ISSUE 53

STRATEGIKA

Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

SEPTEMBER 2018

US ENGAGEMENT WITH RUSSIA

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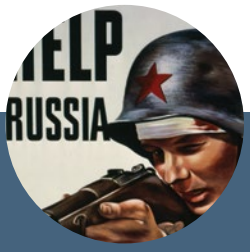

ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

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.

Toe-to-Toe with the Russkis: Is Realistic Engagement with the Russians Still Possible?

By Ralph Peters

Image credit: Poster Collection, US 3777B, Hoover Institution Archives.

In the greatest film ever made about the human dimensions of strategy, director Stanley Kubrick's Cold-War masterpiece, *Doctor Strangelove*, an excited strategic bomber pilot speaks of "noo-cullar combat, toe-to-toe with the Russkis." But the lengthy annals of Americans and Russians tramping on each other's feet followed a brief interlude when we danced the light fantastic to our mutual benefit, with neither side's dancing shoes scuffed.

That was at the historic high point of US-Russian relations. In 1863.

Russia's only liberal reformist czar, Alexander II, had freed the serfs in 1861 and had no sympathy with the slave-holding, self-proclaimed Confederate States of America, which Russia's government declined to recognize. (Russia also worried, as it does still, about a precedent for secession movements at home.) In the latter half of 1863, the czar's admiralty dispatched a squadron from Russia's Baltic Fleet on a visit to Union ports and the warships—whose crews included a distinctly unseaworthy junior officer named Rimsky-Korsakov—would visit multiple harbors during their half-year stay. A second squadron from the Far East later anchored in San Francisco, willing to protect the bay against Confederate commerce-raiders.

Lincoln's government and Northern society were ecstatic—suddenly, all things Russian were in vogue. With Great Britain and France leaning toward Richmond, the czar's evident show of support seemed a great strategic boost.

Yet, the visits were not intended primarily as a goodwill gesture. Russia recently had been humiliated by Britain, France, Sardinia, and Turkey in the Crimean War, and with Russia suppressing yet another gallant-but-hopeless Polish insurrection with fire and sword, renewed war with Britain, at least, appeared imminent. Those Baltic Fleet ships were sent to New York to avoid being bottled up at Kronstadt, the fleet's home port, by the much more powerful Royal Navy. By sheltering in neutral American ports, the Russian cruisers could set forth—with a strategic advantage—to raid British commerce in the North Atlantic. The squadron in San Francisco, too, was to act against British shipping, should war commence (the sailors' most-significant "combat" action, though, was to pitch in to help fight one of the city's recurring fires).

Despite the disparate agendas and misunderstandings of purpose, both Washington and St. Petersburg won, and neither side paid a price. Britain and its allies did not go to war against Russia and did not grant recognition to the Confederacy. Then, with the czarist government fearful that Britain would seize indefensible Alaska in any future war, Russia's foreign ministry offered the reunited United States a deal—"Seward's Folly"—that would rival the Louisiana Purchase as the greatest real-estate bargain of all time.

Until the Second World War, when a very different atmosphere prevailed, there would not be another example of US-Russian defense collaboration—and none in which one side or the other, or both, would not end up feeling wronged.

A half century after the balls and gala dinners welcomed the czar's naval officers, the forgotten (by us) low point in US relations with Russia arrived. In 1918, thirteen thousand US Army troops joined allied expeditionary forces that—setting diplomatic euphemisms aside—invaded revolutionary Russia. The declared goal was to protect stores of munitions, property, and interests, as well as to evacuate POWs. But the deployed militaries actively backed the czarist White Guards against the then beleaguered Bolsheviks (in 1921, Herbert Hoover would oversee humanitarian missions to famine-ravaged Russia, but that was stricken from history by the Soviets).

We may have forgotten that ill-starred occupation, but the Russians never have: Indeed, in the iciest years of the Cold War, Nikita Khrushchev was glad to remind us that we had killed Russians on Russian soil (in fact, the US troops on the Murmansk-Arkhangelsk front did kill and wound thousands of Russians, while those deployed to the Far East and Siberia engaged in fewer large-scale combat operations but prefigured our current counterinsurgency doctrine of embracing the people, achieving perhaps the highest venereal disease rates in US Army history).

