
*Reviewed by Robert S. Litwak, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*

As the Obama administration considers its options for dealing with Iran’s nuclear weapons program—policy determinations that will hinge on assessments of the Iranian regime’s intentions, capabilities, and political durability—the publication of Robert Jervis’s trenchant new book on intelligence failures could not be timelier. Jervis, a distinguished political scientist perhaps best known for his path-breaking work on perceptions and misperceptions in foreign policy decision-making, examines two of the most consequential U.S. intelligence failures in recent history: the flawed assessment by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1978 of the Shah of Iran’s vulnerability to revolutionary overthrow, and the CIA’s mistaken judgment that Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq had retained active programs of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) after 1991 in contravention of United Nations Security Council resolutions (a judgment often cited in late 2002 and early 2003 by George W. Bush’s administration in justifying the decision to go to war against Iraq in 2003). Jervis extends his analysis of these two detailed case studies to draw broader, highly policy-relevant conclusions about the politics and psychology of intelligence analysis and intelligence reform.

The Iran case is based on the recently declassified study the CIA commissioned Jervis to write when he was a scholar-in-residence at the agency in the late 1970s. An insightful and occasionally wry memoir of Jervis’s experience as an academic in what was then the CIA’s National Foreign Assessment Center (NFAC) precedes his postmortem. When preparing his report, Jervis was surprised by the paucity of CIA resources dedicated to Iran relative to the agency’s primary Cold War intelligence target, the Soviet Union. That problem was compounded by the weakness of the CIA’s collection effort—a glaring example being the dearth of information about the revolution’s leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, beyond what was available to the U.S. embassy and CIA station through newspapers. Reporting in general on the domestic politics of a key U.S. ally was given short shrift. Jervis’s report focused on the CIA analytical division’s performance in responding to Iran’s unfolding domestic crisis from its onset in mid-1977 to its decisive turn in November 1978. An analytical paper prepared by the CIA in August 1978 on the prospects for an orderly succession to the Shah claimed that “Iran is not in a revolutionary or even a ‘prerevolutionary’ situation” (p. 45).

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Jervis notes that U.S. intelligence analysts missed and misunderstood the roles that religion and nationalism (as manifested in anti-Americanism) would play as drivers of revolutionary fervor. His report concluded that “even had observers grasped the depth of popular discontent in Iran, . . . [t]he idea that one of the world’s most powerful monarchs could be overthrown by an unarmed mob of religiously-inspired fanatics was simply incredible” (p. 38). At the heart of this CIA assessment was a flawed inference that verged on tautology. The NFAC analysts expected that the Shah would “crack down” if domestic instability escalated to the point of threatening regime survival; in turn, as events unfolded in the autumn of 1978, the Shah’s decision not to employ massive force to quell demonstrations was read by U.S. analysts as an indicator that the Shah had the domestic situation under control. The persisting riddle of the Iranian revolution is why the Shah never resorted to full-scale repression. A key factor unbeknownst to the CIA, Jervis notes, was that the Shah was undergoing treatment during this period for a terminal illness.

Jervis’s examination of the Iraq WMD intelligence failure draws on the official British, Australian, and American retrospectives, as well as the myriad journalistic accounts. His assessment challenges the conventional wisdom that intelligence was politicized to make the case for a preventive war to topple Saddam Hussein’s regime. Jervis concludes that correctable errors were made and that analysis could have been better, but “the result would have been to make intelligence assessments less certain rather than to reach a fundamentally different conclusion” (p. 124). Analysts never made clear the uncertainties about sources (such as the infamous “Curveball”) on which their judgments rested. Nor did they indicate that their analysis was driven by the plausibility of past Iraqi behavior. That was the “central analytical error,” according to Jervis.

Saddam Hussein’s calculated strategy compounded the U.S. problem. The Iraqi leader deliberately maintained ambiguity about the status of his capabilities to deter the state he considered Iraq’s primary adversary—Iran. Ironically, the WMD ambiguity that Saddam Hussein cultivated to impress Iran became the avowed basis for the U.S. invasion. Jervis concludes that the “most reasonable assessment” would have been that Saddam “probably (but not certainly) had active WMD programs, including a small stockpile of chemical and perhaps biological programs: A responsible judgment could not have been that the programs had ceased.” Jervis’s convincing analysis is limited to the narrow issue of Iraq’s WMD programs, not to the separate policy issue of whether that determination rose to the level of threat supporting the initiation of a preventive war.

Jervis concluded his CIA report on the Iranian revolution with “a dual appeal: analysts, re-examine your assumptions and beliefs; managers, create an environment conducive to analyzing foreign affairs, not just reporting them” (p. 108). Three decades later, in the midst of a new Iran crisis, those words remain more relevant than ever. The various policy options advanced to address Iran’s nuclear challenge are each premised on a key assumption—that a military strike on Iran’s nuclear infrastructure is necessary because the regime cannot be deterred, that the theocratic regime is vulnerable to overthrow through a civil society uprising led by the “green movement,”
that targeted sanctions on core regime interests can coerce a change in Iranian conduct, and so on. Such threshold assumptions often represent an extrapolation of past policy or stem from an ideological predilection or even a vain hope. They need to be continuously subjected to rigorous questioning, analysis, and debate. Jervis’s book provides an invaluable guide for doing so. One can only hope that policymakers do not provide him material for a third case study.


Reviewed by Bruce Kuklick, University of Pennsylvania

In 2008 the Center for International Affairs (CFIA) at Harvard University (now renamed the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs) had its fiftieth anniversary. CFIA was an important and early academic think-tank. Having been set up in the mid-1950s, it was probably more significant in the 1960s than it is today. The current leadership decided to celebrate the birthday with an academic monograph detailing the first 25 years of the center’s existence. David Atkinson, a staff member at the center from 2000 to 2002 who subsequently went on to a Ph.D. program at Boston University (where, at this writing, he still is), was commissioned to write the history. *In Theory and in Practice* is the outcome.

The book is based on a careful reading of the primary sources available to Atkinson, and he thoroughly covers the early organizing period of the mid-late 1950s and the first decade of the center’s existence from 1958 to 1968. But he does not cover the 1970s and after in any depth and gives no reason for stopping in 1983. This attempt at periodization is particularly frustrating because, according to Atkinson, just at the time his study ends, the center was facing a set of serious troubles, and we never learn how they were resolved.

These problems internal to the volume do not matter much. *In Theory and in Practice* is an old-fashioned (in the worst sense) in-house institutional history. Atkinson is a serious and honest writer but has almost no sense of the jugular of writing in modern U.S. intellectual history or of work in the sociology of ideas or in the social history of intellectuals. He pays no attention to the secondary literature in these fields, and he is unable or unwilling to examine in any independent manner the way his former employer functioned during a crucial period of the cultural and intellectual Cold War.

The CFIA was awkwardly positioned as an organization that was supposed to do basic research but also to contribute in some way to contemporary policymaking in the struggle against the Soviet Union. The center was created to mobilize the U.S. scholarly community to play a positive role in a forward-looking foreign policy. Atkinson recognizes this issue but can get no further than to say that the center made brilliant contributions to the new field of international relations; that members of the
organization offered diverse points of view about the U.S. role in foreign affairs; and that we can easily dismiss the leftist critique—paradigmatically made by Students for a Democratic Society protesters at Harvard in the late 1960s—of such think-tanks.

The center received lead funding from the Rockefeller Foundation when Dean Rusk was in charge of the foundation. CFIA also got substantial amounts of money from the U.S. Department of Defense and other government agencies for contracted research. McGeorge Bundy was instrumental in setting up the center, and Robert Bowie served as its first head. Henry Kissinger left the center in 1969 for his new job in Washington. These are only starters. One hopes that some researcher with a better eye for the historical analysis of foreign policy and the social history of ideas will make use of the book’s assemblage of data.


 Reviewed by George C. Herring, University of Kentucky (Emeritus)

Mark Bradley’s *Vietnam at War* joins an already long list of interpretive surveys of the wars in Vietnam. Unlike most of its predecessors, which tell the story from the U.S. side, Bradley’s book focuses on Vietnam and claims agency for the Vietnamese. In contrast to earlier Vietnam-centric books by William Turley and William Duiker, which concentrate on “high” policy, Bradley also skillfully uses art, film, and literature to analyze the role of ordinary people and the often devastating impact of the wars on them.

