leading and that various sources employed by other scholars to shed light on aspects of 
Cuban policy are unreliable. Gleijeses also earns our gratitude for the ambitious thor-
oughness and transparency of his research endeavor, for making available to other 
scholars the documents he received, and for having told admirably well the story of 
the soldiers whom he interviewed: “They were proud of their past,” he writes, “and 
and they wanted it to be recorded” (p. 395).

James Oberg, *Star-Crossed Orbits: Inside the U.S.-Russian Space Alliance*. New York: 

Reviewed by Matthew J. V. Bencke, *University of California, Berkeley*

The space race was one of the most memorable aspects of the Cold War. The United 
States and the Soviet Union each went to great lengths to establish its space program 
as the world’s best. Conversely, when the leaders of the two countries looked for ways 
to ease tension, they often settled on forms of space cooperation, such as the 
Soyuz-Apollo linkup. The space program thus became one of the most salient features 
of both the competitive and the cooperative dimensions of the Cold War.

Much has changed since the Cold War ended. In April 1993 the United States 
and Russia signed an agreement merging the last entries in the Cold War race, the 
U.S. and Russian space stations (Freedom, initiated in 1984, and Mir 2, the planned 
successor to Mir). This joint effort resulted in political complications for both coun-
tries; the transformation of U.S. and Russian aerospace industries; and the most com-
plex engineering project of the space era, the International Space Station (ISS).

In this light, James Oberg’s new book might well have been a welcome foray into 
an underexamined topic. As a former space engineer and now a freelance space com-
mentator, Oberg presumably can offer an insider’s unique knowledge and perspective. 
He provides entertaining anecdotes about what it is like to build, operate, and support 
a space station, and he regales the reader with stories about remarkable cosmonauts, 
quick-thinking engineers, and strained bureaucrats.

Oberg’s basic theme is that the U.S.-Russia “relationship [regarding the ISS] has 
evolved into new patterns of mutual misunderstanding” based primarily on the inept-
tude, naïveté and desperation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration 
(NASA), and on the Russians’ propensity to mislead and even extort their U.S. part-
ners (p. 5). The book begins by reviewing the zenith of Soviet and Russian achieve-
ments in human spaceflight. After selectively tracing Soviet/Russian space history and 
the origins of the U.S.-Russian partnership, Oberg turns to the Shuttle-Mir program, 
also known as “Phase One” of the ISS. He focuses on Mir’s problems and lambastes 
NASA for purposefully ignoring safety risks. His harshest criticism, though, is of 
NASA’s claim that this initial phase gave the two sides valuable practice for the ISS 
and spawned meaningful scientific work. He dismisses the NASA statements as “dubi-
ous,” “desperate, even pathetic,” and “ludicrously trivial” (pp. 171, 172, 174). The remaining chapters cover the Freedom–Mir 2 merger, culminating in the beginning of human operations on ISS in late 2000.

In closing, Oberg laments that as a result of the cooperative nature of ISS people now believe “there should be no option for a purely U.S. project” (p. 316). He speculates that the Russians might yet disconnect their half of the ISS, leaving the U.S.-led half to founder on its own (pp. 322–323).

The danger of *Star-Crossed Orbits* is that people might consider it a serious contribution to important debates about space cooperation. Rather than presenting well-reasoned argumentation, Oberg subjects his readers to meandering, often self-aggrandizing anecdotes strewn with unfounded assertions and personal mudslinging. Much of his evidence, by his own admission, comes from disaffected former space officials, drunken cosmonauts, and intercepted e-mail messages and memoranda. Claiming protection of sources, Oberg includes not a single footnote. At best the result is a tale unsupported by credible evidence; at worst the author fixes the story to support an agenda aimed at debunking the real accomplishments in U.S.-Russian space cooperation.

Among the most dubious claims here is that the United States gained nothing from having astronauts on Mir. The Russians are by far the world's leading experts in long-duration human spaceflight, having orbited dozens of cosmonauts for record-setting flights continuously since 1971. The longest U.S. astronaut flight on an American craft—a trip of eighty-four days on Skylab in 1973—was far eclipsed by the periods of as long as 188 days that seven U.S. astronauts spent on Mir in 1995–1998. Thus, concluding that NASA did not manage to learn from these flights, at least until it was too late, requires a belief that the space agency is fantastically incompetent. This is exactly what Oberg does believe. But he does not seriously assess the 150-plus scientific publications that resulted from these flights, or the medical, engineering, systems management, contingency resolution, cultural, and other lessons that NASA learned during Phase One. Unfortunately, this slanted analysis is typical of *Star-Crossed Orbits*.

What can political observers learn from the last ten years of space interaction? First, the U.S. decision to merge the space stations was all but inevitable. Although Oberg blames the Clinton administration for racing into the merger unprepared, the fact is that Vice President Dan Quayle, as chair of the National Space Council, first ordered a technical-feasibility study of the station merger in early 1992. By 1993 Freedom was billions of dollars over budget and still in need of engineering redesigns; it received funding in the House of Representatives by only one vote. None of this is mentioned by Oberg. Without the merger there would be no space station, neither U.S. nor Russian (the Russians could not have afforded Mir 2).

Second, the project's institutional design is interesting. In purely engineering terms the ISS is history's most successful multilateral, high-technology project. Although the ISS partnership, involving sixteen countries, is roughly the size of the United Nations Security Council, its management is facilitated by the fact that some 85 percent of the hardware is American or Russian.
Third, the political problems of the ISS are remarkably reflective of broader post–Cold War phenomena. Both countries have substantial elements of their military industries left over from the Cold War. The ISS and the billions of dollars of commercial space cooperation it has generated have turned the tide, slowly but surely, against lingering resistance to cooperation. Both bureaucracies have had to fight top-down to inculcate new mores.

Fourth, if we are to have a human space program, it is going to be multilateral. The ongoing ambivalence about this cooperation and about the U.S.-Russia relationship more generally continues to hamper and increase the program’s costs both financially and diplomatically. The United States successfully directed the ISS design so that neither side can continue without the other. Multibillion dollar pieces of hardware, like institutions, are “sticky.” Oberg finds patriotism and multilateral pride mutually exclusive, but with the Cold War over, the space race has been irreversibly transformed into an ambitious exercise in cooperation.

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Reviewed by Dmitry P. Gorenburg, CNA Corporation

Walter Kemp sets out in this book to explain “how communist theorists and practitioners tried to cope with nationalism” (p. xv). He argues that Communist policies toward nationalism underwent a cyclical pattern that oscillated between repression and conciliation of nationalist thought and behavior. The Communists, he contends, gradually strengthened nationalism while weakening Communism, leading eventually to the disintegration of the Communist bloc and the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Kemp’s ability to combine analysis of Marxist theory and the practical implementation of Communism is one of the strengths of his book. He ably shows how the difficulties and delusions of Communist political thinkers when dealing with nationalism helped prevent Soviet and East European leaders from formulating policies that could defuse nationalist tensions and maintain Communist rule. At the same time, Kemp demonstrates that the inability of Communism to control nationalism was the crucial factor that connected the collapse of Communist rule in East European states in 1989 with the disintegration of the Soviet Union two years later.

Kemp succeeds in offering a clearly written survey of the changes in Communist thought on nationalism and the impact these changes had on the practice of dealing with nationalism in states ruled by Communist parties. But the ambitious chronological and geographic scope of the book makes it less successful as an in-depth analysis of the effect of nationalism on Communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In trying to cover 150 years of political thought and seventy-five years of political history in nine countries, Kemp is forced to deal only superficially with key events such as the 1956 Hungarian revolution and even the collapse of Communism in the late...