Even during the worst years of the US-Soviet bipolar struggle, US and Soviet forces never openly fought each other again—although there was a good deal of uniform-swapping and subterfuge. Mutual disdain did not prevent mutual restraint, and Soviet violence was directed primarily at its subject peoples.

The grand alliance against Hitler did result in a brief warming of feelings on both sides, but, beyond the diplomatic handshakes, shipments of Spam and Studebakers, and a brief heyday for fellow-travelers here, this was a cold-blooded teaming of enemies against a greater enemy, and the clearest heads in Washington and Moscow never succumbed to the notion of enduring amity. In the postwar era, both governments would purge those deemed too sympathetic to the now estranged Ally (although the "purging" in the US Government was considerably more benign, if at times hysterical).

From 1945 onward, as one pretense after another crumbled, the United States and the Soviet Union became and remained enemies. Then, after nearly half a century of the Cold War, the Soviet Union came apart in 1991 and gangsters took power in Russia, just as romantics took hold of Washington's Russia policy.

Indeed, romanticism is perhaps the most-dangerous threat to the foreign policies of free and democratic nations, inspiring abrupt shifts in temper that overlook mass atrocities in favor of swapping orchestras.

With the Soviet Union's dissolution, American intellectuals and students of Russian affairs surrendered to an optimism utterly ungrounded in geopolitical or basic human reality. During the Clinton administration, those in positions of influence seemed to believe that, with the Soviet bogeyman gone, Russia would revert to the *visokaya kultura* beloved of the Kulturati, a fairy-story realm of Tolstoy and Chekhov, of Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov, of the *ballets russes*, Nijinsky and Diaghilev. But the Russian culture of the Golden and Silver Ages was exterminated by Stalin in the gulag or, at best, driven into exile. The DNA is gone. Russia's hard-won European veneer was scraped off without mercy: Russia remains the tragic land depicted by Dostoevsky and Mussorgsky, but without artists of their quality to capture it (over the years, when asked what books I would recommend to understand Russia, I suggested Dostoevsky's *The Devils*—aka *The Possessed*—but stressed that an even better entry is through the operas *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*, which, between them, contain all of Russia).

Despite the density of Mercedes and BMWs on Moscow streets, behind the Italian-designer shops and the frenzy of pop culture, Russia is less European today than it was in 1914: It's not a matter of what people wear or own, but of how they view the world. Vladimir Putin's well-cut suits do not make him a statesman in the Western tradition.

We face an arthritic, spiteful nuclear power led by a brilliant, bitter leader who seeks revenge against those he views as Russia's enemies—above all, the United States of America. And he is immeasurably dangerous. It has been observed that Putin has played a weak hand extraordinarily well. Indeed, he consistently beats the house with a pair of deuces. Yet, this genius of subversion remains willfully misunderstood by Westerners who cannot imagine, even now, that a major leader might have as his priority inflicting suffering on them or destroying their freedoms, their societies, and their lives. Spoiled by safety and cushioned by wealth, we cannot grasp the plain-as-day existence of hatred before us.

The core question isn't whether there is still a place for realistic engagement with Russia in US foreign policy, but whether there's a possibility of useful engagement with Vladimir Putin. The answer, for now, is "No, but. . . ."

The problem is Putin, not us, and we need to stop blaming ourselves. From the exuberantly naïve Clinton administration, through President George W. Bush's hallucinations about Putin's soul, and President Obama's childlike conviction that he could cut behind-the-scenes deals with a cold-blooded murderer who resented shaking his hand, to President Trump's as-yet-unexplained deference to Russia's new czar, the problem, for over a quarter century, has not been our lack of goodwill toward Russia, but Russian malevolence toward us. We have tried, again and again, to embrace Russia, only to be clawed again by the bear.

Where, then, does that leave us? Faced with a breathtakingly unscrupulous Russian strongman who means us harm and is willing to pay dearly to inflict it on us, and forced nonetheless to confront the realities of a nuclear power whose born-to-pessimism population has been inoculated with virulent anti-American propaganda far more sophisticated than yesteryear's clubfooted efforts, we cannot simply fold our arms and stand back in mute patience. Putin is active, so we must act, as well. Our passivity in the face of Russia's innovative aggression will bewilder future historians.