*Vietnam at War* nicely explicates the complexity of wars that lasted three decades and had local, national, and international dimensions. A struggle among Vietnamese to determine the shape of their country’s post-colonial society began long before Ho Chi Minh’s September 1945 declaration of independence, persisted through thirty years of war, and, according to Bradley, continues today. North Vietnamese backing made possible the early success of the insurgency by the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam, and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) won the final battles in 1975. Throughout the war, however, Hanoi and the NLF differed sharply over strategy, tactics, and especially priorities. Major divisions existed within the NLF itself. During what the Vietnamese call the American War, South and North Vietnam each relied heavily on the support of foreign allies, but there were profound conflicts of interest among the various countries, and these tensions grew as the war neared an end.

Bradley focuses on Vietnam, and here he is superb. He does not subscribe to the new “revisionist” school that finds much to admire in South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem’s policies, Bradley argues, alienated peasants and urban dwellers alike, and his government never had more than a narrow base of support in South Vietnam. *Vietnam at War* is excellent on the rise of the NLF and its shrewd and highly
effective use of terror and reform to gain widespread popular support by 1963. The most interesting and perhaps most important chapter covers the period 1965–1968, the height of the war. The chapter deals sparingly with high policy, focusing instead on how Vietnamese of all types and from all regions responded to the conflicting pressures of war. In South Vietnam, social and family ties were disrupted. Military action in the countryside created an estimated four million refugees, generating, in turn, slums in the major cities. The massive U.S. presence produced a service economy riddled with corruption, drug abuse, and prostitution. Western popular culture undermined traditional values. Among the South Vietnamese, war-weariness, alienation, and distrust of the government became pervasive and were eloquently expressed in literature, art, and a multitude of antiwar songs. North Vietnam was much more cohesive, but divisions within the Hanoi leadership provoked a purge in 1967. The U.S. bombing and heavy conscription forced major population dislocations in the North. Despite tight censorship, subsurface tensions were also vented discreetly through art and literature.

Bradley skillfully outlines the ways the 1968 Tet Offensive dramatically changed the war. Militarily, the emphasis shifted from counterinsurgency to conventional operations increasingly waged between the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and the NVA. The enormous losses suffered by the NLF during Tet forced a drawdown, leaving South Vietnam more secure than it had been in years. Nonetheless, the Tet Offensive also exacerbated the South Vietnamese government’s problems, especially corruption, and it was no more popular than before. Tensions between South and North Vietnam and their allies became more pronounced, especially as Washington began to extricate itself from the war and execute a major diplomatic realignment with its Cold War adversaries, the Soviet Union and China.

Vietnam at War is especially good on the aftermath. The struggle among Vietnamese continued after the war ended. Hanoi could not match its military triumph with economic and political success. Its economic programs brought disaster, and its wars with China and Cambodia imposed huge additional burdens on a country already reeling from 30 years of fighting. Ultimately, leaders in Hanoi sought solutions in doi moi, which involved a market economy. Thus, South Vietnam won the war to determine how the economy would operate. Most important and interesting, Bradley concludes, after the war ended, the state lost control of how the war is remembered. Artists, writers, and filmmakers have used memories of the war to critique the society they live in and to set forth alternative visions for the future.

Whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Vietnam, many Americans believe that what their country does or fails to do will decide the outcome of conflicts in which it is engaged. What this book makes dramatically clear is that although the outside powers—the United States included— influenced events, sometimes quite significantly, the war remained in essence a struggle among Vietnamese, and indigenous forces ultimately determined its outcome.

Intended for a general audience, this excellent survey is quite original in places and helps us to understand a crucial dimension of the war often neglected in U.S. studies; it can be read with profit by those interested in a war that is still traumatic and
by those concerned about U.S. nation-building efforts today. The book will be invaluable for use in classes on the Vietnam War.


Reviewed by Andrew Preston, Cambridge University

No scholar of the Vietnam War deserves a *festschrift* more than George C. Herring. As the author of several important articles and books, Herring has long been the most authoritative scholarly voice on the history of American intervention in Vietnam. His book *America’s Longest War*, the single most successful and influential survey of the conflict, is now in its fourth edition; the first was published nearly thirty years ago. It is entirely fitting, then, that two other leading historians of the war, David L. Anderson and John Ernst, have asked several of their colleagues to contribute to a collection of essays in Herring’s honor. Although the result, *The War That Never Ends*, betrays the customary inconsistency of edited volumes, overall it will stand as both an enduring tribute to an important historian and a significant scholarly contribution in its own right.

Despite its quality, the book’s subtitle, *New Perspectives on the Vietnam War*, does not always live up to its promise. For example, Anderson’s own essay is strikingly similar to his 2005 presidential address before the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, which was subsequently published in the January 2006 issue of *Diplomatic History*. Although Robert Buzzanco has added a poignant coda on the Iraq War, his chapter on military dissent basically offers a summary of his important 1996 book on the same subject, *Masters of War*. Similarly, Robert Topmiller’s essay on the Buddhist antiwar movement in South Vietnam provides a condensed account of his excellent 2002 book on the same subject, *The Lotus Unleashed*. Even less new is Sandra Taylor’s chapter on the role of Vietnamese women in the war, which is simply reprinted here from another edited collection, Kenton Clymer’s *The Vietnam War*, published in 1998. Although these chapters are all valuable, they are not exactly “new perspectives.”

Several chapters revisit old ground in fresh ways; others present genuinely new contributions. The book’s essays fall into three categories, all of which are valuable: politically informed reflections, scholarly articles, and historical and historiographical overviews. Two essays that are essentially extended op-ed articles begin and end the book. Marilyn Young’s introductory chapter is a brief but insightful examination of the enduring political legacy of the war and its controversies. Having failed to learn the lessons of Vietnam, and having failed to come to terms with its legacy, Americans are now repeating their Indochina agonies in the Middle East. Howard Zinn closes the book by also linking Vietnam to Iraq. The bulk of his contribution is a reprint of a suggested speech, announcing the unconditional withdrawal of the United States
from Vietnam, that he drafted for Lyndon Johnson and published in his 1967 book *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal*. For this version, he has added a very short introduction that highlights what he sees as the similarities between the foreign and military policies of Lyndon Johnson and George W. Bush.

Several of the book’s scholarly articles present new interpretations of old issues and debates. The best are Gary R. Hess’s examination of the international context of the Johnson administration’s decision-making, Robert K. Brigham’s reevaluation of Ho Chi Minh’s ideological moorings, and Joseph A. Fry’s evaluation of the antiwar movement. Hess uses the notorious “More Flags” campaign, in which the Johnson administration unsuccessfully solicited allied participation, to highlight the war’s diplomatic difficulties and lack of international legitimacy. Turning much of the existing consensus on its head, Brigham challenges the view that Ho was deeply influenced by Confucianism and that the nationalist-Communist movement he led against France, the United States, and South Vietnam had such wide appeal because of its successful blending of traditional Confucian precepts with modern Communist ideology. Instead, Brigham argues, Ho’s appeal was rooted more exclusively in the successful everyday application of the elements of socialist theory, especially land reform, that would most strongly resonate with the Vietnamese peasantry. Fry also takes a familiar topic, the students who protested the war, and integrates it into a wider historiography by examining it from a new angle. Religion, gender, demographics, economics, and (especially) race have long dominated the scholarship that explains the decline of liberalism and the rise of conservatism in the late 1960s and 1970s. The antiwar movement has been left relatively untouched in the existing literature on this “backlash thesis.” By examining the numerical inferiority of the protesters, especially the most radical elements, and the conservative majority’s reaction, Fry’s essay begins a process that foreign relations and domestic historians should have started long ago. Other scholarly essays in *The War That Never Ends*—such as Kyle Longley’s examination of congressional opposition to the war and Yvonne Baldwin and John Ernst’s chapter on the experiences of U.S. combat infantrymen—are also valuable contributions.

The book’s thematic overviews, written by Walter LaFeber, Luu Doan Huynh, and George Herring himself, are the book’s most interesting chapters. LaFeber and Luu follow a well-worn chronological trail from the 1940s to the 1970s—established in no small part by the trajectory of Herring’s *America’s Longest War*—of the war’s roots, escalation, stalemate, and end. Both essays manage to bring fresh perspectives to this familiar story. LaFeber weaves U.S. policymaking together with international factors, especially Soviet and Chinese decisions, and blends the usual geopolitical and strategic influences with economic and domestic political considerations. Luu presents the war not only through the eyes of a Vietnamese Communist but—perhaps more important—from the viewpoint of a former Vietnamese Communist official who participated in the war effort against the United States. In an insightful essay, Herring looks instead at the historical and political legacies of the war, what they reveal about the American character, and how they have affected U.S. attitudes toward politics, the military, and foreign policy.
The essays in *The War That Never Ends* prove just how shallow that old saw about the war—“is there really any need for another book on Vietnam?”—really is. The war that never ends has spawned a historiography that never ends—and long may it continue.


