Issue 37 • December 2016

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

Putin and Russian Nationalism

IN THIS ISSUE

Ralph Peters • Josef Joffe • Miles Maochun Yu

Contents

December 2016 · Issue 37

About the Posters in This Issue

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.

Vladimir Putin and The Russian Soul

Ralph Peters

A skilled miner is useless without a seam of ore. Russia's President Vladimir Putin, czar in all but name, has a genius for mining the ore of Russian nationalism, but the crucial factor is that the ore was there, waiting to be exploited. A ruler perfectly fitted to Russian tradition, Putin is the right man at the right time to dig up Russia's baleful obsessions, messianic delusions, and aggressive impulses.

The short answer to the question "Why is Putin so aggressive?" is because aggression works. The twenty-first century is revisionist: After the collapse of European empires in the twentieth century, old imperial and crusading (aka jihadi) forces have reawakened in Orthodox Russia, in post-Ottoman Turkey, in Shia Persia, and among Sunni Muslims entranced by romanticized caliphates. History didn't end. It just rolled over. The human chronicle reverted to forms dating back millennia (the geographic aspirations of today's rulers in Iran match those of Cyrus the Great). Racial and religious hatred are back in vogue, and brutalities we view as transgressive are merely a return to form for humankind.

Putin's Russia is a perfect fit.

As for why Russians respond so well to Putin's smirking belligerence, naked corruption, and growing tyranny, the short answer is "Because they're Russians!" Assigning national characteristics may be politically incorrect, but it's strategically essential if we hope to understand the depths of emotion, the ingrained responses, and the social DNA that have allowed Putin to become the most successful leader in Moscow since Josef Stalin (a figure currently undergoing rehabilitation in Russia's media).

Putin's invocation of strong leaders reaches back beyond Stalin, however, through the early eighteenth century's Peter the Great to the late sixteenth century's Ivan the Terrible, both ferocious empire-builders and Russian to the core. Catherine the Great, whose military conquests outshone those of Ivan and Peter, remains absent from Putin's gallery of heroes, though: Catherine was born a German princess, and only Russians need apply to Putin's Pantheon—with the Georgian Stalin the sole and alarming exception.

Western observers—even many familiar with Russian affairs—refuse to recognize either Putin's brilliance or the innate predilections of Russians. As to the first, Putin didn't go to the right prep school and, literally, lacks table manners. So Western elites

long dismissed him and still attempt to explain his success away. Even now, in the wake of Putin's unchallenged interference in a US presidential election, Washington insiders decline to credit his genius. Regarding the second point, a chaotic burst of freedom after the Soviet Union's collapse didn't convert Russians to our liberal values; rather, it terrified them. Meanwhile, our disregard of the profoundly different historical experiences that molded the Russian mentality amounts to self-congratulatory and self-deluding folly.

So what are the key historical ingredients that combine to give us Putin and a Russia once again militant? What political qualities make Russians Russian? What has allowed a state composed of eleven time zones of desolation, poverty, and disease to reclaim its status as a superpower?

Dread of chaos. If Germans revere order (and they do), Russians crave it. The threat of *smutnoye vremya,* a "time of troubles" of political and social breakdown, is more unnerving to Russians than plague or fire (both of which often accompanied troubled times in the filthy, wooden Moscow of the czars). Deadly upheavals—generally the result of a power vacuum—have unleashed anarchic demons time and again, permanently scarring the "Russian soul," the *Russkaya dusha,* so deeply that even the two greatest Russian operas, *Boris Gudonov* and *Khovanshchina,* both deal with such periods of disorder, while the Soviet-era novels most revered in the West, *Doctor Zhivago* and *Quiet Flows the Don,* both emerged from another time of troubles. And then there was Akhmatova, the poet of fracture and loss, who lived through horrors beyond Hieronymus Bosch or H. P. Lovecraft.

While every extant nation has had crises, in just the last hundred years Russia has suffered military defeat, revolution, civil war, repeated famines, multiple insurgencies, the most-devastating invasion of modern times, mass repression and vast concentration camps, the loss of empire and economic chaos, and a swift collapse from superpower status to shame and lawlessness. In one century, from 1917 to 2017, at least fifty million and perhaps twice that many Russians and subject peoples died violently, or of starvation, or of epidemic disease, a loss proportionate to the Black Death of the fourteenth century, the last time Europe suffered so great a demographic catastrophe.

