarkov's achievements by 1979 included:

- **At the highest command level**—The formation of a Main Command of Forces of the Far East, the first of four planned TVD headquarters tasked with planning and conducting theater strategic offensives.¹⁰
- **In the forward groups of forces and internal military districts**—"hardened" and "streamlined" tank and motorized rifle divisions equipped with new tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, self-propelled artillery, other technologically advanced weapons, and command and control systems.
- **In the forward groups of forces**—tank armies within *fronts* and tank divisions within armies designated and tailored to conduct operational maneuver; separate tank regiments within armies and reinforced separate tank battalions within motorized rifle division designated and tailored to conduct tactical maneuver (forward detachments), and air assault and

Spetsnaz brigades to provide a vertical dimension to this maneuver and conduct reconnaissance and diversionary actions in the enemy's rear.

Ironically, Ogarkov's concept of the theater-strategic offensive reached its zenith from 1981 to 1984, at the same time the Soviet Union experienced serious political and economic crises and President Reagan enunciated his more aggressive foreign policy. By 1984 this strategy was based on the premise that the United States and China posed the most serious future threats and that nuclear parity and the U.S. strategy of "defensive sufficiency" had decreased the likelihood of global nuclear war and increased possibilities for conducting conventional strategic operations in a "nuclear-scared" context. Consequently, the Soviets developed a strategy for conducting war, in stages, to the entire depth of the TVD in differing variants from global nuclear to conventional war in a nuclear context, with priority to the latter.

By definition, the theater-strategic offensive was, "An aggregate of operations and combat actions of various types of Armed Forces coordinated and interrelated by the aim, place, and time of the strikes and unified by a common concept and conducted under the overall direction of the Supreme High Command for the achievement of the strategic aims of the war in a theater of military operations."¹¹ Its components included air operations to gain and maintain air superiority; if necessary, missile strikes to eliminate enemy in-theater nuclear weapons; rapid penetration of enemy defenses by *fronts* [army groups] deployed in shallow single echelons and operational-maneuver groups (OMGs); and deep exploitation and raids throughout the entire depth of the enemy's defenses by OMGs, supported tactically by forward detachments and air assaults and operationally by airborne insertions.

Operationally and tactically, this concept marked the triumphal return of operational art and tactics vis-à-vis military strategy by emphasizing operational and tactical maneuver and rapid and deep thrusts along multiple axes to intermingle friendly and enemy forces so as to deprive the enemy of opportunities for employing tactical nuclear weapons.¹² Based on operational and tactical concepts developed in the 1930s, such as deep battle [*glubokii boi*] and the deep operation [*glubokaia operatsiia*], which were refined and perfected during and after World War II, the Soviets created OMGs, modernized replicas of the former mobile group [*podvizhnaia gruppya*], to conduct operational maneuver, and modernized versions of forward detachment [*peredevoi otriad*] to conduct tactical maneuver. Accordingly, in a theater-strategic offensive, attacking *fronts* and

armies were to deploy in a single echelon formation, with operational maneuver groups embedded within or slightly to the rear, and with tactical maneuver forces (forward detachments) spearheading all of the advancing forces. These maneuver forces relied on speed, early commitment to action along multiple axes, and flexible command and control to advance to the entire depth of the TVD in cooperation with airborne divisions and air assault brigades providing a vertical dimension to maneuver.

Marshal Ogarkov's accomplishments by 1984 included:

- **Four main commands of strategic directions (axes)**—created to control all nuclear, ground, air, and naval forces in the external groups of forces and forward military districts in the Far East, Western, Southwestern, and Southern TVDs;¹³
- **New army corps**—OMGs structured to perform operational maneuver for *fronts* and/or armies, including 5th and 48th Separate Guards Army Corps in the Belorussian and Trans-Baikal Military Districts;¹⁴
- **Airborne divisions and air assault brigades, and battalions**—to provide a vertical dimension to operational and tactical maneuver;
- **Tank and motorized rifle (mechanized) brigades**—located within OMGs and armies or divisions in the forward groups structured to conduct tactical maneuver¹⁵; and
- **Spetsnaz brigades**—placed in forward groups of forces and military districts.