Reviewed by Kendrick Oliver, University of Southampton (UK)

A reader looking to *After the Massacre* mainly for a detailed historical account of how the survivors of My Lai have gathered the traces of their shattered community in the nearly 40 years since the killings, have sought to make sense of what befell them, and have negotiated the problem of commemoration might finish this book feeling somewhat disappointed. This is not a story yet told in the West, except in fragments; nor is it a story that Heonik Kwon has really attempted to tell. The book offers revelations, certainly. We learn that the survivors were reluctant to participate in the official state commemorations of the massacre that attracted most notice abroad; that the remains of many of the victims were moved in the 1990s from mass burial sites to ancestral graves, as economic liberalization restored control over land to private individuals and families; that the ghosts of the victims continued to be seen and heard, initially around the killing sites and then, after reburial, in family homes; and that the spirits of other victims of the war in villages close to My Lai were held by their relatives to be jealous of the commemorative attention directed to those killed in the massacre. In general, though, Kwon's descriptions of memory and mourning in My Lai seem to function primarily as corroborative evidence for the broader salience of insights generated by his more substantial study of the aftermath of the massacre committed by Korean Marines in Ha My, near Da Nang, in 1968. The inclusion of My Lai within the project may reflect the imperatives of publication, as it was always likely to enlarge the audience for the book. That My Lai is incidental to Kwon's overall analysis, however, may also reflect the changing interests of the authorities in Quang Ngai Province, where My Lai is located, who rejected Kwon's requests to make additional research visits to the area because of their desire in the era of normalization “to move beyond past tragedies in foreign relations” (p. 144).

Nevertheless, Kwon has still constructed a wonderful book, capturing the rich, complex, and dynamic patterns of memory in Vietnamese communities affected by the experience of mass civilian death. He brings an anthropologist’s subtlety and discretion to the study of the rituals of Vietnamese ancestor worship and the felt presences of ghosts and spirits in the lives of those left behind. Presences, not just absence and loss, were the legacies of the massacres for the survivors and their families: the desolating knowledge of close relations buried without appropriate ritual in a mass grave had an existential concomitant in the haunting of local streets and paddies by their
unsettled ghosts. In contrast to the priorities of the Vietnamese state, at least up to normalization—which were to valorize the sacrifice of soldiers over that of civilians or, in the exceptional case of My Lai, to exploit the memory of civilian massacre as a resource for internal and external propaganda—the deepest desire of survivors was to rebury the massacre victims as best as possible in ancestral graves and, by so doing, bring their wandering spirits back inside the family home. The end of the Cold War, and the subsequent process of economic liberalization, finally afforded them the opportunity to fulfill this desire.

Much of the originality of Kwon’s study lies in the attention it pays to the impact of the Cold War, specifically the polarizing patterns of its violence, on communal traditions of worship and spiritual belief in a post-colonial setting. Now those polarizations have decayed, and the disturbances they produced in the ghost-worlds of the Vietnamese have finally been contained. Probably we should be glad. As Kwon argues, the return of massacre victims to the realm of home and kinship, “free from traditional ideologies and political control,” is consistent with “the universal ethic that all human beings have the right to be remembered” (p. 182). Yet one might also wonder what this privatization of grief and ritual leaves in the way of a challenge to the memories of war held by the countries from which the perpetrators of massacre came—to the perceptions of Americans who visit the memorial in My Lai and the occasional Korean who may travel to Ha My. These massacres offer lessons that endure beyond the life of the Cold War and extend beyond the imperative of individual communities to settle their ghosts.


Review by Mark Moyar, Orbis Operations

Herbert Schandler’s book The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977) ranks as one of the best early histories of the Vietnam War. Written at a time when the wounds to America’s psyche were still raw, the book showed greater dispassion than most histories, and it presented a range of valuable insights. In his latest book, America in Vietnam: The War That Couldn’t Be Won, Schandler promises to enhance our understanding of the Vietnam War by incorporating the thinking and decision-making of North Vietnam’s leaders during the war. Expectations should therefore be high.

Unfortunately, the new book fails to deliver either important revelations from the other side or new insights about the war’s character. The Vietnamese Communist sources that Schandler touts consist almost entirely of interviews he conducted in 1998 and 1999 with former senior North Vietnamese officials as a member of a delegation to Hanoi organized by Robert McNamara. Schandler accepts the comments of these officials at face value, making no effort to compare their statements against
known facts. Such faith in interviewees is always dangerous but is especially perilous when dealing with the leaders of a one-party state with a long record of twisting history to serve their own interests or those of the state.

The book’s other sources are also thin, comprising very few primary sources beyond the Pentagon Papers. The secondary sources consulted do not include many recent U.S. works that would have corrected some of the book’s defects. Nor do they include the voluminous histories published by the Vietnamese Communists, many of which demonstrate greater objectivity than Schandler’s interview subjects and directly contradict what those interviewees told him.

Owing to the overreliance on North Vietnamese interviewees and the underreliance on better sources of information, the book’s interpretations differ little from the standard fare provided by countless U.S. historians and journalists opposed to American involvement in the war. Schandler begins with Ho Chi Minh’s political aspirations, claiming that Ho was primarily a nationalist rather than a Communist. As evidence, Schandler asserts that Ho Chi Minh himself said as much, but he provides no citations to this effect. He also quotes some interviewees who said the same about Ho and maintained that North Vietnam was not part of a conspiracy with China or the Soviet Union to spread Communism. Because Ho was mainly a nationalist, Schandler argues, the principal U.S. rationale for intervention in Vietnam—saving the Asian “dominoes” from an international Communist menace—was entirely wrong.

This interpretation does not stand up to what we now know about Ho Chi Minh’s words and deeds. Ho rarely claimed to be more of a nationalist than a Communist, and then only to deceive and propitiate gullible Westerners. In a great many other instances, both public and private, he professed to putting Communist internationalism ahead of national interests, and he closely collaborated with his Communist allies, especially China, in spreading Communism not only to South Vietnam but to other countries in Southeast Asia.

The interpretation of Ho as a nationalist not aligned with the Communist great powers leads Schandler to conclude that “Hanoi’s strategy of achieving its twin objectives—replacing Diem with a neutral government able to reunify the nation and avoiding an American war—was in many respects the mirror image of Washington’s strategy.” According to Schandler, the United States should have reached agreement with the North Vietnamese to form a neutral coalition government in the South, modeled on the neutralization of Laos in 1962. Yet it was the Laotian model that proved the bankruptcy of this idea. The North Vietnamese violated the neutralization agreement from the beginning, keeping large numbers of troops in Laos, and the Laotian Communists refused to join the Laotian national army and instead collaborated with the North Vietnamese in furtherance of the international revolution in Southeast Asia.

Schandler’s treatment of the National Liberation Front is similarly erroneous. Echoing the NLF’s own propaganda, Schandler claims that the “Southern resistance” began as a conglomeration of Communist and non-Communist opposition that sprung from the grassroots, in reaction to the oppressiveness of the Diem government,
and was not subservient to Hanoi. North Vietnam, he says, eventually came to the assistance of the oppositionists because it was “radicalized by its southern allies.” Although the portrayal of the resistance as a spontaneous uprising enjoyed popularity among scholars during the war, it has long since fallen out of fashion even among those sympathetic to Hanoi. Captured documents and Communist histories have proven beyond a doubt that the Communist Party of North Vietnam organized and ran the resistance in the South from 1954 onward.

Schandler, like many before him, attributes America’s travails in Vietnam to the failure of U.S. policymakers to appreciate the strength of Vietnamese nationalism. In Schandler’s view, “The main feature of Vietnamese history is its unity and continuity.” Yet a sober analysis of Vietnamese history shows the very opposite to be the case. During the nearly three millennia of Vietnamese history prior to the Vietnam War, Vietnam was united for a mere 58 years, from 1802 to 1859. During that period, as well as during most others, the Vietnamese spent an inordinate amount of time fighting each other, far more time than they spent fighting foreigners. The Vietnam War was but the latest internecine struggle. As for the contention that the United States grossly underestimated North Vietnamese resolve, the release of presidential recordings and other documents over the past fifteen years has conclusively shown that U.S. policymakers understood that they faced an extraordinarily determined adversary that was likely to persevere for many years.