Given the tales still told by Russian grandmothers, the average Russian will choose Putin over liberty.

And one must note: Putin had a powerful insight that eluded the last century's totalitarians: It doesn't matter if people complain around the kitchen table or in the bedroom, as long as they hold their tongues when they step outside. Previous dictators, from Stalin and Mao through Orwell's fictional Big Brother, tried to control every thought—an impossible task, given human fractiousness. Human beings need a realm in which they can revile the government clerk or even the czar—in Putin's Russia, that's your apartment or dacha, once the door is shut. Go on, get drunk, pity yourself, blame the

Hoover Institution Archives Poster Collection, RU/SU 151

bureaucrats and beat your wife, Putin only requires that you toe the line in public (hungover or not). Given Russia's history, it's a bargain.

The Strong Czar. For all of the reasons above (and there are far more historical justifications), Russians admire and support leaders who guarantee security. On the sunniest day, Russians expect it to rain. And the czar is their umbrella. To a greater extent than in Western Europe, Russian rulers were viewed, however incorrectly, as the people's champion and a check on the voracious, capricious nobility, the *boyari*. The clichéd sigh of the Russian peasant "If only the czar knew!" in the face of the aristocracy's depredations was psychologically essential: the czar as future savior and redeemer. If only he knew. . . .

Sense of divine mission. Just as beautifully educated Western chat-mongers dismiss Islam as a source of Islamist terrorism, so they write off Putin's embrace of the Orthodox Church as politically expedient. That reads the man, his people, and the church utterly wrong. Even if Putin doesn't fit our conception of a believer (although William James wisely pointed out that belief takes many forms), he is imbued with a mythic sense of mission. The idea of Moscow as the "Third Rome" is the Russian version of our "city on a hill," only stronger in tone and far more aggressive in practice.

Possessed by our kiddie-car version of *Realpolitik,* we dismiss religion's role in strategic affairs. But faiths burrow deep into the consciousness of men and nations. Stalin's gone, but the Orthodox Church he sought to crush remains. Czars consistently viewed themselves as defenders of their faith against not only their immutable enemy, the Turk, but against the Catholic Pole, the Baltic or Swedish Lutheran, and, of course, the Jew. In the nineteenth century, Russia's militant foreign policy was driven by the goal of liberating and protecting Orthodox nations and by pan-Slavism—even at the cost of strategic self-interest. In the end, Russia found itself paralyzed by its embrace of this destiny, first because fellow Slavs (not least, the Poles) had their own quarrels and would not unite under Moscow's tutelage, but also because the key Orthodox states, Serbia, Bulgaria, and (non-Slav) Greece, no sooner gained full independence than they engaged in a round of wars with each other that drew Russia deeper into Balkan affairs and, consequently, into the Great War.

Time and again, Imperial Russia leapt before it looked—a literal "leap of faith." The same pattern is alive and well today, with Putin's vision of a restored empire of the czars and hegemony over all lands possessed of a Slavic heritage or that embrace the Orthodox faith. Do not seek logic here: Humanity is governed by emotion.

As a relevant note on the Orthodox faith: It's utterly unlike the rational organizations which most Western Protestant churches and, increasingly, Papal Catholicism have become. The Orthodox faith is mystical and millenarian, far closer to the pre-Christian "mystery religions" of the Near East than to, say, Episcopalianism. The iconostasis is the gateway to Asia.

Insularity. After just over a decade of relative freedom of the press, Putin began to put an end to media criticism of his government. And the only Russians who've objected are pallid members of the intelligentsia, which has ever been out of touch with the common people. The result is that, despite the vaunted power of the Internet, Russians today are astonishingly insular—as they always have been. And Putin knows how to serve up delectable propaganda that bolsters the national ego and, even better, blames others for all of Russia's mistakes and misfortunes.

Because our "Russia experts" generally meet only well-educated counterparts, they have no sense of the weight of centuries of ignorance on Russian minds. Suspect books were banned under czars and Soviet leaders alike (the brief czarist liberalization of the press after the 1905 revolution proved catastrophic). Propaganda has always been effective—and often exported (*Protocols of the Elders of Zion* anyone?). Prince Potemkin didn't invent the false façade, he was merely its first true master.