When developed in full, the concept of the theater-strategic offensive seemed to grant distinct advantage to the USSR in the realm of national security and the conduct of future war. As promising as it seemed, however, its validity was based on three vital assumptions—first, that perceived U.S. weakness was real and would persist; second, that the USSR was capable of developing and sustaining the concept economically; and, third, that the country's limited technological capabilities would not undermine the concept's feasibility. All of these assumptions would ultimately prove incorrect when a combination of internal and external problems ultimately challenged them, spelling doom for both the concept and its creator.

At the very zenith of Ogarkov's reforms, from 1980 through 1984, a series of domestic and international challenges intervened that ultimately undermined his reforms and shook the Soviet State to its foundations. During this stage,

President Reagan's political and military challenges to Ogarkov's reforms, together with internal political and economic problems, dashed Soviet hopes, producing a barrage of new problems that ultimately undermined not only Soviet confidence in Ogarkov's reforms but also in the country's communist system and, ultimately, the system's will to survive. During this period, political stability gave way to instability, economic hope faded into despair, and military certitude surrendered to perceived impotence. These problems included acute political decay (Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev); a sharply worsening economic crisis; lingering opposition to Ogarkov's concepts on historical grounds and on the basis of their cost; gradual realization of the backwardness of Soviet military technology vis-à-vis the West; the deleterious effects on the Soviet economy of the crushing burden of vastly increased military and space expenditures; and military policies enunciated by the Reagan administration that fundamentally altered U.S. military strategy by making it more aggressive and contentious, further exacerbating the other internal Soviet problems.

Internally, this period was characterized by five years of political drift stretching from the rule of an ill and virtually incapacitated Leonid Brezhnev through the brief tenures of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. Political uncertainty and paralysis was so serious that it undermined the rationality that maintained peace throughout the Cold War and resulted in a genuine war scare in the fall of 1983, which involved circumstances conducive to the accidental occurrence of a global nuclear exchange. It was within this sobering atmosphere when, on 11 March 1985, the Central Committee of the CPSU selected Mikhail Gorbachev as first secretary of the Communist Party.

Reagan's policies reflected a sharp change in U.S. foreign policy to challenge communism globally, known in Russian parlance as strategy of "direct confrontation" [*priamoe protivodeistvie*].¹⁶ Ending any vestige of "détente," this policy declared that, whenever and wherever possible, the United States would actively oppose the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries globally and regionally. In Soviet eyes, this meant achieving complete and indisputable military superiority and a dominant position in the world by initiating programs or actions aimed at restoring U.S. military power and countering and reversing the successes the Soviets achieved in the 1970s. The Soviets considered these measures to represent an unprecedented massive build-up in U.S. military power and the initiation of an arms race that was threatening and destabilizing. These measures included revival of the B-1B bomber program on 2 October 1981, the

1981 decision to field the MX “Peacekeeper” missile, a declaration of intent in 1981 to deploy the Pershing II intermediate-range nuclear range missile system to West Germany in 1983 and the actual deployment from November 1983 to 1985; and the announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) on 23 March 1983. All these measures were encompassed by the so-called Reagan doctrine, which promised to provide overt and covert aid to anti-communist resistance movements aimed at “rolling back” communist insurgencies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The Soviets viewed deployment of Pershing II to Europe especially threatening because its presence provided thitherto absent linkage between conventional war, with the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, and a global nuclear exchange. If deployed, by increasing the risk of escalation and opportunities for the United States to achieve a first strike capability, this system represented a dagger thrust into the heart of Ogarkov’s concept of a theater-strategic offensive and checkmated the Soviets’ quest for the duel option.

Soviet mistrust was heightened in March 1983 when Reagan announced his SDI program. Nicknamed derisively “Star Wars” by its opponents, SDI sought to develop an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system to counter the Soviet nuclear missile threat. If this were accomplished, it would virtually destroy the strategic nuclear balance. Although SDI remained mere promise in 1983, it thoroughly frightened the Soviet political and military leadership, prompting some to assert the measure represented “psychological preparation of the American people for nuclear war.”

