appropriate insofar as the UN is not a salient issue for the American public. Public opinion about the UN is addressed in chapter 10, but the treatment is largely inadequate. Luck is correct in noting that the American public displays relatively consistent—though very shallow—support for the UN. But when he attempts to show how support varies by race, class, political ideology, and other factors, his assessment is severely limited by his eschewal of regression analysis. Understanding American attitudes toward the UN requires a multivariate analysis to sort out which factors are statistically significant and which of these are most important. Of course, surveys on the UN are notoriously influenced by question framing and wording effects, so there is some reason to doubt the utility of the whole exercise.

Another problem with the book is its overreliance on quotations in the thematic chapters. Although some of the quotations are necessary to document the particular viewpoints and are nicely framed and integrated, the reader is often bombarded with multiple passages on a single page. Some of the statements are essentially redundant, whereas others cry out for more analysis. The goal of documenting American ambivalence toward the UN frequently takes precedence over the task of explaining or analyzing such ambivalence.

The concluding chapter takes on a more prescriptive tone. Luck advocates reconciliation and consensus between internationalist and unilateralist camps without taking sides. He rightly notes that the problems between the United States and the UN can be solved only by a broader consensus among American domestic political forces. Yet his final recommendations are heavily weighted toward statements on what areas should be the basis for dialogue among those holding differing viewpoints. Wise and thoughtful as his recommendations are, one might have hoped for greater delineation of how and exactly where consensus might be achieved.

Despite these caveats, Luck’s book is the best on its subject and is likely to remain relevant over time (though it was published before the U.S. Congress recently agreed to pay some of the country’s back debts to the UN and is therefore somewhat dated already). Parts of the book will no doubt find their way into undergraduate and graduate courses, but perhaps its most important value may be as a reference for decision makers. Foreign officials, who are often puzzled and at times appalled by U.S. policy toward the UN, will find the book immensely helpful in understanding the domestic political sources of American behavior.


Reviewed by Robert Hutchings, Princeton University

“The Cold War didn’t ‘end’; it was won.” So said George Bush in January 1992 in what turned out to be his last State of the Union address. The remark was dismissed as
a crude attempt to take personal credit in an election year, rather than an appeal to Americans to reflect on the role their country had played and needed to continue playing. One of the virtues of Don Oberdorfer's gripping account of U.S.-Soviet relations at the end of the Cold War is that it helps debunk the myth that the Soviet empire collapsed of its own internal contradictions. The United States, according to the myth, was merely a bystander as the Cold War ended, needing only to pick up the ripe fruit as it fell from the tree. Oberdorfer's detailed, balanced account describes the policies and personalities that actually changed history.

There was nothing inevitable about the dramatic events that began in 1989. The Berlin Wall would not have fallen in November 1989 if there had not been a successful challenge to Communist rule in Poland earlier that year. On numerous occasions Poland's peaceful revolution might have broken down. There was nothing foreordained about the successful unification of Germany in the face of Soviet opposition and the misgivings felt by most of Germany's neighbors. Nor was the disintegration of the Soviet Union the inevitable consequence of the conflicts that raged in that country for most of 1991. There were several possible outcomes to the crisis of Soviet Communism, not just one. While acknowledging that deep historical forces were at work, Oberdorfer concurs with former Soviet foreign minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh in characterizing this period as "a rare case in history when a major change didn't just develop—it was willed to happen" (p. 478).

A second myth that Oberdorfer helps debunk is that George Bush merely carried on the foreign policy initiated by Ronald Reagan. As anyone engaged in foreign policy making under the two presidents knows, there was no such thing as a "Reagan-Bush foreign policy." The differences between Bush and Reagan were stark—more stark than between Bush and Bill Clinton, and as stark in substance (though not in rhetoric) as between Jimmy Carter and Reagan. Bush made sharp departures in strategy and policy: away from concentration on arms negotiations, especially regarding nuclear weapons, toward addressing the underlying political conflicts; away from an approach that opposed European unity to one that actively embraced it (Bush's shift of priority from Britain to Germany being a case in point); away from the "Reagan doctrine" in the Third World (a doctrine aimed against the Soviet Union and its Marxist clients) toward an approach that sought to enlist Soviet cooperation in solving Third World conflicts. Conceptually, there was a profound shift from Reagan's bipolar worldview—manifested in his reliance on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a naval buildup, and other unilateral military measures—toward Bush's pragmatic multilateralism, which saw the world in terms of friends as well as enemies—friends whose partnership was vital to ending the Cold War. Above all, rather than seeking a strategic partnership with the Soviet Union, Bush held U.S.-Soviet relations hostage to the end of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. Arguably, this was the most important single contribution the United States made to ending the Cold War. Oberdorfer argues that Bush showed "remarkable prescience" during the election campaign in 1988 when he referred to the possibility of major change in this region (p. 330).