Yet, for all that, we have to talk when it makes sense—with subdued expectations or none at all. As my long-ago traveling companion on the Georgian Military Highway, Brigadier General Peter Zwack (USA-Ret.), our former Defense emissary to Muscovy, argues, we still must keep open our lines of communication. But—my addition—we must beware our recurring gullibility. President Reagan's perfect-to-the-age admonition to "trust, but verify" may have become a cliché, but it's a cliché we might usefully update to "Distrust, but talk."

We can never—*never*—trust Vladimir Putin on any issue that cannot be consistently enforced and monitored. Our diplomats, in particular, must re-embrace our 1950s skepticism and abandon their enthusiasm for accord at any price, anytime, anywhere.

We must be willing to counter Russian military adventurism with surrogates, proxies, and, when necessary, our own forces. We must counter Russian subversion and cyber attacks with up-the-ante reprisals. Another cliché is that, one day, we will face a cyber Pearl Harbor. We already have, in the 2016 election. It's as if, after December 7th, 1941, we were still pondering our response in mid-1943. Russian cyber-invasions have turned Clausewitz's most-famous dictum on its head: Today, policy is "an extension of war by other means."

So yes, upon occasion there can be realistic engagement, even with Putin's Russia. But the emphasis must be on "realistic," rather than on engagement for its own sake: We must always be prepared to walk away from the table, no matter what a fickle electorate has been led to expect.

And we learn more from such interactions than the Russians do. Thanks to our open society, they already know our positions.

From 1863 and through 1867, we experienced the zenith of Russian-American relations, when both sides benefited enormously at no cost to either. We may never return to such an ideal state (and Putin would like Alaska back, thank you), but, were it not for Putin's raw and irreducible hatred of the United States, we might find that we have many interests in common—not least, countering the rise of China, which troubles the US but threatens to overwhelm Russia.

Or perhaps the ultra-skeptics are correct that this global town isn't big enough for both cultural, ideological, and literal gunslingers, that we're too alike to coexist: the United States with its globalized sense of Manifest Destiny and crusading impulses, and Russia with its own version of manifest destiny intertwined with a revival of the mystical vision of Moscow as the "Third Rome." Indeed, in the 1860s, even as we fought our bloodiest war amongst ourselves in the temporarily disunited United States, we continued expanding across our Wild West just as czarist Russia pushed into its wild east. For much of the 20th century, we competed to extend our visions around the world, not twins but Cain and Abel.

Perhaps we were destined to clash, at once too alike and too profoundly different. The Bering Strait may be the world's widest body of water.

Or perhaps not. History is a chronicle of the unexpected, the unintended, and the unfathomable.

We do not know for certain where, how, and indeed, if this destructive rivalry will end, but, in the meantime, we can talk between shouting matches, but with the recognition that successful engagement requires two committed horse traders. And Vladimir Putin just wants to shoot our horse.

Ralph Peters is the author of many books, including works on strategy and military affairs. As a US Army enlisted man and officer, he served in infantry and military Intelligence units before becoming a foreign area officer and global scout. Since retiring in 1998, he concentrates on writing books but remains Fox News's strategic analyst. His latest novel, *Hell or Richmond*, a gritty portrayal of Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign, follows his recent *New York Times* best seller, *Cain at Gettysburg*, for which he received the 2013 Boyd Award for Literary Excellence in Military Fiction from the American Library Association.

The Way Forward with Putin and Russia

By Chris Gibson

Image credit: Poster Collection, US 3290A, Hoover Institution Archives.

In late August 2016, I led a Congressional Delegation trip to Israel, Latvia, Poland, and Germany to gather information and build support for the POSTURE Act, a bill to reverse the Obama administration's draw-down of US armed forces and deter further Russian aggression in eastern Europe. On day four of that trip we were in Latvia listening intently to Edgars Rinkevics, the foreign minister, explain his dismay with then presidential candidate Donald Trump's recent comments questioning the relevancy of NATO. He was concerned that his country may be next to face Russian aggression, potentially collateral damage in a US shift to an "America First" grand strategy.