In the nineteenth century, even Russian nobles needed government permission to travel abroad (nor have today's package tours to sunny spots turned into springs of

enlightenment). Russia's vastness, too, its stunning remoteness, hindered factual awareness of all that was not Russian—and of much that was. (On the positive side of Russia's isolation, Russians didn't suffer the widespread devastation of the syphilis epidemic that ravaged Europe for over four centuries—Russia's few, awful roads and trackless expanses held the spirochete at bay until the railroad came; today, of course, Russia is AIDS-ridden, thanks to the advantages of modernity.)

Egalitarianism. Karl Marx did not think Russia would lead the Communist revolution because he didn't know Russia. A bourgeois German panhandler living in London, he had no idea of the communalism traditional among Russian peasants or of the proto-communist egalitarianism preached by the Orthodox Church (along with respect for authority, of course), especially among the Old Believers and other offshoot cults. Again, clichés exist because they capture truths. Russians can stomach a great deal of misery, as long as the misery is shared equally by all (ruling classes get a pass, until the next peasant uprising). The daily degradations of the Soviet era remained acceptable long after other nations would have rebelled because life was more or less equally wretched for everyone.

Then came the uproar of the 1990s. Some Russians got rich quick (and some of the best-known oligarchs were Jews, reinforcing Russian anti-Semitism). The compact was broken. Suddenly, haves and have-nots were neighbors, and friends left friends behind in their gilded wake. Guaranteed jobs disappeared. Savings became worthless as foreign products tantalized. Warned for seventy years that capitalists were gangsters, Russians abruptly were told to become capitalists—and became gangsters. The nuclear superpower lay humiliated. And Big Macs were insufficient consolations for the sense of failure, betrayal, and shame.

Putin understood. Perhaps his greatest gift is his ability to read presidents and populations. Former President George W. Bush believed that he had seen into Putin's soul, but saw only his own reflection. Putin saw deep into Bush, though, as he later saw through President Obama,

POLL: In the next three months, what is the most likely scenario to erode Russian-American relations?

- ☐ We will be in a major war with Putin's Russia.
- ☐ Putin's jets or ships will stage an attack on a US counterpart in the Middle East or in the Baltic.
- ☐ Putin will cook up a pretense to invade a Baltic country.
- ☐ Putin's hackers will cause a major disruption in US cyber security or electronic communications.
- ☐ The latest braggadocio will fade, and we will go back to our tense but stable relationship.

and as he grasped the weakness of a European political order in its dotage, and as he felt the wounds of his own people.

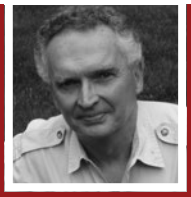
He began by giving Russians back their pride. Now he is giving them the gift that Russian culture values above all else: revenge.

For all that, he's one czar in a long line. He longs for empire, to regain eastern and central Ukraine (the western sliver was part of Austria-Hungary and can wait), territory that was only brought under czarist rule in the mid-eighteenth century and remained subject to popular revolts, some of them, such as the Pugachev Uprising, hugely destructive. Catherine the Great's generals only conquered Crimea in the 1770s (she annexed it in 1783, and Premier Khrushchev "gave" it to Ukraine in 1954, but that's another story). Much of the Caucasus wasn't subdued until the mid-nineteenth century, and Central Asia's khanates, Imperial Russia's "wild east," only fell in the same decades that saw the United States subdue its western plains.

The territories of the Baltic States, which Putin longs to recapture, have been subject to dispute between various powers since the Middle Ages (long before the current states existed). As Russia gobbled up the ground previously ruled by a German nobility (peasant ethnicities weren't a factor to anyone), its Baltic possessions became of special importance not only for the coastline they offered but because (to the chagrin of pure-blooded Russians), minor German aristocrats served the St. Petersburg government as capable and less-corrupt administrators, fulfilling much the same role for the czars as Greek-speaking officials played in the regimes of Middle-Eastern sultans in Islam's glory days—they were the loyal, culture-straddling bureaucrats who made sure the papers were signed and the salaries paid.

Add to these age-old conquests and reawakened ambitions Russia's renewed Pan-Slavism, Neo-Orthodox mantle and the persistent longing for warm-water ports and access to the world's seas, and you have only to substitute the United States for the German-speaking empires of yesteryear to see a formula for the Great War Redux.

The salient difference? In 1914, Russia had a weak czar. Today, Russia has a strong czar accustomed to winning.