Subsequently, in the wake of numerous political statements by Reagan, culminating in his “Evil Empire” speech on 3 March, a series of incidents (the Soviet downing of a Korean airliner, KAL-007) and Ogarkov’s crude response in September, the U.S. invasion of Grenada in October, and the U.S. conduct in November of a strategic command and control exercise code-named Able Archer, which simulated the outbreak of nuclear war, increased Soviet suspicions over U.S. intent and led to the genuine “War Scare” of 1983.¹⁷ This was one of the few points in the Cold War when irrationality threatened the rationality that kept the peace. Although the “war scare” passed, it, together with U.S. deployment of Pershing II missiles to West Germany beginning on 23 November 1983 and the deaths of Andropov and Chernenko and subsequent rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to power, once again raised the basic question of confrontation versus rapprochement between the United States and Soviet Union.

Reagan's new policies had a damaging effect on Ogarkov's reforms. First, the measures undertaken by Reagan fostered intense internal Soviet debate over the viability and excessive cost of the marshal's reforms, especially his concept of the theater-strategic offensive. This debate pitted those who advocated pursuing his concept, as well as strategic operations in oceanic TVDs, against those who appreciated the threat of national bankruptcy and the necessity for economic, political, and military reform. The issues central to this debate were Pershing II (INF), SDI, the applicability of historical experience to these matters, and, beginning in the mid-1980s, increased concern over U.S. development and fielding of precision-guided munitions, whose proliferation and potential impact on warfare promised to represent a new technological revolution in weaponry and command and control.¹⁸

This debate culminated in September 1984, when Chernenko relieved Ogarkov as chief of the General Staff and replaced him with Marshal of the Soviet Union S. F. Akhromeev, an armor officer who had served as first deputy chief of the General Staff since February 1979. Although interpreted by many as a demotion, actually Ogarkov's new posting as commander-in-chief of the Main Command of Forces of the Western Axis was logical given the prime importance of the main command and his role in its creation.

In December 1984, however, Chernenko went a step further by relieving Ustinov as minister of defense and replacing him with Marshal of the Soviet Union S. L. Sokolov, an armor officer who had served as first deputy minister of defense from April 1967 to 1979 and had headed the Ministry of Defense's Operational Group that had introduced Soviet forces into Afghanistan in 1979 and supervised their operations since that time. Within months, this debate was definitively settled when Gorbachev, shortly after his rise to power, introduced his domestic program of "*Uskorenie*" [acceleration] and initiated a new debate over the twin concepts of "defensiveness" and "defensive sufficiency."¹⁹

The final stage of strategic development in the Soviet Union, specifically, during the period from 1985 through 1988, could be termed as "Reagan and the collapse of Ogarkov's military reforms." In brief, once elected general secretary of the Communist Party, from 1985 through 1988, Gorbachev undertook three waves of reform designed to reverse Soviet political and economic decay. Instead, these reforms shook the entire Soviet political edifice to its foundations and produced a virtual revolution in military doctrine and strategy, which amounted to a clear break from a military doctrine and strategy that had dominated Soviet military thought for well over twenty years, if not the entire post-

war period. The breakneck speed characterizing this revolution was to a large extent a direct result of the vigor with which Reagan pursued his strategy of “direct confrontation,” particularly regarding the arms race and limitations on the nuclear arsenals on both sides.

However, unlike the first four years of the decade, where confrontation and risk-taking characterized U.S.-Soviet competition, perhaps sobered by the “war scare,” by mid-decade the beginning of Reagan’s “peace” and “arms control” offensives, together with Gorbachev’s policy of “New Thinking,” led inexorably to a new exchange of arms control proposals, summitry between Reagan and Gorbachev, and Soviet investigation of strategies of “defensiveness” and “defensive sufficiency.”²⁰

When considering the fate of Ogarkov’s reforms within the context of Reagan’s and Gorbachev’s policies, earthshaking developments took place in the realms of Soviet military doctrine and strategy. Perhaps the most important was Gorbachev’s admission at the 27th Party Congress in February 1986 that, “The nature of contemporary weapons does not permit any state hope of defending itself by military-technical means alone, even by creating the most powerful defense.”²¹ This statement turned Soviet military doctrine on its head by introducing the concept of “defensiveness,” together with the strategic concept of “defensive sufficiency.” Retrospectively, the authoritative *Russian Military Encyclopedia* encapsulated this change as follows:

The quantitative growth and qualitative improvements in rocket-nuclear weapons [means] in the 70s and 80s conditioned the necessity for reexamining doctrinal aims. The realization in the Soviet Union of the danger of employing nuclear weapons led to the acceptance by it of the obligation of not employing it first.... In light of this, military doctrine of the USSR began to single out the potential of retaining and viewing nuclear weapons as means of retribution in responsive strikes. *Great attention began to be devoted to developing and perfecting conventional means of destruction. Views were changed on the methods of conducting battles, operations, and wars as a whole. The possibility of a far longer period of conducting military operations with the use of only conventional weaponry was substantiated.*

Historical limits appeared in the development of the Fatherland's doctrinal views in the second half of the 80s. A final realization of the ruinous nature of employing weapons of mass destruction, a sharp growth in the destructive properties of conventional means of destruction, their preciseness and their long range, and an understanding of the inescapability of ecological catastrophes in the event of their use given the massive destruction of nuclear reactors, chemical enterprises, and dams led to the conclusion that, in contemporary conditions, the desires of states to achieve political aims by military means was inadmissible and could create a threat to the existence of world civilization. Taking this into account, in 1987 the Soviet Union, together with the other members of the Warsaw Pact (OVD), accepted a principally new defensive doctrine, which reflected a positive change in international relations. These new approaches found their legalization in published drafts of Soviet military doctrine. *If, in previous years, military doctrine consisted of views on the preparation and conduct of wars, the priority in this document was accorded to its prevention.*²²

While the first paragraph describes Soviet military doctrine and the circumstances surrounding the development and implementation of Ogarkov's strategic concept of the theater-strategic offensive (specifically, the dual option), the second provides the rationale for Gorbachev's "defensiveness." At a stroke, Gorbachev's upending of traditional Soviet military doctrine resulted in a similarly drastic change in Soviet military strategy. This change included abrupt renunciation of many of Ogarkov's concepts associated with the theater-strategic offensive and an extensive debate over what "defensiveness" and "defensive sufficiency" actually meant, ultimately coupled with a new boldness on the part of subject populations of the USSR to exploit apparent Soviet weakness by asserting their independence. These momentous changes in the military realm produced the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in 1989 and the Soviet Union itself two years later. Ironically, rather than Reagan, it was his successor, George Herbert Walker Bush who presided over these events. Undoubtedly, however, it was Reagan and his policies that facilitated these events.

Conclusion

When considering why and how President Reagan and his policies emerged victorious over Gorbachev's USSR, one faces the classic dilemma of, "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" Phrased differently, "Did the USSR, together with Ogarkov's ambitious new military strategy, fail because of systemic problems within the country that political leaders were unable to resolve?" or "Did the USSR fail to reform itself successfully because Reagan challenged it politically and militarily?" One school of thought has argued, "Brezhnev caused a great stagnation where everything was failing, a bunch of old people came to power and died, and then Gorbachev came along and tried but failed to fix a fundamentally flawed system."²³ Another has asserted, "Despite the serious difficulties the USSR faced, Reagan and his confrontational policies hastened Soviet collapse by pushing the USSR beyond what it could endure."²⁴ As is usually the case in such important events, each of these assertions contains more than a grain of truth.

Politically and economically, the Soviet Union was certainly in a sclerotic state during the early 1980s. Faced with Brezhnev's crippling illness, the unwillingness or inability of the "*nomenclatura*" [Soviet elite] to rock the Soviet political boat by removing a living leader from power, coupled with their deliberate selection of leaders who were unlikely to threaten them by creating Stalin-like "personality cults" and the unanticipated untimely death of two of Brezhnev's successors, produced five years of damaging political drift. Systemic problems that plagued the USSR throughout its entire existence provided context for this drift. Politically and ideologically, lacking any sort of public input, the principle of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" generated either Stalin- and Brezhnev-type dictators who, through terror or other less brutal means, ruled until their death or collective leadership where each member of the collective was constantly distracted by fears that a new dictator might emerge. The necessity for implementing ideologically-motivated economic programs which, because of the ideology itself, no one could reform, only exacerbated this problem. Inevitably, chronic economic stagnation resulted. Despite achieving dramatic advance in the space race through immense expenditures of increasingly scarce resources, the same circumstances inhibited technological advances.