Schandler embraces the conventional depiction of Ngo Dinh Diem as an oppressive, ineffectual leader who stood no chance of competing with Ho Chi Minh for allegiance. Citing North Vietnamese officials and U.S. journalists, Schandler claims that Diem’s strategic hamlet program and the rest of his counterinsurgency effort did nothing to impede the rise of the Viet Cong insurgency. Absent from this analysis is the recent scholarship from a variety of historians calling into question much or most of the caricature of Diem as a mindless, reactionary tyrant. Also missing from this section are the numerous Communist sources, including the widely available translation of the official North Vietnamese Army history Victory in Vietnam (the only North Vietnamese history that appears in the book’s bibliography), that have acknowledged that the Diem government inflicted serious damage on the insurgency from early 1962 until Diem’s assassination in November 1963.

Of the claims made by Schandler’s interview subjects, few are new to the debate. The most noteworthy of the new claims is the assertion that “Flaming Dart”—the U.S. aerial retaliation for the Pleiku attack in February 1965—brought North Vietnamese forces into the war. Schandler accepts as fact the words of senior Communist leaders that prior to Flaming Dart the North Vietnamese had no military units in South Vietnam and were in general little involved in the war. These leaders told Schandler that the Flaming Dart air strikes caused the North Vietnamese to send southward the first units of North Vietnamese regulars and that these units did not join the fighting until the Ia Drang Valley battles of November 1965. This version of events would be a major revelation if it were true, but it is not. A wealth of Communist and U.S. accounts attest that Hanoi had infiltrated tens of thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers into South Vietnam prior to February 1965 to serve in ostensibly
“Viet Cong” units and that an entire North Vietnamese Army division departed North Vietnam for the South in November 1964 to spearhead a decisive military offensive. Tens of thousands of North Vietnamese officers and soldiers took part in the large battles in the first half of 1965 that prompted the introduction of U.S. ground forces.

Schandler contends that pacification remained ineffective throughout the war, in disregard of many detailed studies showing that pacification experienced dramatic progress after the Tet Offensive of 1968. In the final section of the book, Schandler remarks: “The inevitable failure of American policy in Vietnam was assured by Congress, which in June 1974 voted to block funds for any U.S. military activities in Indochina.” That statement would be correct if the word “inevitable” were removed. The defeat of Hanoi’s 1972 Easter Offensive had shown that South Vietnam could defend itself without U.S. ground troops, provided that it continued to receive large amounts of U.S. aid and air power. The slashing of aid and elimination of U.S. air power made the defeat of South Vietnam certain. Although the Communist leaders interviewed by Schandler would like us to believe that their victory was preordained, these claims are, like so many other claims of inevitability, inconsistent with facts and reason.


Reviewed by David F. Winkler, Naval Historical Foundation

Covering a period at the end of the 1980s, Harold Lee Wise’s fine narrative of U.S. military operations in the Persian Gulf is much more relevant to the current standoff with Iran than to the Cold War with the Soviet Union. That said, because Middle East oil fueled U.S. combat efforts in Korea and Vietnam and because much of the Western world became dependent on Arab and Iranian oil, the area by the 1970s rose sharply in importance for U.S. war planners who worried about a Soviet thrust south to seize the oil fields. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, less than a year after the fall of the Shah in Iran, exposed Western military vulnerability in the region.

The West’s vulnerability stemmed from the British decision in 1967 to withdraw all British forces stationed east of Suez by the end of 1972. In light of U.S. military commitments to Europe and Asia, the Nixon administration chose not to increase the token U.S. naval presence in the Middle East and instead to sell billions in arms to Saudi Arabia and Iran. This so-called twin-pillars approach complemented the Nixon Doctrine, which sought to induce U.S. allies to bear more of the burden for their own defense. The arms buildup in the region did not deter the Soviet Union, which built up its own naval presence in the Indian Ocean, establishing bases at Aden and in Somalia.
Wise provides little historical context for the infighting within the U.S. military about the prudence of establishing what became known as U.S. Central Command. Once established, the new command had to depend on the largesse of other unified commanders for forces, as well as contend with the issue of service parochialism; for example, senior naval officers who did not believe an ashore general could command afloat units. Though Wise made extensive use of interviews when gathering information for Inside the Danger Zone, he failed to sit down with former Pacific Fleet Commander Admiral James “Ace” Lyons or former U.S. Central Command Marine General George Crist to gain the background on the creation of a command organization that remained dysfunctional until the Navy’s Middle East Force and the Joint Task Force Middle East were placed under the command of Vice Admiral Anthony Less.

Bungled U.S. initiatives in the region also led to what became a major U.S. naval commitment. The leaked news that the Reagan administration had dealt with Iran to win the release of hostages undermined stated U.S. positions within the Arab world and damaged Washington’s credibility. Wise documents the impact of the Iran-contra scandal in the Middle East and the opportunity to save face by offering to reflag Kuwaiti tankers under a U.S. imprimatur and safely escort them. An additional potential flashpoint was the Soviet offer to move Kuwaiti oil in Soviet tankers.

Having established the short-term context that led to what became known as Operation Earnest Will, Wise ably provides a chronology of such events as the SS Bridgeton hitting a mine, the capture of the Iran Ajr minelayer, Operation Nimble Archer, the USS Samuel B. Roberts mining, Operation Praying Mantis, and the tragic shooting down of an Iranian Airbus airliner. In doing so he provides a synthesis of previous writings on these events, including Michael A. Palmer’s Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America’s Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf: 1833–1992, Randy Edwards and Jeffrey Levinson’s Missile Inbound: The Attack on the Stark in the Persian Gulf, and David C. Crist’s 1998 dissertation, “Operation Earnest Will, The United States in the Persian Gulf, 1986–1989.” Crist, the son of the aforementioned CENTCOM commander and a historian with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is revising his excellent dissertation for publication. Wise’s work complements Brad Peniston’s No Higher Honor: Saving the USS Samuel B. Roberts in the Persian Gulf and this reviewer’s Amirs, Admirals, and Desert Sailors: Bahrain, the U.S. Navy, and the Arabian Gulf, which were both released by the Naval Institute Press at the same time as Wise’s publication.

Wise’s synthesis is enhanced through the information gained from some 150 interviews with individuals ranging from those who served in the Gulf to decision-makers in Washington, DC. Wise was able to contact Rear Admiral Harold Bernsen, who served as Less’s predecessor as Commander Middle East Force and was the on-scene commander during the Stark attack and the initial phases of the Earnest Will escorting operations. Bernsen, an innovative commander, addressed emerging situations with jury-rigged solutions such as hiring civilian tugboats to serve as minesweepers. As Wise documents, many of Bernsen’s actions were second-guessed in Washington, but he had the support of Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., who used operations in the Middle East as a means to exert new powers that had been authorized to him under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.
For the U.S. Navy these operations were significant. Earnest Will exposed the Navy’s lack of anti-mine capabilities, which would again manifest itself during Operation Desert Storm. Otherwise, the book shows that the U.S. Navy performed rather well when operating in a harsh environment far from home, especially during Operation Praying Mantis, the largest at-sea combat action since the end of World War II, in which the Iranian navy lost some of its most capable ships to U.S. warships and aircraft. Significantly, the U.S. Navy improved its ability to operate in these dangerous waters. With the subsequent actions against Iraq and continuing confrontation with Iran, Wise’s book is timely.


Reviewed by Martijn Lak, Erasmus University Rotterdam

When Israel declared its independence on 14 May 1948 and five Arab countries invaded the newly formed Jewish state the next day, the U.S. response was ambivalent. President Harry S. Truman had refused to promise recognition of Israel before the state was actually established. Afterward, Truman decided to extend de facto recognition to Israel, but he delayed de jure recognition and did not go along with territorial gains made by the Israelis in the 1948–1949 War of Independence. His recognition of the nascent Jewish state enraged the Arabs. In short, Truman’s policy toward Palestine satisfied neither side. As Peter L. Hahn writes in his masterful *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961*, this was characteristic of U.S. policy. Truman and his advisers pursued an Arab-Israeli peace but failed to find terms acceptable to the belligerent powers. In Hahn’s words, “American leaders repeatedly experienced the helplessness and misfortune of being caught between Israel and its Arab neighbors” (p. 280).

After the Second World War, the United States became increasingly involved in the Middle East. Before 1945, however, U.S. policymakers had shown little interest in the region, in particular toward Palestine. This changed during the war years, when U.S. officials decided, on grounds of national security, to endorse the anti-Zionist policy of Great Britain, which had exercised a mandate in the Middle East since the end of the First World War. Hahn is right, however, when he writes that U.S. presidents occasionally endorsed Zionism to serve their domestic political interests “but never seriously challenged Britain’s policy, especially after the start of World War Two” (p. 15).