I was initially sympathetic to Rinkevics's argument. After all, I previously spent over twenty-nine years in the US military, with my formative years in Europe during the Cold War. Indeed, my first assignment was in Berlin and I was at the Brandenburg Gate as a witness to President Reagan's iconic speech calling on Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. Reagan was my hero and I had no love for the Soviets and their way of life.

Today, Russia remains a real threat to Latvia, Europe, and the US But that doesn't mean we can't, at once, deter Russian aggression while carving out space for constructive engagement based on verified behavior in pursuit of our mutual interests. We can do all that in a manner that is consistent with an "America First" approach.

To set the conditions for such actions on our terms, we should immediately take three steps.

First, as the Trump administration has done, and consistent with president Reagan's "Peace through Strength" approach, we must strengthen deterrence. Russian President Vladimir Putin respects power and exploits weakness. Deterrence broadly comprises two factors—capability and will. We must build on the passage of the POSTURE Act and Trump's recent actions to build up the military. This includes fully restoring joint force readiness, modernizing the nuclear triad, and fielding improved national missile and cyber defenses.

Second, we must strengthen collective defense and enhance NATO unity with every nation complying with the stated goal of 2% of GDP dedicated to defense. We are making progress on that, and recent steps to reinforce the Baltics with allied ground troops and to provide arms to non-NATO Ukraine are also movement in the right direction. These actions go beyond shoring up capability, they also display determined will, essential to credible deterrence.

Third, both the United States and Europe must take steps to strengthen their domestic economies and stabilize their debt crises. History is littered with great powers who crumbled under the weight of massive debt. We are not immune from such fate. Our energy revolution provides enormous opportunity here. We

are in a strong position to export natural gas and oil to help Europe get off its dependency of Russian energy. This will strengthen our economy and help fill the Treasury coffers with needed revenues. As we strengthen our economy, we must reduce overall federal spending and work our way back to a balanced budget. Our national security, indeed, our national survival demands it.

Taking these actions will ensure we approach Russia from a position of strength. Russia possesses a formidable nuclear stockpile and has a history of playing a significant role in world affairs. It is in our interests, Russia's interests, and the world's, for us to get along. Our agenda should be realistic and straightforward. I nominate several priorities.

First, we should work together to defeat Islamic extremism. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have designs of taking down all of civilization and replacing it with a Caliphate. It is in our mutual interests to work together to ensure they are defeated.

Second, working together we have a better chance of stabilizing the Middle East. We can help broker an interim peace agreement in Syria and foster a regional balance between Saudi Arabia and Iran which could set the conditions for broad-based regional economic development and constructive steps towards Arab-Israeli peace.

By working together to achieve these first two priorities, we will build the trust necessary for the third, and arguably boldest initiative—bringing Russia into friendship with the West, and possibly new legal arrangements—commercial, diplomatic, and security agreements.

All of this is predicated on American strength and Russian respect for that strength. We will not tolerate Russian cyber attacks on our institutions and our democracy. President Trump has clouded the issue by conflating Russian meddling in the 2016 election (which is an indisputable fact) with alleged collusion between his campaign and Russia. Putin has exploited Trump's actions and continues his cyber offensive against us to this day. This weakens America and must stop.

By following this broad outline and insisting on verifiable actions, Putin will see the wisdom in changing course and working with the United States to achieve our mutual interests.

Chris Gibson is a combat veteran and former congressman from New York. In Congress, Chris served on the House Armed Services Committee and was the author of the POSTURE Act. He is the Stanley Kaplan Distinguished Visiting Professor of American Foreign Policy at Williams College and the author of *Rally Point: Five Tasks to Unite the Country and Revitalize the American Dream*, published by Twelve Books in 2017.

The United States and Russia: Opposite Personalities

By Thomas Donnelly

Image credit: Poster Collection, US 3286, Hoover Institution Archives.

