
POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

The Giant with Feet of Clay

"Fear of Bureaucracy: A Raging Pandemic" by Herbert Kaufman, in *Public Administration Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1981), 1225 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

That the federal bureaucracy is too big and too powerful has become an article of faith in American politics. But Kaufman, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, maintains that the power of the civil servant is vastly exaggerated.

At first glance, fears of an omnipotent bureaucracy are understandable. How can 537 elected officials (the Congress, the President, and the Vice President) properly supervise the U.S. government's three million civilian and two million uniformed workers? Indeed, the dramatic extension of Washington's responsibilities has meant that politicians must frequently rely on the bureaucracy's corps of experts—many of whom outlast elected officials—for substantive guidance.

But critics tend to forget the constraints on bureaucratic power, writes Kaufman. A President determined to dictate an agency's course will eventually get his way, as when President Nixon ordered the Justice Department and the FBI to slow their investigations of the Watergate break-in. Congress, with its budgetary and investigatory powers, can strike terror into administrators' hearts. And, in recent years, the courts have usurped many bureaucratic prerogatives, often overseeing specific agency programs.

The biggest check on bureaucrats' power, however, may be other bureaucrats. Agencies such as the Commerce Department and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which serve different constituencies, clash continually. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation compete for new public works projects. And jurisdictional overlaps (such as that between the Justice Department's Antitrust Division and the Federal Trade Commission) sometimes keep bureaucrats busier protecting their turf than expanding it.

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An Incurable Adversary

"Whither the Soviet Union?" by William E. Odom, in *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 1981), Dept. WQ, Transaction Periodicals Consortium, P.O. Box 1262, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

Can the Soviet Union be induced to curb its expansionism and accept the international status quo? Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter believed so, as they negotiated arms control pacts and promoted trade with the USSR. But their policies were doomed because Soviet leaders perceive international stability as a threat in itself. So writes Odom, a

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member of the National Security Council staff under President Carter.

The country the Bolsheviks wrested from the Romanovs in 1917 had "neither a tradition of rights of the nobility, nor of private property, which might have helped diffuse State powers," notes Odom. Ever since Peter the Great (who ruled from 1682 to 1725), Tsars had also been obsessed by fears of Western attack. Only a powerful military, they believed, could conquer neighboring lands as buffer states, keep their non-Russian populations in line, and make sure the peasants produced enough food to maintain an Army.

After the Revolution, Lenin's pledges of "peace, bread, and land"—and self-determination for nationalities—promised to change all that. But Lenin also believed that no worthy "proletarian" regime would actually move to secede from the new Soviet Union. When some did, the Bolsheviks substituted a Red Army for the Imperial force and crushed nationalism in the Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia. Later, they placed the economy on a permanent wartime footing (starting with the First Five Year Plan of 1928) and forcibly collectivized agriculture.

In short, the central issues of the Russian Empire—how to support a strong Army, how to control the centrifugal tendencies of diverse nationalities, how to keep the needs of the state paramount—remain unresolved today. Ever-increasing Western trade concessions will not bring about liberalization within the USSR or abate international tensions, for either would reduce the power of the Soviet state and alter the *domestic* status quo.

The Soviet Union's imposing military strength makes a return to Cold War-style containment and U.S. nuclear superiority impossible. But East-West stability can be attained. Odom calls for a Western military build-up aimed at making the United States (with its allies) "pre-eminent" over the Soviets (and their allies) in nuclear and conventional fighting capabilities; a Western policy of denying the Soviets strategic goods and of linking all other commerce to diplomatic concessions; and active political, moral, and sometimes material support for those who resist Soviet designs—in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, Cuba, Eastern Europe, and inside the Soviet Union itself.

Beyond Cloak and Dagger

"Intelligence in the 1980s" by William E. Colby, in *The Information Society* (vol. 1, no. 1, 1981), Crane, Russak & Co., 3 East 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.

For centuries, spies were the backbone of government intelligence, ferreting out secrets and occasionally manipulating events. Then, during World War II, General William Donovan, head of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency), introduced a new approach, employing a corps of academic specialists to analyze information available publicly as well as data gathered by agents in the field. Today, writes Colby, who directed the CIA under President Ford, a third revolution is transforming intelligence-