The U.S. wartime president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had taken the same stance that Truman later did. Nothing was to undermine the Anglo-American alliance or the prospect of victory over the Axis powers. To protect Allied wartime interests in the Arab states, “U.S. leaders professed non-Zionism to Arab leaders” (p. 16). Saudi Ara-
bia, with its enormous oil reserves, was lavishly supplied with military and economic aid. Given the political and strategic importance of Saudi Arabia to the Allied war effort, Roosevelt did not directly rebut the harshly anti-Zionist views of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, an Arabian desert warlord who had established the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. On the other hand, Roosevelt hinted in 1944 that he had no objections to accelerated Jewish immigration to Palestine, and he refused, against the strong demands of the Arabs, to rule out a prospective Jewish state there. Hahn points out that “such concessions planted the seeds for trouble in the U.S. relationships with Britain and the Arab powers” (p. 19). Roosevelt left an ambiguous legacy on Palestine, a fact that would characterize U.S. policy toward the Middle East for the next sixteen years.

When Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945, Truman inherited “a messy situation” (p. 20) in Palestine. Focusing on how to bring a swift conclusion to the war, Truman had little time to study or understand the complexities of the Middle East. Moreover, his advisers differed profoundly in their perceptions of the region. Officials at the State Department and the Pentagon took an Anti-Zionist posture, whereas Truman, the White House staff, and U.S. public opinion were largely pro-Zionist. This difference prevented Truman and the United States from stipulating a clear policy at a time when Western strategists were assigning increasing importance to the region, especially to its vast petroleum resources, which U.S. and British officials considered vital for the economic reconstruction of Western Europe and wanted to keep out of Soviet control. U.S. leaders “defined vital interests in the region” (p. 277) and took action to protect those interests in the light of the waning of British power in the region and growing Soviet power. The strategic and economic importance of the region also prompted U.S. officials to try to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, which threatened Middle Eastern stability.

However, U.S. policy continued to be ambivalent. “Truman had to make key policy decisions about Palestine while torn by the conflicting advice of his personal and professional advisers” (p. 26). The former urged a pro-Zionist attitude, whereas State Department and Pentagon officials warned that support of Zionism would undermine vital U.S. interests in the Arab world—including the interests of U.S. investors who in 1947 owned 23.75 percent of Iraq’s oil industry. In the end, Truman’s policy satisfied neither the Israelis nor the Arabs.

The same can be said of Truman’s successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Like Truman, Eisenhower saw the Middle East as vital to U.S. security and “resolved to defend the region against Soviet political and military expansion. In so doing, the new president significantly deepened the long-term U.S. commitment to Middle East security” (p. 147). However, Eisenhower wanted to practice impartiality in the region. In this and in preventing the Soviet Union from gaining more influence, he was not particularly successful. Egypt and Syria became Soviet clients, and the Arabs continued to perceive the United States as too pro-Israel. Moreover, both Truman and Eisenhower failed to reach an Arab-Israeli peace. The primary responsibility for the failure of peace efforts lies with the Arabs and Israelis themselves, but Hahn rightly points out in his meticulously researched book that the United States regularly sacrificed peace-
making objectives when those objectives conflicted with broader aims in the Cold War: “The United States preferred to tolerate the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite its destabilizing tendencies, rather than to solve it at a cost to other interests” (p. 276).


Reviewed by Steven Usdin, Senior Editor, BioCentury

During the reign of Iosif Stalin, millions of Soviet citizens and tens of thousands of foreigners were sucked into the gruesome complex of prison camps operated by the Main Camp Administration, better known by its Russian acronym, Gulag. *The Lost Spy* is the story of one of those foreigners, an American named Cy Oggins, and of Andrew Meier’s almost obsessive effort to piece together his story.

Meier’s quest started in 2000, when he traveled hundreds of miles north of the Arctic Circle to Norilsk, a nickel-mining city built by prisoners from the Norillag camp, which was notorious for its harsh conditions. When Meier, a journalist, interviewed aging Norillag survivors who had settled in Norilsk, he asked them whether any Americans had been in the camp. “A small birdlike woman” remembered an American. In the camp, she recalled, they called him “the American professor.”

Armed with this clue, Meier went to Paris to meet Jacques Rossi, then 91 years old, a Norillag survivor who had written an encyclopedia of camp life. It turned out that Rossi had known the American, and had even once traveled to New York on an unsuccessful search for the man or his relatives. Rossi said that the man’s name was Cyrus Oggins, and that he had once been a history professor at Columbia University. Rossi, who had been a low-level Soviet intelligence operative in the 1920s and 1930s, was sure that Oggins had also been a spy, though they had never discussed the matter.

Some of the details of Rossi’s story turned out to be wrong, but it was accurate enough to help Meier make the breakthrough that fueled his six-year investigation of the life and death of Cy (for Isaiah, not Cyrus) Oggins. Through Internet searches, inspired guesswork, and serendipity, Meier managed to track down Robin Oggins, the only child of Cy and Nerma Oggins.

Working closely with Robin, a retired history professor who lives in upstate New York, Meier tried to piece together the sequence of events that took a bookish young man from the halls of Columbia University to the desolation of a Soviet prison camp. Meier’s pursuit of the story took him across Russia, and to Germany, France, and England. Along the way he mined archives, pried information from the former Soviet State Security organs, and consulted a veritable who’s who of scholars of Cold War espionage.

Although Meier’s work yielded a great deal of fascinating detail about early American Communism and the Soviet Union’s clandestine services, he did not turn up much solid information about Oggins. Reading *The Lost Spy*, we learn that Oggins
became a fervent Communist some time before he graduated from Columbia in 1920. But we do not learn why. His environment was unlikely to have been the cause; Cy's older brother was a conservative Republican businessman.

Oggins started work on a Ph.D. dissertation but abandoned it and went underground, giving up the life of a scholar to work fulltime as an espionage operative. *The Lost Spy* tracks his travels on behalf of Iosif Stalin's secret service to Germany, France, and China. However, Meier did not find a scrap of information indicating what Oggins actually did for the Soviet Union.

If he had stuck to the hard facts, Meier would have had enough material to write a fascinating magazine article or a tremendous novel. He chose instead to expand his research into a biography largely by describing events as they probably, might have, or could have occurred.

The guessing starts with the beginning of Cy Oggins's espionage career and continues throughout the book. “By all appearances,” Meier writes, when Oggins took his first trip abroad in 1926, "he went to Europe as a courier, surreptitiously bearing money, passports, or documents."

Two years later, when Oggins and his wife Nerma moved to Berlin, a raucous Communist demonstration took place. “No document records that Cy and Nerma stood among the fighters, but it is hard to imagine them missing the chance,” according to Meier. A few pages later, *The Lost Spy* describes “one of the Soviets’ most ambitious—and harebrained—clandestine schemes of the interwar years,” a failed attempt to put into circulation at least $500,000 in counterfeit $100 bills. It is “unlikely, though possible” that the operation was based in a Berlin villa in which the Oggins couple lived, and although the “available evidence is scant . . . it is difficult to imagine how Cy could not have encountered” the Soviet intelligence officers who were responsible for the scheme.

*The Lost Spy* includes two sets of photographs that are as hard and real as the text is squishy and speculative. Both are mug shots of Oggins, one set in profile and the other looking straight into the camera. The first was taken in the dungeon of the Lubyanka in Moscow on 20 February 1939, the night Oggins was dragged from his room on the top floor of the Hotel Moskva. The photograph shows that he had been beaten—his face is bruised—but he is wearing a clean shirt and suit jacket and looks healthy, unafraid, perhaps angry. Why Oggins was arrested is unclear, but in those days of terror many were thrown into the camps for no discernable reason.

In the second set of photographs, taken in 1947, also in Moscow, Oggins seems to have aged 20 or 30 years. Dressed in the patched rags of a zek, or Soviet gulag inmate, he stares listlessly, and his shoulders are stooped and neck bent. These photos were taken after Oggins had survived an eight-year sentence in Norillag and other prisons and was scheduled for release.

The story of Cy Oggins and the horrors he witnessed in the camps would probably be common knowledge if he had been freed in 1947 and allowed to leave the USSR. The Soviet Union was determined to prevent the world from making the inevitable comparisons to Nazi concentration camps, however. One day in the summer of 1947, not long after Oggins had sat for the second set of mug shots, guards took him...
to a medical facility near the Lubyanka dungeon where, they said, he would be given a final medical examination prior to release. Instead, a Soviet State Security colonel injected a lethal dose of curare and watched as Oggins died a slow, excruciating death.