Ralph Peters is a member of the Hoover Institution's Military History Working Group; a retired US Army officer and former enlisted man; a long-time student of Russian affairs; a media commentator; and a best-selling, prize-winning novelist. His most recent work is *The Damned of Petersburg*, a dramatized history of the Civil War's most brutal campaign.

Putinism or Nationalism? Neither. Opportunism

Josef Joffe

"All politics is local" works in the international arena, too. Shakespeare put it well in *Henry IV Part II* (4.3.343–345) when the king counseled his son and successor: "Be it thy course, dear Harry, to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels."

Vladimir Putin certainly has reasons to "busy giddy minds" in Russia. His economy, in free fall for years, is now barely coming out of stagnation. Russian public health—high morbidity and low life expectancy—is worse than in some African countries. Tied to the price of resources, especially oil and gas, Russia remains, as German chancellor Helmut Schmidt once quipped, "an Upper Volta with nuclear weapons." The Kremlin needs an oil price of $80 to $100 to balance its budget. That price currently oscillates around $50. Basically, Russia has failed to join the global knowledge economy.

Yet Putin need not fear for his political life, nor does he need to manipulate his country's elections. Russians may hunger for prosperity. They may want to escape from sanctions and isolation. Presumably, they also cherish the rule of law. But there is a powerful substitute, which is nationalism.

When they draw from that wondrous well, they can enjoy a political good that defies scarcity. Material goods are inherently limited, and so are symbolic ones like power and status. Not so nationalism, that *über alles* feeling of collective superiority. What I imbibe, I do not take from you. We can both drink to our heart's content—rich and poor, country and city, Slavs or Bashkirs. Nationalism is not a zero-sum game. It is the great equalizer. It unites all in common pride, a conviction that generates enormous cohesion and overwhelms the usual cleavages of politics.

Nationalism revolves around exceptionalism, which comes with a historic mission. Therefore, Russia must sacrifice and not listen to the false gods of materialism. So when Vladimir Putin castigates the moral decline of the West, he raises up the *rodina,* the community of fate that is Russia. When he grabs Crimea, he feeds the nation's pride—never mind that it was only a short-lived Russian possession. Catherine the Great stole the Crimean Khanate from the Ottoman Empire in 1783.

To recoup Ukraine, at least the Russian-Orthodox East, is not just a matter of geography, but a sacred mission whose value dwarfs the monetary costs. Wasn't Ukraine—the Kievan Rus—the very cradle of Russia whence it expanded all the way to the Pacific? To restore it to Russia is an obligation bequeathed by Russia's glorious past.

So nationalism is one, but only one engine of expansionism, and it comes with religious fervor. Russia has always seen itself as "Jesus" among the nations. It must suffer and sacrifice to fulfill its messianic vocation. Nor is this conviction tied to any particular ideology. Even in Soviet times, Russia saw

Hoover Institution Archives Poster Collection, RU/SU 2082

itself as the "Third Rome"—after the Roman and then the Byzantine Empires.

This impulse has served the Tsars and the Bolsheviks, and now, it is serving Vladimir Putin. Hence Western expectations that Russia's dire economic straits will force Putin back into the community of nations will not soon come true. Suffering, to turn a phrase, is as Russian as vodka and kasha. It took seventy years before the Soviet Union fell under its own weight.

But to repeat, nationalism is just one engine. Here is the twist. Something that has always existed,

cannot logically explain Russia's shift toward expansionism circa 2008. There must be an intervening variable. Call it "opportunity."

Recall that Putin I, president from 2000 to 2008, did not gallop off into neo-imperialism. It was Putin II, president again since 2012, who turned toward authoritarianism at home and expansionism abroad. What had changed? The intervening variable is the presidency of the United States that kicked in when Barack Obama took office in 2009. A sign of things to come was the occupation of South Ossetia in August 2008, presumably because George W. Bush seemed crippled by his lame-duck status and his unpopularity at home.

At first, Putin must have looked on in disbelief as he saw Obama prescribing self-containment—retrenchment and retraction—to his country. Obama would pull the last of US troops out of Iraq at the end of 2011. He was drawing down US forces in Europe. He was cutting defense expenditures—though, it must be said, with the help of a Republican Congress.

Instead of playing Globocop, the United States, as Obama orated, must take care of itself; it was time "for a little nation-building at home." Then came the infamous "red line" Obama drew over Assad's chemical weapons. Yet hardly had he laid it down, when Obama vacated it. In Europe, the White House outsourced the "Ukrainian Job" to the EU that was loath to confront Russia with anything more than limited sanctions. The embattled Ukraine certainly would not get arms to defend itself against Russia's "little green men" and its local surrogates, neither from the US nor from the EU.