In his famous 1947 "Long Telegram" and subsequent Foreign Affairs article, George Kennan described what he thought was the "political personality of Soviet power." It was an effort at what he called a "task of psychological analysis" to discern a "pattern of thought" and the "nature of the mental world of the Soviet leaders." If Soviet "conduct is to be understood"—and, as a matter of American strategy, "effectively countered"—it required not only a grasp of the principles of Soviet ideology but the effects of "the powerful hands of Russian history and tradition." Kennan thus argued that Josef Stalin and other Soviet leaders saw international politics and the struggle for power through a unique set of lenses, lenses that might filter and distort even nature's purest colors and shapes. It mattered less what wavelengths objects reflected than what wavelengths appeared to Russian eyes.

Kennan's analysis described Russian "strategic culture," that is, a set of deeply ingrained ideological, political, military, and even institutional habits and practices that color strategic decision making and supreme command. He viewed Soviet behavior not as a break from past history, but as old Russian wine in new bottles. If that was true in 1947, and strategic culture is a slow-to-change thing, why not now?

In fact, Vladimir Putin projects the Russian "political personality," as defined by Kennan, with greater verve and vigor than either his late-Soviet or post-Soviet predecessors. He is determined to restore Russia's lost greatness. Like the empire-building tsars, he is obsessed both with rebuilding a Eurasian sphere of influence from Germany to the Pacific, and with the convincing image of global power. Perhaps most of all, he has no interest—or belief—in win-win outcomes; power is, for Putin, a zero-sum game.

Like Russia, America is possessed of an international "political personality," though it is near the polar opposite of Russia's. Since World War II, the United States has been committed to maintaining a favorable balance of power across the important theaters of Eurasia—Europe, the Middle East, South and East Asia—and the unfettered ability to project military power and trade along the sea, air, space, and cyberspace lines of communication that link theses centers of power; and to prevent a hostile hegemon from interfering with this project. We regard this very much as a "win-win" system, in that it also ensures the security, liberty, and prosperity of others.

In sum, it would be hard to define two less-well-suited strategic partners than Russia and America. Nevertheless, our recent presidents have regularly proposed such a partnership to leaders in Moscow. The most promising period was the late Gorbachev era, as the Soviet empire imploded; the Russians turned their backs on Saddam Hussein, their longtime client, exposing his regime to the slow but inevitably untender mercies of the United States. Still, the soul-gazer George W. Bush and the "more flexible" Barack Obama

"reset" relations many times, despite actual Russian invasions of Eastern European borderland states. Putin-bro Donald Trump, as always, says he wants to make a deal.

And also as always, this sort of "engagement" is thought to be "realism" as understood in the political science academy and among many in the pundit class. Russia is a large and powerful state, a nuclear state, with expansive security interests; as such it deserves a "sphere of influence"—despite what its neighbors or others, including Americans, might think. Nor does the character of the Russian regime really mean anything. And certainly the risks and potential costs of standing athwart Putin are not worth it. Who wants to die for the Donbass?

As the Cold War developed, George Kennan recoiled from the conclusions and policies his portrait of the Russian political personality elicited from the Truman administration and its successors. Ironically, the astute analyst of Russian strategic culture found comfort in a Realist retreat from confrontation with the Soviet Union. But his original insight was made of more durable fiber and remains strong now: the prospects for liberal change in Russia likely are receding, at least within any time horizon relevant to American strategy-making. Russia's well-catalogued demographic, economic, and domestic political problems have yet to have a significant, discernable impact on the Putin regime, and the Macho Man of Moscow looks pretty good when he takes his shirt off. Or put it this way: neither the catastrophic suffering of the Stalin years or World War II, nor the collapse of a 400-year Eurasian empire appears to have changed Russian strategic habits.

Of course, the United States must "engage" with Russia—we certainly cannot afford to ignore it. But realism in engagement will almost always mean confrontation, including military forms of confrontation: arms sales, proxy wars, private wars that kill actual Russian "contractors." The difference this time is the Russia contest is no longer the only or even most important shadow of cold war; we have Iran and China, at least, to think about as well. Nonetheless, Clausewitz's dictum still applies: we must see the Russia conflict as it truly is.