*The Lost Spy* sheds little light on Soviet espionage, but it is a powerful depiction of the price Oggins, like millions of other idealists, paid for their belief in the Soviet utopia.


Reviewed by Katherine Sibley, Saint Joseph's University

In November 2007 the then-president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, honored the late George Koval—a hitherto unknown South Dakota native—for his role as a spy working for Soviet military intelligence during World War II at Oak Ridge, among other sites. Koval had been publicly identified as a Soviet spy in the early 1980s in the memoirs of Lev Kopelev and later in the unexpurgated Russian edition of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *In the First Circle,* but the revelation drew almost no notice for some 35 years until Putin suddenly conferred a posthumous medal on Koval. Even experts about Soviet espionage were caught unawares by Putin’s comments, which *The New York Times* mistakenly reported as the first time that Koval’s identity had been publicly disclosed.

Putin’s commemoration of Koval underlines how Soviet espionage—despite the collapse of the USSR—is still an actively unfolding story as well as a source of pride for the current Russian regime. Koval was never prosecuted in the United States. He returned safely to Russia at the end of the war. But that, as John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr suggest, is scarcely the point. As they argue, only a score or more of the hundreds of Soviet spies who were identified in the 1940s and 1950s were ever prosecuted. Those who faced the courts, including the Rosenbergs, Alger Hiss, and Elizabeth Bentley, participated in trials of intense political interest, and the authors provide full treatment of those judicial dramas. But such trials were rarely effective as an instrument of justice—and law enforcement officials often avoided resorting to them because of their inherent risks: the hazards of exposure of secret information, of revelations of government “sources and methods,” and of just plain embarrassment. As the authors argue, the U.S. legal system is “flawed” when it comes to the prosecution of espionage; its restraints are “inappropriate” for such sensitive matters (p. 201). Beyond that, as they point out, espionage is extraordinarily hard to find, and to prove in a court of law—it is designed, after all, to leave no trace behind.

Haynes and Klehr have already filled a library bookshelf with works on the covert operations of the Soviet Union and American Communism, including such earlier overviews of the Soviet archives as *The Secret World of American Communism* (with Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov; 1995), as well as their stereograph on the Soviet wartime ca-
bles, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (1999). This volume, however, is their first to offer a synthetic overview of Soviet espionage cases in the Cold War. *Early Cold War Spies* is thus an excellent resource for undergraduates, as well as many others less familiar with the intricacies of these cases. Most gratifying for seasoned veterans, the work also includes some surprises. The cases under examination include not only the usual suspects but many less familiar characters, including Steve Nelson, Ted Hall, William Weisband, the Soble and Soblen brothers, and the treacherous Mark Zborowski. The book’s treatment of controversial figures like J. Robert Oppenheimer and complex cases like *Amerasia*, moreover, is balanced and masterfully. But the book offers more than a helpful compilation of Cold War spy cases. Its sharp and insightful treatment of the U.S. legal system provides much to chew on.

By scrutinizing the cases through the lens of law, the authors take a tack different from that of many previous works on American political culture during the Cold War. Often, books on this topic have placed most of their emphasis on the evils of a certain Wisconsin senator (e.g., Norman Fried’s 1990 book, *Nightmare in Red*, and Ellen Schrecker’s 1998 book, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*), while downplaying espionage. In such works, the focus has been largely on the excesses of government persecution of non-spies. By contrast, other studies have not only underlined Soviet espionage but have vigorously flayed its practitioners; for example, Jerrold Schecter and Leona Schecter, *Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed History* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s Inc., 2002). Neither approach to the subject has fully addressed the U.S. government’s legal response, or displayed much subtlety.

Athan Theoharis, in *Chasing Spies: How The FBI Failed in Counterintelligence but Promoted the Politics of McCarthyism in the Cold War Years* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002) does focus on the U.S. investigative process but finds it to be a botched job that created panic while failing to catch most spies. Such an assessment, as Haynes and Klehr note, overlooks the importance of the alertness of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other counterintelligence agencies to Soviet spies in this era—and the way the FBI’s discovery of spies prevented additional espionage, trials or not. Even if many avoided legal prosecution and thus got off scot-free, Soviet espionage was hindered when tedious gumshoe work like the decoding of Venona or the risky accumulation of defectors’ confessions prevented spies from returning to jobs where they might do more damage.

When the government did put spies on trial in the early Cold War, the process was racked by problems, from partisanship and outright witness- and evidence-tampering on both sides of the political aisle to bumbling mistakes made by prosecutors, lawyers, and FBI agents. In the few instances in which the government was able to win, as in the Rosenberg, Remington, Perl, and Hiss cases, the victories reverberated down the decades precisely because of the controversial sentences, and other consequences, that resulted. In treating these cases, the authors are particularly deft. For instance, in the Rosenberg trial, as they acknowledge, the death sentence was extremely uncommon for such a crime, and its unusualness in this was only compounded by the fact that the FBI thought Ethel was not an important spy, if one at all.
Yet, as the authors suggest, the Rosenbergs could have done more to save themselves. Instead, apparently accepting both the ideological imperatives of their own consciences as well as the dictates of their Soviet masters—who refused to allow Theodore Hall to divulge that he was the far more serious Manhattan Project spy—they sadly took the road of martyrdom. The authors’ coverage of Alger Hiss is also multilayered, which is not surprising given their frequent engagement in the endless debates over his involvement in espionage. In particular, their discussion underlines the awe that psychologists in the early Cold War engendered for grandiose assertions on sexual behavior that seem strikingly bumptious (or worse) today.

As the authors show, the U.S. judicial system makes “catching spies,” in the classic practice of trials and sentences, inherently difficult. Because the information that Soviet spies tried to steal was secret, describing its importance in open court was problematic. Moreover, the methods by which the espionage was discovered (e.g., electronic surveillance or the Venona decrypts), remained unacknowledged throughout the Cold War or was inadmissible in court. Laws have changed since the 1950s, but, as the controversy over the National Security Agency’s recent warrantless eavesdropping shows, the issue is very much alive. This book will encourage students to think deeply about the tradeoffs in U.S. society between security and civil liberties, a vexing issue since the time of the Quasi-War and its alien and sedition acts more than 200 years ago.

The book contains almost no typos—a remarkable feat these days—and perhaps just a few unnecessary repetitions (Roy Cohn—of all people—is introduced several times). Overall Early Cold War Spies will prove a useful text for those seeking a greater understanding of the history of Soviet espionage, the challenges of the U.S. legal system, and the compromises we continue to make to live in a free society.


Reviewed by Leopoldo Nuti, Università Roma Tre

In recent years the foreign policy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger has seen a strong revival of interest, stimulated by the declassification of relevant sources that have allowed historians to probe old theses and advance new interpretations. The dramatic U.S. choices of the early 1970s can now gain the salience they deserve in the narrative of the evolution of the international system after the Second World War.

Duccio Basosi’s Il governo del dollaro is a most welcome addition to the outpouring of new works. Basosi, a scholar from the florid school of the University of Florence, moves at ease in the relatively unexplored field that lies at the intersection of the international history of monetary and economic matters, developing for the Nixon years the kind of approach that has been adopted by such scholars as Francis Gavin
and Hubert Zimmerman for the study of the 1960s. The outstanding quality of this book is demonstrated by the fact that in 2007 the author was awarded the Annual Prize of the Italian Society of Contemporary History (SISSCO) for the best first book by a young author.

Basosi’s goal is straightforward; namely, to analyze in their complex historical context the crucial decisions adopted by the Nixon administration in August 1971. Nixon’s “New Economic Policy” included the end of the dollar’s convertibility to gold but also a spate of other economic and monetary choices that rocked the boat of the international economy and destroyed the Bretton Woods system.

Nixon’s decisions, Basosi notes, fundamentally shaped the evolution of the international system. Yet, according to Basosi, they still suffer from a theoretical short-circuit caused by contradictory explanations. If Nixon was forced to act the way he did, how can he be held responsible for his choices? If his decisions were the symptom of an inevitable U.S. decline in the world economy, how does one explain that the United States eventually emerged from the crisis stronger than before and in a leadership position that was bound to become more and more unassailable?