Ronald Reagan also gets deserved credit for exposing the vulnerability of the Soviet Union and opening Western eyes to the possibility of its collapse. Oberdorfer
nicely captures Reagan’s weaknesses as well as his strengths. He gives a riveting account of Reagan’s encounter with Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1987, when “Reagan seemed unable to remember or relate the U.S. position” and his secretary of state had to take over while “the President sat by in embarrassed silence” (p. 263). But Oberdorfer also agrees with Soviet journalist Aleksandr Bovin’s characterization of Reagan as a leader unlike the traditional politician “who slices off small bits of decisions.” Instead, Reagan was “a figure with a bold approach and keen intuition, even if he did not understand many of the important details” (p. 480).

Oberdorfer is at his best in recreating the negotiations, especially at summit level, and the internal policy deliberations on both sides. To counteract the image purveyed in 1992 of an indecisive, humiliated Gorbachev, it is a useful corrective to read Oberdorfer’s descriptions of the Soviet leader in his early days, when he was firmly in command of his brief, brimming with self-confidence, and willing to take risks. A vignette of Leonid Brezhnev’s mumbled, Mafia-like reference to Afghan leader Hafizullah Amin as an “indecent person” is both hilarious and chilling, in that it led to Amin’s assassination a few days later (p. 237).

The current spectacle of a crisis-ridden, corrupt, enfeebled Russia makes Oberdorfer’s account of U.S.-Soviet diplomacy in the late Cold War seem somehow antiquated. Was this the “other superpower” that preoccupied the United States for nearly two generations? Was the Cold War really the clash of titans we believed it was? When Reagan was fulminating to Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko that the Soviet Union was “an expansionist state” (p. 90), was it not already apparent that the USSR was in the advanced stages of imperial decline? The precarious standing of the Soviet Union was evident among senior officials in the Soviet Communist Party, who wrote about “the prolonged crisis of the model of socialism” in Eastern Europe and warned of “crisis symptoms . . . in all spheres of public life.” (“On the strategy of Relations with European Socialist Countries,” memorandum from the CPSU International Department to Aleksandr Yakovlev, February 1989; and “Changes in Eastern Europe and Their Impact on the USSR,” memorandum from the Bogomolov Institute to Aleksandr Yakovlev, February 1989, both in Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow.) Gorbachev himself, recounting a discussion with Henry Kissinger about Eastern Europe, told his Politburo: “The peoples of these countries will ask: ‘What about the Soviet Union, what kind of leash will it use to keep our countries in?’ They simply do not know that if they pull this leash harder, it will break.” (Remarks of Mikhail Gorbachev at CPSU Politburo meeting, 21 January 1989, transcribed by Anatolii Chernyaev, in Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation.) Oberdorfer notes that in this updated version of his 1991 book, he made “no changes” aside from minor corrections to the original text (p. 12). It is a shame, because this citation is from a newly declassified source that sheds light on an exchange he recounts on page 342.

Oberdorfer cites de Tocqueville’s famous prediction that Russia and the United States “each . . . seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe” (p. 31). During the Cold War this image mutated into a Manichean worldview of two armed, hostile camps that persisted long after the bipolar order
broke down. For the United States and the Soviet Union alike, the speed and thoroughness with which this world collapsed gave way to profound confusion about the two countries’ roles in a new and very different era. The “grand struggle” had ended not with a bang but with a whimper.


Reviewed by Valerie Sperling, Clark University

Pacifists and peace activists have long claimed that the power of nonviolence exceeds that of more tangible and traditional forms of weaponry. Mao Zedong may have been convinced that persuasion was best enacted through violence—a belief summed up in his claim that “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”—but even he was fully aware of the value of propaganda in helping to change people’s minds. In *Unarmed Forces*, Matthew Evangelista contends that a transnational movement of scientists and physicians armed only with ideas, data, acquaintanceship, and an abiding fear of nuclear war managed to convince Soviet leaders on several occasions to pursue a path of de-escalation during the Cold War. Viewed from this nontraditional perspective, the Soviet Union and the Cold War did not dissolve solely because of a superior and ultimately bankrupting display of military and economic power by the United States. Instead, the Soviet regime was defeated by the infusion of a set of norms and ideas that found resonance among populations and politicians on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Evangelista’s book provides a history of the varied influences on Soviet military policy making during the Cold War. In the process, he tells the little-known story of the transnational peace movement, focusing on several groups, including the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, the Soviet-American Disarmament Study group, and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), all of which brought together scientists who could help promote a mutually reinforcing process of peacemaking between the superpowers. Evangelista makes an interesting and at times counterintuitive argument, claiming that the rigidly hierarchical and authoritarian structure of the Soviet regime actually helped the transnational groups achieve a measure of success in their mission. The Communist Party dictatorship, Evangelista maintains, left Soviet “policy entrepreneurs” (p. 7) out of the foreign policy-making process much of the time, but when crises, fundamental disagreements over policy, or changes of leadership occurred, opportunities arose for these entrepreneurs to gain access to the top political leaders and inject their ideas into the system. The top-down nature of policy making then enabled the fresh ideas to be implemented over the objections of Soviet bureaucratic agencies such as the Defense Ministry. According to Evangelista, the post-Soviet period under Boris Yeltsin’s leadership witnessed the rise of strong interest groups and state bureaucracies that competed for