So opportunity came knocking at nationalism's door. Should anybody have been surprised? Putin is not an imperialist pursuing a grand design, but an opportunist who carefully tallies risks and gains. He understood that the US would not commit serious forces to Syria; so he committed his own. Today, the Russian air force controls the skies over the entire Levant. The range of Russia's antiaircraft missiles reaches deep into Israel.

In his State of the Nation Address on December 1, Putin did appeal to Russian pride when he noted that the "Russian Army and Navy have shown convincingly that they are capable of operating effectively away from their permanent deployment sites." He took another page out of the nationalist book: "Let's remember that we are a single people, a united people, and we have only one Russia." So nationalism is the great unifier.

Yet it does not really explain the expansionist turn of events. The appeal to "Mother Russia" must be married to opportunity and low risk. That is the moral of this tale. Exploiting perceived weakness is the oldest rule of international politics. No balance, no stability; no resistance, no containment. You don't have to be Putin or Russian to live by this general maxim. Nationalism is good, opportunity is better.

Josef Joffe, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, is publisher/editor of the German weekly *Die Zeit.* His areas of interest are US foreign policy, international security policy, European-American relations, Europe and Germany, and the Middle East. A professor of political science at Stanford, he is also a senior fellow at Stanford's Freeman-Spogli Institute for International Studies. In 1990–91, he taught at Harvard, where he remains affiliated with the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies. His essays and reviews have appeared in the *New York Review of Books, Times Literary Supplement, Commentary, New York Times Magazine, New Republic, Weekly Standard, Newsweek, Time,* and *Prospect* (London).

Russia Is Fighting for Relevance, Not Dominance

Miles Maochun Yu

Prevalent in many Western capitals is the narrative that Vladimir Putin is striving to regain dominance of the "lost" Soviet empire, and his aggressive behavior in Ukraine—especially his blatant annexation of Crimea in March 2014—is just the beginning of a great Russian advance toward another *Pax Russiana*.

This is a misreading of Putin's motives and Russia's strategic reality.

What Putin is fighting for is neither Moscow's world dominance, nor its opposition to the superpower status of the United States. Putin does not want a duopoly comprising Washington and another superpower rival of the United States in a new bipolar geopolitical structure whereby Russia is less relevant or even irrelevant. Instead, Putin wants to be the world's Number 2, and to prevent anyone else from filling that position so that Moscow and Washington can still bilaterally decide world affairs, just like the old days in the Cold War, sans ideological and geopolitical fervency.

There should be no illusion about Putin's nostalgia for the Soviet empire. However, Putin's nostalgia is not driven by a desire to revive communist ideology. Nor is Russia able any time soon to achieve parity with the United States in modern military hardware or new weapons platforms. In a nutshell, Vladimir Putin is a Russian economic nationalist.

Russia in reality is not a superpower of equal strength with the United States whose economy is nearly nine times larger than Russia's. Putin knows this well and has readily acknowledged as late as June 17, 2016 in St. Petersburg that Russia respects the US as the world's "only superpower," and that "we [Russia] want to and are ready to work with the United States."

Essentially, Putin views the European Union and China as the two biggest threats to Russia's relevance in a desired duopoly with the United States.

Putin has viewed the European Union as a unified political and economic powerhouse that can interact with the United States in a new geopolitical duopoly.

Hoover Institution Archives Poster Collection, RU/SU 562

To compete with the EU for the Number 2 position, Putin has planned for an ambitious politico-economic union of his own, the centerpiece of which is the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In his vision for EAEU, which was initially proposed by Kazakhstan in 1994 but taken over by Russia soon afterwards, Putin has expected three former Soviet republics—whose leaders, like him, were all quasi-dictators who loathe full democracy—to form the core of the new union, i.e., Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

But President Viktor Yanukovych of Ukraine, a Putin yes-man, was overthrown by a pro-EU popular uprising. The "loss" of Ukraine's membership in the EAEU and Kiev's pivot to favoring EU membership was at the root of Vladimir Putin's aggressive gambit in Ukraine that culminated in his March 2014 annexation of Crimea.

However, Putin's struggle for greater global relevance as the world's Number 2 has met its biggest challenger, i.e., China, a country whose economy is five times bigger than Russia's and that has been constantly talked about in Western capitals as the only other superpower opposite the United States.