Basosi has thoroughly analyzed a large number of sources at the U.S. National Archives, at the Federal Records Center, and at the Gerald R. Ford Library, where he has often had the privilege to be the first to open up for research the papers of such crucial figures in Nixon’s economic policy as David Kennedy, John Connally, George Shultz, Paul Volcker, and Arthur Burns. This effort has enabled him to develop a coherent interpretation that demonstrates how the 1971 decisions were the result of a long, complex, and meticulous foreign policy analysis that must be assessed and evaluated together with the other momentous decisions of the Nixon administration. Faced with a deteriorating economic situation that seriously hampered the flexibility of U.S. foreign policy, Nixon was aware from the early days of his administration of the need to revise the Bretton Woods system. But, according to Basosi, this urge went together with a number of other pressures from the U.S. economic establishment, which aimed to inject a new dose of liberalism into a capitalist system that was extracting the final benefits from the end of the long cycle of Keynesian expansion launched in the early postwar years. Although Nixon was inclined to heed calls for a new wave of unbridled capitalist growth, he was also aware of the need to reconcile these aspirations with the economic and political exigencies of the Western Europeans. The increasingly tense relationship with European allies gave rise to the decisions of August 1971. If no multilateral agreement could be achieved with the European allies for the badly needed reform of the Bretton Woods system, then the United States would not only act unilaterally but would do so in the most effective way for the restoration of U.S. economic primacy.

Basosi closely follows the evolution of this debate in the different government channels in which it took place, describes the pauses and accelerations of its development, and demonstrates its close connection to the parallel path of the Western Europeans for improving their own economic position vis-à-vis the United States. Eventually, the growing awareness that a concerted U.S.-European effort to reform Bretton Woods was nowhere in sight freed the hands of officials inside the Nixon administra-
tion who were urging the president to change the rules of the game of the international economy—and in a way that would turn out to be quite beneficial to the United States. In his conclusion, Basosi asks whether Nixon’s decisions should not be classed as the founding moment of the subsequent wave of economic globalization based on deregulated capitalism. Although Basosi prudently refrains from jumping to such a sweeping conclusion, he seems to find a causal connection between the decisions of August 1971 and the developments of the global economy that followed.

Aside from these highly speculative conclusions, however, what is remarkable about this lucid, concise, well-argued, and well-written book is the author’s sure-footedness in making such a complex argument, which he supports by moving through an amazing web of economic and monetary details without losing sight of his broader interpretive framework. The 1971 economic decisions come out of this narrative as a central step in the reorientation of U.S. foreign policy carried out by the Nixon administration—a shift that, according to Basosi, should be ranked with other paramount decisions, including the opening to China, as the foundations of a new cycle of U.S. foreign relations.


Reviewed by Balázs Szalontai, East China Normal University

This book tells the story of the Vietnamese equivalent of Richard Sorge, the famous German-Soviet spy in the 1930s and 1940s. Pham Xuan An, Hanoi’s most effective intelligence agent in the Vietnam War, emulated Sorge in obtaining classified information of the highest strategic and tactical importance under the cover of journalism. Both Sorge and An skilfully positioned themselves between their allied enemies—Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan on the one hand, and South Vietnam and the United States on the other. By having extensive personal contacts with both sides, they used their ties with one power not only to allay the other’s suspicions but also to adopt the role of the indispensable expert. Although Sorge ultimately paid with his life for entering the tiger’s den, An managed to escape detection until the end of the war and saw his dream fulfilled when the triumphant North Vietnamese tanks rolled into Saigon in April 1975.

The title of the book masterfully catches the paradox that enabled An to perform this extraordinary feat. If his intimate familiarity with the ways of his great opponent had not been propped up by a genuine fondness for the etiquette of U.S. journalism, he might have found it considerably more difficult to gain the trust of so many star reporters who became his friends and—unknowingly—also his informants. Having carefully interviewed not only An but also dozens of An’s wartime Vietnamese and American acquaintances—including his fellow agents and fellow journalists—
Thomas A. Bass draws a colorful, nuanced, and credible picture of An’s complex personality.

Bass, a correspondent and professor of journalism, also proves capable of putting An’s activities into a wider context by describing the Cold War–inspired liaisons between the U.S. media and the U.S. intelligence services. Quoting former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer Frank Snepp on how Robert Shaplen had been given “unbelievable access to . . . high-level intelligence” (p. 155), he explains why U.S. policymakers, having assisted the media to play such a crucial role in their global crusade, felt unable to disregard press criticism when one famous journalist after another raised his or her voice against the Vietnam War.

Although obviously attracted to his talkative interviewee, Bass does not overlook the occasional omissions and distortions in An’s self-portrait, pointing out that “An, while presenting himself as a strategic analyst, someone who merely observed the war from the sidelines, was actually a master tactician involved in many of the war’s major battles” (p. 4). Bass is less interested in challenging the historical narrative presented by An and his Communist superiors, in which the Communist party is depicted as the only genuine vehicle of patriotic, anti-colonial struggle. Bass tacitly accepts this narrative instead of investigating which social and cultural peculiarities of the Vietnamese scene facilitated the growth of a powerful Communist movement. After all, anti-colonialist nationalism was by no means absent in Cambodia, Burma, or Indonesia, but in the latter countries non-Communist parties and politicians played a far more important role than in Vietnam.

Unfortunately, Bass’s focus on An’s love-hate relationship with the United States underemphasizes a factor in his phenomenal success as a spy that was even more important than his ability to understand and enchant Americans: the utter failure of the South Vietnamese counterintelligence system. The book reveals that An obtained the bulk of his classified information from South Vietnamese rather than U.S. sources. Ready as the CIA officers were to give Shaplen strategic briefings (which then often found their way to An), they did not go so far as to provide him with tactical intelligence, let alone raw intelligence data on military interrogations—the kind of super-sensitive information that An could routinely acquire from his contacts in the various South Vietnamese military and security organs.

This cavalier disregard for secrecy appears even more striking if we take An’s less-than-spotless past into consideration. Apart from his own direct involvement in student riots, his father, brother, and friends had been repeatedly interrogated on security grounds. Yet he managed to escape the dragnet and even to get important positions, simply because his cousin happened to be a high-ranking intelligence officer. One wonders whether a person having a comparable political record would have had any chance of gaining access to classified information in North Vietnam, where personal or family ties could not so easily override security considerations.

Thus, the failure of the U.S. venture in Vietnam seems to have resulted not only from Washington’s lack of understanding of the country (as Bass suggests) but also from the inability of the South Vietnamese political system to become as dynamic and
efficient an alternative to the Communist North as the South Korean regime headed by Park Chung Hee (whose counterintelligence service successfully foiled Kim Il Sung’s efforts to dispatch spies and commandos to the South) was to Communist North Korea. Astute an analyst as ever, An himself makes a comparison with Korea, concluding that in the event of permanent partition the Republic of Vietnam would have ended up as “a minor star in the Western orbit” (p. 253) rather than evolving into another “tiger economy.” An also remarks that “Vietnamization” failed “not because it was a bad policy” but “because of mistakes made by the Vietnamese” (p. 256). Although his views may be debatable, no one can deny that few people knew the political and social realities of South Vietnam as intimately as “General Givral.”

This book is a must read for those seeking to understand why the Vietnam War ended as it did. A fine example of investigative journalism, it combines the meticulous collection of biographical data with a colorful psychological portrait of the person whom one of Bass’s editors called, not without reason, “the most dangerous man in Vietnam.”


*Reviewed by Laura A. Belmonte, Oklahoma State University*

In an age in which the failures of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are fodder for late-night comedians, Hugh Wilford’s nuanced book is a welcome reminder of the agency’s complexities and contradictions. Building on the work of fine scholars like Kenneth Osgood, Scott Lucas, Helen Laville, and Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Wilford has produced a marvelously researched and engagingly written account of the diverse array of private groups that the CIA enlisted in its battle against the global spread of Communism during the early Cold War. Frank Wisner, the agency’s first chief of political warfare, compared these “front organizations” to a “Mighty Wurlitzer” able to produce any propaganda tune he wished. Wilford demonstrates that the “fronts” were often much less potent and considerably more cacophonous than Wisner and other CIA leaders claimed.

Alarmed by the creation of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in the fall of 1947, the CIA searched for ways to combat Communist-controlled labor, cultural, and political groups. Combining newly created “private” organizations and publications and collaborations with existing entities, the agency built a sweeping network of émigrés, unionists, intellectuals, artists, writers, students, women, Catholics, African Americans, and journalists who promoted the American national interest, both wittingly and unwittingly. In 1967, after the leftist magazine *Ramparts* revealed ties between the CIA and the National Student Association, a storm of subsequent media coverage exposed covert CIA sponsorship of a stunning number of other U.S. citizen groups. The news triggered bitter denunciations and impassioned defenses of
the front network. Many groups collapsed under the impact of the disbelief and distrust unleashed by the revelations. Others severed their ties with the CIA and managed to survive.