Above and beyond these problems was a pervasive state of national paranoia characterized by the ubiquitous post-World War II slogan, "No-one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten" [*nikto ne zabyt, ничто не забыто*], which dominated

the Soviet psyche for more than forty years. Although beyond the comprehension of most Westerners, the searing effects of as many as 40 million deaths in the so-called Great Patriotic War left an indelible mark on the Soviet soul by compelling the USSR, at huge cost, to build and maintain an armed force perceived necessary to ensure national security. Ironically, however, the cost of this institution ultimately undermined the security it was designed to provide.

While perceived U.S. weakness permitted the Soviet Union to conceal and ignore these problems in the 1970s, this abruptly changed in 1980. In addition to representing a sharp break in U.S. passivity on the international stage, President Reagan's policy of directly confronting the USSR whenever and wherever possible shocked the Soviet system, causing it to reveal the many cracks and fissures in its façade. Coupled with his public statements regarding resistance to communist advances, the introduction of Pershing missiles to Europe and the promise of SDI proved central to the success of Reagan's military strategy. Both of these measures severely undermined current Soviet military strategy, if not its military doctrine as a whole. However, as the "war scare" of 1983 indicated, this strategy was also proved risky, although this risk diminished perceptively when rationality returned under Gorbachev in 1985.

Thereafter, perhaps sobered by the "war scare," while retaining his overall confrontational stance (for example, the "Evil Empire" speech), Reagan deliberately pursued the softer alternative of personal diplomacy by engaging in summitry with Gorbachev. In addition to advancing his strategic agenda, this summitry also served as a release mechanism for the heat generated by the controversial measures confrontation involved. Just as Reagan exploited his positive personality traits of congeniality and humor to disarm critics domestically and achieve compromise on a wide range of matters that other more rigid persons might not have, he did the same with Gorbachev. The result was an unprecedented series of strategic victories, leavened with compromise on such matters as INF and what would ultimately become strategic arms limitations (SALT). While the beneficiary of his policies was President George H. W. Bush, it is accurate to conclude that Reagan's policies, regardless of whether they represented the chicken or the egg, proved to be a resounding success.

Postscript

Before relegating Ogarkov's reforms to the dustbin of history, it is important to understand that General Staffs continue their work despite political turmoil.

Nor does that turmoil alter technological circumstances or halt technological advances. Therefore, the same technological trends that gave rise to Ogarkov's reforms during the late 1970s and early 1980s persisted and even accelerated in the 1990s. Recognizing and pursuing these changes, theorists in the Russian General Staff built upon Ograkov's conclusions as they proposed military reform programs during Yeltsin's and Putin's times.

As a result, important aspects of Ogarkov's reform program remained relevant, albeit on a vastly reduced scale, and conditioned the steady though hesitant reforms instituted under Gorbachev's successors. The most important of these were Ogarkov's insistence on creating command and control organs necessary to plan and conduct operations in TVDs, his faith in the utility of operational and tactical maneuver in what the Russians described in the 1990s as non-linear war, and his determination to exploit computer technology and mathematical modeling in the service of planning and conducting combat operations. By 2014 these trends were clearly evidenced in decisions by the Russian Ministry of Defense to create new TVD headquarters, to transform its force structure into a corps, brigade, and battalion group configuration, and to preach the utility of information warfare. In short, continuities do indeed persist, even in revolutionary times.

David M. Glantz is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, University of North Carolina, U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, Defense Language Institute, Institute for Russian and Eastern European Studies, and U.S. Army War College. As a U.S. Army officer, he served as chief of research at the U.S. Army's Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, from 1979 to 1983; he later founded and directed the U.S. Army's Soviet (Foreign) Military Studies Office. He has written or co-authored more than twenty books on Soviet military history. In recognition of his work, he received the Society of Military History's prestigious Samuel Eliot Morrison Prize for his contributions to the study of military history.