Russia's worry about China is real. Despite the facade of a Moscow-Beijing alliance, the reality is that Putin has never allowed China to buy shares in Russia's energy sector; the much-hyped gigantic gas/oil deal has gone sour significantly; bilateral trade has gone down nearly 40 percent, while the two nations still harbor deep distrust and engage in territorial spats.

The surest sign of Putin's resolve to prevent China from becoming the world's Number 2 is Russia's recent entrance into East Asia's imbroglios caused by China, especially in the South China Sea disputes—not to forge an alliance with China to fend off the US, but to prevent China's foray from becoming purely a US vs China dichotomy. Putin wants the world to know that Russia still matters mightily in Asia and the Pacific. To upstage China, Putin has hosted a boisterous ASEAN Summit in Sochi. Russia, with unambiguous anti-China messages, delivered advanced *Kilo*-class submarines to Vietnam to fight China and warmed up relationships with Japan and South Korea much to Beijing's chagrin. In fact, most key nations weary of China in the region, from the Philippines to Vietnam and Indonesia, are now actively considering Russia as the third way toward a favorable outcome of various disputes involving China and the United States. Apparently, China's role as the world's Number 2 may well have been shanghaied by Moscow.

References:

CBS News, "Putin: Russia respects U.S. as world's 'only superpower,'" (June 17, 2016). http://www.cbsnews.com/news/vladimir-putin-russia-respects-us-world-superpower/

Jon Henley, "A brief primer on Vladimir Putin's Eurasian dream," *The Guardian* (February 18, 2014). https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2014/feb/18/brief-primer-vladimir-putin-eurasian-union-trade

Miles Maochun Yu, "Russia Poised To Play A Lead Role In Asia Pacific," *Military History in the News* (May 24, 2016). http://www.hoover.org/research/russia-poised-play-lead-role-asia-pacific

Miles Maochun Yu, "China's Ascendance To The Position Of Chief Adversary," *Military History in the News* (January 29, 2016). http://www.hoover.org/research/chinas-ascendance-position-chief-adversary

Miles Maochun Yu is a professor of East Asia and military and naval history at the United States Naval Academy (USNA). He is the recipient of numerous awards including the USNA top researcher award, US Navy Special Action Award, and US Navy Meritorious Service Awards. He received a doctorate in history from the University of California, Berkeley, a master's degree from Swarthmore College, and a bachelor's degree from Nankai University. His latest book is entitled *The Dragon's War: Allied Operations and the Fate of China, 1937–1947* (Naval Institute Press, 2006).

Discussion Questions

1. What is Vladimir Putin's ultimate aim—a new Russian empire, public support at home, the destruction of NATO and the EU—all and more?

2. Why does Putin's Russia seem to harbor such contempt for the Obama administration that has done so much to appease it?

3. What was the thinking behind the 2009 efforts at "reset" with Russia?

4. Is there any chance that Eastern Europe will fall back into a Russian orbit?

5. What is the ultimate purpose of Putin's new alliance with Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah?

Suggestions for Further Reading

- James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1966). http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/13526/icon-and-axe-by-james-billington/

- Lesley Blanch, *The Sabres of Paradise: Conquest and Vengeance in the Caucasus* (John Murray Limited, 1960). https://www.amazon.com/Sabres-Paradise-Conquest-Vengeance-Caucasus-ebook/dp/B00SHT8RVU

- Benson Bobrick, *Fearful Majesty: The Life and Reign of Ivan the Terrible* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1987). https://www.amazon.com/Fearful-Majesty-Life-Reign-Terrible/dp/0399132562

- Dominic Lieven, *The End of Czarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution* (Viking Penguin, 2015). http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/309089/the-end-of-tsarist-russia-by-dominic-lieven/9780143109556

- Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (Knopf, 1980). https://www.amazon.com/Peter-Great-His-Life-World/dp/0345298063

- Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime,* Second Edition (Penguin Books, 1995). http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/277513/russia-under-the-old-regime-by-richard-pipes/9780140247688

In the Next Issue
Renewing America's Security

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of "War, Revolution, and Peace." Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: "The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life." From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the "Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict" has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution's dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

Hoover Institution, Stanford University
434 Galvez Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-6003
650-723-1754

Hoover Institution in Washington
The Johnson Center
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202-760-3200

HOOVER INSTITUTION