

of empire. This was dictated by the constraint of abysmal communication and transportation infrastructures, vitiating prospects for reinforcement. In the context of 1000-year ethnocentric memories of periphery war, this always translated into larger armed forces' structures than might otherwise have been necessary. Thus also in Eastern Europe: "bought with the blood of 20 million", the perceived need for hegemony echoed the names of Hitler, the Kaiser, Napoleon, and Charles, and the fact that east of the Tatra, the land runs flat to Moscow; the visceral nature of the demand was reflected also in the fact that the "Iron Curtain" was a near-replica of a line first drawn on the map by Catherine the Great, as the line east of which Moscow could afford no hostile dominion.

The new doctrine negated the premise that underlay periphery force deployments, in Tsarist and Soviet days, and that made maximum buffer extensions a strategic necessity, whatever the cost. It established the military rationale for withdrawals, and for substantive reductions not only in the nuclear arsenal, but also, and more importantly, in conventional force numbers--by far the costliest part of the defence establishment. It ipso facto thus also provided leeway for continued funding of high-tech aspirations even in the context of significantly declining overall defence budgets.

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Withdrawal and Contraction; change unleashed. Gorbachev's December 1988 UN Speech announcing unilateral Soviet army manpower cuts of 500,000, was followed, in 1989, by withdrawal from Afghanistan, the announcement that the Soviet defence budget would be cut by 14%, and withdrawal of Soviet support for East European client regimes--their deathknell. Negotiations on total troop withdrawal schedules were begun that year with Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Mongolia.

The scale and pace of subsequent withdrawal rates was wrenching; the revolution wrought imposed its own dynamic and momentum--its impact was, in fact, eerily reminiscent of that of the Petrograd Soviet's 14 March 1917 Order Number One. The Soviet contingent in Afghanistan, withdrawn by February 1989, totalled about 115,000. The 73,500 troops in Czechoslovakia and 65,000 in Hungary, plus 50,000 from Mongolia, and some of the 50,000 in Poland and 350,000 in Germany were out by 1991. The withdrawal from Poland was completed in 1992 (except for 2000, to facilitate troop transports from Germany). That from Germany was scheduled for 1994 completion.

The return of nearly 700,000 (Army and Air Force, with weapons, logistics and all base removables)⁵, most of whom could not be absorbed by a now contracting force structure, was wrenching for morale and discipline. 36,000 homes would be paid with German financing, but most returnees were condemned to grossly inadequate and crowded housing, or tent cities. There were already 175,000 military families without proper living conditions before the withdrawals from Czechoslovakia and Hungary began; with these withdrawals and others, from Poland and Germany, the number swelled to 275,000.⁶ And housing was not