Notes

1. "Massive retaliation," which was designed to counter the USSR's clear superiority in conventional forces, declared that the U.S. would respond to any aggression with a massive retaliatory nuclear attack. For Khrushchev's "revolution in military affairs," see Marshal of the Soviet Union V. D. Sokolovsky, *Voennaia strategii*

[Military Strategy] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1960), which was preceded by Sokolovsky's secret study, *O kharakter sovremennoi raketno-iadernoi voiny* [Concerning the nature of modern rocket-nuclear war] (Moscow: Voroshilov Academy of the General Staff, 1959).

2. The strategy of “flexible response” posited several options for war, including all-out nuclear, limited nuclear, conventional, and wars beginning with conventional weaponry but making a transition to nuclear weapons and declared the U.S. capable of fighting two and one half wars simultaneously.

3. See V. A. Zolotarev, ed., *Istorii voennoi strategii Rossii* [A history of the military strategy of Russia] (Moscow: Kuchkovo pole, 2000), 441.

4. For example, see P. A. Kurochkin, ed., *Obshchevoiskaia armiiia v nastuplenii* [The combined-arms army in the offensive] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1966); *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v Sovetskikh voennykh tudakh (1917-1940)* [Questions of strategy and operational art in Soviet military works (1917-1940)] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965); *Voprosy taktiki v Sovetskikh voennykh tudakh (1917-1940)* [Questions of tactics in Soviet military works (1917-1940)] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970); I. Kh. Bagramian, ed. *Istoriia voin i voennogo iskusstva* [A history of war and military art] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970); and numerous articles published in the Soviet Army's journal, *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal* [Military-historical journal] (*VIZh*) and the General Staff's professional journal, *Voennaia mysl'* [Military thought] (*VM*).

5. Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-91* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1998) 125-126, a translation of A. A. Kokoshin, *Armiiia i Politika* [The army and politics] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1995), in which Kokoshin wrote, “In the late 1960s, probably as a direct result of the flexible response strategy, there were some indications that Soviet military experts, though with some reservations, considered the restricted use of nuclear weapons to be a feasible possibility in the event of war...” Kokoshin argued that by the early 1970s, the General Staff identified five possible types of war, including: instantaneous, full-scale nuclear war in which strategic nuclear forces play the principal role; a protracted nuclear war involving all the armed forces; a major war in one or several theaters of military operations involving restricted use of nuclear weapons; a major conventional war; and a local war involving conventional weapons

6. For example, German Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, Henry Kissinger's and President Richard Nixon's “Détente” 1972, SALT I, the Helsinki Final Act 1975, and SALT II 1979, and U.S. strategic pronouncements such as “realistic deterrence” [*realisticheskii ustrashenie*] and “defensive sufficiency” [*oboronnaia dostatochnost'*].

7. Brezhnev's defense team included Marshal A. A. Grechko, Minister of Defense until April 1976, and Dmitri F. Ustinov, Minister of Defense from April 1976 to December 1984; chiefs of the General Staff of the Armed Forces Marshal M. V. Zakharov to September 1971, Army General (Marshal in 1977) V. G. Kulikov from

September 1971 to January 1977, and Marshal Ogarkov from January 1977 to September 1984; and Colonel General (Army General in 1989) Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev, deputy chief of the General Staff's Military-Scientific Directorate from 1974 to 1977, deputy chief of the General Staff's Main Directorate from 1977 to September 1984, and deputy chief of the General Staff from 1984 to 1989, and Army General I. G. Pavlovsky, commander of the Ground Forces from November 1967 to November 1980.

8. For a detailed explanation of the theater-strategic offensive, see Zolotarev, ed., *Istorii voennoi strategii Rossii*, 467-476; and Ghulam Dastagir Wardak, compiler, and Graham Hall Turbiville, Jr., editor, *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials from the Soviet General Staff Academy, Volumes I and II: Issues of Soviet Military Strategy, and Volume III: Issues of Operational Art* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1989-1992). This concept sought to preclude the use of tactical nuclear weapons by liberal use of operational and tactical maneuver and exploit the absence of intermediate-range nuclear weapons to prevent escalation to a general nuclear exchange.