Thomas Donnelly, a defense and security policy analyst, is the codirector of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. From 1995 to 1999, he was policy group director for the House Committee on Armed Services. Donnelly also served as a member of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. He is the author, coauthor, and editor of numerous articles, essays, and books, including *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* and *Clash of Chariots: A History of Armored Warfare*. He is currently at work on *Empire of Liberty: The Origins of American Strategic Culture*.

A Russian Reset? Not Unless We Want to Declare Defeat

By Peter R. Mansoor

It is no secret that US-Russia relations are at their lowest ebb since the end of the Cold War in 1989. Spurred on by President Vladimir Putin's nationalist impulses, Russia has invaded two neighboring states, Georgia and Ukraine, seized the Crimean Peninsula, and interfered in elections in the United States and various European nations. Russian cyber warriors arguably made a difference in the 2016 US presidential election, won by Donald Trump by the slimmest of margins—just eighty-thousand votes in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. Russian agents have used nerve agent in assassination attempts on British soil. Russian aircraft have pulverized civilian communities in Syria, killing thousands in the process and generating waves of hundreds of thousands of refugees washing up on Europe's shores. Russian denials of their bad behavior would be humorous if the consequences were not so significant.

Putin views the collapse of the Soviet Union as "a major geopolitical disaster of the century." He views the world through the eyes of an ex-KGB agent—an arena of global conflict where Russia can exploit its traditional strengths of intelligence and deception (*maskirovka*), areas where it has historically excelled. Russian cyber warriors are wreaking havoc on the Internet, ironically using our own freedoms (of speech and the press) and technology (the Internet and social media) against us. Putin's goals are fairly clear: to reintegrate the Russian-speaking areas in the "near abroad" adjacent to Russia's borders, sow dissention in the West, weaken US resolve to engage abroad, crack the foundations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and return his nation to the status of a major power on the world stage. In short, Putin wants to make Russia great again.

Given the chaos Putin has sown in the West over the past decade, improved relations between the United States and Russia would be a welcome development. But at what cost? Lifting the sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Crimea would validate Russia's theft of territory and its complete disregard of international laws and norms. Siding with Russia in the Syrian civil war would endorse the use of war crimes as a valid strategy and consign America's Kurdish allies, who helped us to fight and destroy the Islamic State, to a bleak future. Failure to retaliate against Russian

POLL: What is the best American approach toward Putin's Russia?

- ☐ The United States should seek some informal alliance with Russia based on mutual interests.
- ☐ The United States must drop current sanctions and accept détente with Russia.
- ☐ The status quo of punishing Putin's aggression should continue until he changes Russian behavior.
- ☐ The United States should further increase sanctions and seek to discourage global trade with Russia.
- ☐ The United States should sever all diplomatic relations and consider Russia as a de facto enemy.

interference in elections would likewise validate the use of cyber warfare as a low-cost, high-reward implement of statecraft.

A reset in US-Russian relations under the current circumstances would hand Putin a major geostrategic victory for little to no gain. Improvement of relations might reduce tensions in Europe, end US involvement in Syria, and perhaps temporarily halt Russian meddling in US domestic affairs, but only at the cost of throwing our European and Kurdish allies as well as international laws and norms under the bus. A better strategy would be to firm up America's alliances with its like-minded democratic partners around the world, pushing back firmly against the bad behavior of our strategic adversaries. Putin and Russia need to pay a stiff price for their actions, but the reckoning will likely not come while Donald Trump is in office.

Peter R. Mansoor, colonel, US Army (retired), is the General Raymond E. Mason, Jr. Chair of Military History at Ohio State University. A distinguished graduate of West Point, he earned his doctorate from Ohio State University. He assumed his current position after a twenty-six-year career in the US Army that included two combat tours, culminating in his service as executive officer to General David Petraeus in Iraq. His latest book, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War,* a history of the surge in Iraq in 2007– 8, was published by Yale University Press in 2013.

Discussion Questions

1. Did Russia have any valid arguments in absorbing Crimea?
2. Will Ukraine survive as an independent nation or likely be partitioned?
3. Are free and fair elections in Russia now permanently over?
4. Does Russia have any major allies?
5. What is the Russian relationship with China and is it aimed against the United States?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Space Force and Warfare in Space

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.

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