9. For a more detailed examination of operational and tactical maneuver techniques, see, David M. Glantz, *The Military Strategy of the Soviet Union: A History* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle* (London: Frank Cass, 1991); *The Soviet Conduct of Operational Maneuver: Spearhead of the Offensive* (London: Frank Cass, 1991); and "Non-Linear Warfare and Russian Force Structuring," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* (JSMS), Vol. 9, No. 2 (June 1996), 334-375 and articles published in the Soviet journals, *VIZh* and *VM*.

10. The rationales for forming the first main command were aggravated relations with China, with the possibility of a resulting major ground war, together with Ogarkov's new concept of the theater-strategic offensive. See Zolotarev, *Istorii voennoi strategii Rossii*, 489-490, for debates over the creation of TVD headquarters.

11. *Ibid.*, 471.

12. See, for example, F. D. Sverdlov, *Bor'ba s kontrudanyimi gruppirovkami protivnika* [The struggle with counterattacking enemy groupings], *Voennaia mysl'* [Military thought], 11 (November) 1980, 41.

13. These main commands included: The Main Command of the Forces of the Far East (Far East Theater of Military Operations) headquartered in Chita and commanded by Army General I. M. Tret'iak, with the forces of the Trans-Baikal and Far Eastern Military District and the Pacific Fleet; The Main Command of the Forces of the Western Axis (Western Theater of Military Operations), headquartered in Legnica, Poland and commanded by Ogarkov, with the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG), the Northern Group of Forces (NGF) in Poland, the Central Group of Forces (CGF) in Czechoslovakia, the forces of the Belorussian and Carpathian Military Districts, 4th Air Army, and the Baltic Fleet; The Main Command of the Forces of the Southwestern Axis (Southwestern Theater of Military Operations), headquartered

in Kishinev, Moldavia SSR, and commanded by Army General I. A. Gerasimov, with the Southern Group of Forces (SGF) in Hungary, the forces of the Kiev and Odessa Military Districts, 24th Air Army, and the Black Sea Fleet; and The Main Command of the Forces of the Southern Axis (Southern Theater of Military Operations), headquartered in Baku, Azerbaijan SSR, and commanded by Army General Iu. P. Maksimov, with the forces of the North Caucasus, Trans-Caucasus, and Turkestan Military Districts, one air army, and the Caspian Military Flotilla.

14. Because new army corps were experimental, their brigaded internal structures lack uniformity. For further information, see See A. G. Lensky and M. M. Tsybin, *Sovetskie sukhoputnye voiska v poslednii god Soiuzna SSR: Spravochnik* [The Soviet ground forces in the last years of the USSR. A reference book] (Saint Petersburg: B&K, 2001), 114 and 213 and V. I. Zakharov, "Operativnaia manevrennaia gruppa (OMG) [Operational maneuver group (OMG)]," in S. B. Ivanov, ed., *Voennaia entsiklopedia v vos'mi tomakh, Tom 6* [Military encyclopedia in eight volumes, Vol. 6] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 2002), 60-61.

15. For example, in the Group of Forces in Germany (GSFG), which was to become a *front* in the event of war, 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies would perform operational maneuver at *front* level, while the tank divisions assigned to combined-arms armies (for example, 79th Gds.TD in 8th Guards Army) would do the same at army level.

16. For details on Soviet perceptions of this strategy, see Zolotarev, *Istoriia voennoi strategii Rossii*, 395.

17. For further details on the "war scare," see, Stephen J. Cimbala, "Revisiting the Nuclear 'War Scare' of 1983: Lessons Retro- and Prospectively," *JSMS*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (April-June 2014), 234-253.

18. See articles in *VM* for debates over these programs.

19. See other articles in this book for details about Gorbachev's reform programs and their consequences.

20. For details on definitions of defensiveness, see Glantz, *Military Strategy of the Soviet Union*, 214-222, based upon articles written by A. A. Kokoshin and V. V. Larionov.

21. For a clear and understandable analysis of Gorbachev's speech, see Raymond L. Garthoff, "New Thinking in Soviet Military Doctrine," in *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1988, 131-158.

22. S. B. Ivanov, ed., *Voennaia entsiklopedia v vos'mi tomakh, Tom 6*.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*