The furor obscured the moral clarity present when the front network was established in the late 1940s. At that point, few of those involved in private organizations promoting democratic capitalism abroad questioned the ethics of accepting CIA funds and assistance. Bound by a common belief in the superiority of the American way of life, a wide array of individuals participated in the CIA’s global outreach efforts. Former Communists like novelist Arthur Koestler and labor organizer Jay Lovestone used their first-hand knowledge of Communist tactics to help the CIA craft its covert operations. Lovestone engineered early CIA infiltration of the international labor movement, and Koestler organized the 1950 rally of artists and intellectuals in West Berlin that spawned the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the best-known and most hotly disputed CIA collaboration. CIA officials soon discovered the difficulties inherent in harnessing the energies of such disparate individuals and groups. Although many of the so-called fronts eagerly accepted CIA money, they continued to pursue their own objectives.

Even organizations directly founded by the CIA proved challenging to manage. The agency could count on Americans’ penchants for “joining” and anti-Communism to facilitate the creation of viable groups, but many citizen leaders balked at the secrecy involved in the front network. Others wondered whether covert sponsorship of private groups detracted from the intelligence-gathering and analysis at the core of the CIA’s mission.

Undaunted by the notoriously slow pace and small scale of the CIA’s declassification of its historical records, Wilford has ingeniously interwoven agency materials, documents from various front organizations, and secondary scholarship to provide the most exhaustive account of the covert network ever written. Although others have examined key facets of front operations, such as those relating to the arts or women, Wilford is the first scholar to fit the pieces into a cohesive, convincing whole.

The book presupposes a great deal of knowledge about the history of the Cold War and the CIA, but it offers absorbing portraits of the well-known Americans who collaborated with the agency. The story of feminist icon Gloria Steinem’s work for the Independent Service for Information, a project established by the CIA to encourage anti-Communist U.S. students to attend a huge Communist rally in Vienna in 1959, is particularly good. So are Wilford’s discussions of James Burnham, Sidney Hook, Tom Dooley, Henry Kissinger, Richard Wright, and Joseph Alsop. Wilford provides fascinating tales about how participants, both witting and unwitting, reacted to the public exposure of the front network. Whereas Steinem strongly defended her work and declared the agency “liberal, nonviolent, and honorable,” others such as William Phillips, editor of the now defunct Partisan Review, went to their graves denying receipt of any CIA subsidies.

Wilford also does an admirable job tracing the global dimensions and evolving strategic goals of front operations. Readers follow the progression of the covert network from its initial phase as a means of aiding the rollback of Communism in East-
ern Europe to its efforts to bolster the non-Communist left in Western Europe to its role as a tool in fostering the modernization of impoverished countries. Throughout, Wilford concedes the difficulties of gauging the impact of the front operations, a problem all researchers of propaganda encounter.

Wilford’s command of a vast, complex evidentiary base illuminates a critical element of U.S. efforts to defeat Communism internationally. Scholars of the Cold War, U.S. politics, and intelligence will find much to admire in *The Mighty Wurlitzer*.


Reviewed by Gerald C. Lubenow, *University of California, Berkeley*

In this important, comprehensive, and carefully researched book, Kenneth Burt has unearthed the origins and mapped the historic evolution of Latino political power in California, tracing an unbroken arc of ascension that, Burt argues, began in the 1930s, much earlier than has been generally understood. But, in a struggle against discrimination and economic hardship that continues today, Latino electoral gains have not come swiftly or easily. Growing up in East Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s, Antonio Villaraigosa, the former speaker of the California Assembly and current mayor of Los Angeles, notes in the book’s foreword: “It often seemed Edward Roybal was the sole representative for millions of Spanish-speaking people.”

Today, more than a thousand Latinos hold public office in cities and counties across the state, Latino lawmakers dominate the state legislature, and three of the last five speakers of the Assembly have had a Spanish surname. Burt shows how this revolution was engendered by painstakingly constructed coalitions and tireless efforts to register, motivate, and mobilize voters. In doing so, he offers a revisionist view of the dominant narrative of the impact of the Cold War, which holds that anti-Communism unraveled the civil rights–trade union alliance and set back the Latino battle for full citizenship.

Grounding his narrative in the larger progressive social movement of the 1930s, Burt details Roybal’s precarious path to power as he built the Community Services Organization (CSO), which became the major Latino political base, and negotiated the internecine skirmishes between his liberal left supporters and Communists. Even as Roybal and the Latino community fought to end police brutality in incidents such as the Zoot Suit riots, the Communists often sought to provoke police violence to serve their own political agenda.

Militant but nonviolent, CSO managed to survive in the hostile Southern California environment thanks to the singular political skills of Roybal and other CSO leaders who built and nurtured a coalition that included progressive labor leaders, the Catholic Church, the Jewish community, and liberal left Anglos. Early on, they established ties with Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation. On a 1947 visit to Los An-
geles, Alinsky met Fred Ross, who had been organizing Mexican Americans in outlying rural communities, and hired him on the spot. Ross, a legendary organizer and one of the many heroes of this saga, used voter registration to identify Latino leaders and empower the community.

Among the many leaders nurtured by Ross and CSO were a young farmworker named César Chávez and a schoolteacher named Dolores Huerta, both of whom proved to be natural leaders and born organizers. When Chavez and Huerta left CSO to form the United Farm Workers (UFW), they took with them the CSO model of organizing workers in a context of community involvement and civic participation. By 1980, the UFW would become part of the Sacramento political establishment, second only to the California Medical Association in donations to legislative candidates and ballot measures.

As Latino voters gained strength and influence in the mid-1950s, they attracted national attention, and their once solid Democratic front began to fracture. Eisenhower appealed to Latino veterans who had gained entry to the middle class through service in World War II, and in 1956, for the first time, a significant number of Latinos cast their votes for a Republican.

Reverting to type in 1958, Latino voters helped break the Republican stranglehold in California, electing Pat Brown and defeating a right-to-work initiative. Roybal exulted: “The sleeping giant is beginning to awaken.” All it needed was a national symbol to rally around. In 1960, John Kennedy brought the giant to its feet, and Latinos emerged as a national political force. Viva Kennedy, organized and run nationally by Latinos, delivered 85 percent of the Latino vote for Kennedy. Under Pat Brown and a Democratic legislature, California provided old age assistance to non-citizens, curtailed police abuse, and made it easier for Latinos to register and vote. Roybal was elected to Congress with Kennedy’s support, and Latinos were rewarded with key state and federal appointments.

But the decade from 1958 to 1968 marked the high point of Latino support for Democrats. Increased influence and economic prosperity among Latinos proved a double-edged sword. Upwardly mobile, affluent Latinos either switched parties or cast votes as Ronald Reagan Democrats, fueling his landslide win. With Reagan in Sacramento and Richard Nixon in the White House, the Republicans mounted a major effort to woo Latinos with key appointments and carefully targeted funding. By 1990, nearly half the Latinos in California were voting Republican.

Meanwhile, with a huge new influx of Latino immigrants, community organizations were failing to promote citizenship and voter registration, and the Latino vote plummeted. A 1993 poll showed that illegal immigration was a “very serious” issue to three of every four voters and even Latino leaders in the legislature were calling for tough new countermeasures. Despite the anxiety over immigration, Democrats entered the 1994 election cycle with high hopes. Eighteen points behind in the polls, Republican Governor Pete Wilson decided to scapegoat immigrants for the state’s economic malaise. He mounted a massive negative advertising campaign that succeeded in turning the election around while driving Latino voters back to the Democrats.

In recent years, with numbers mounting and community organizations thriving,
the solidly Democratic Latino vote is a major force in California. But, thanks to Burt, one can see the origins of practices that continue to this day in the strategies developed by the founding fathers and mothers of Latino politics in California. The emphasis on coalition politics adopted to overcome the weakness of Latino politicians continues today as a sign of their strength.

Abandoning efforts to create more majority-minority legislative district in recent years, Latino candidates are winning elections by relying on their ability to attract votes in multicultural districts in which Latino voters are outnumbered. In winning his mayoral race, Villaraigosa drew support from union members, African Americans, and, critically, the Jewish community. Many of these ties, Burt notes, were forged in the 1940s.


*Reviewed by Vojtech Mastny, Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security*

The more the Cold War recedes into history, the greater the challenge of trying to relate its outcome to what has happened since. Successive attempts at synthesizing the history of the Cold War have reflected changing perspectives and expectations—from the unlikely “end of history” to the similarly improbable, if worrisome, notion that history repeats. “The Cold War has been disposed of, but it is not difficult to imagine it being resuscitated in another variation” (p. 3), Federico Romero suggests in alluding to the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008 and the onset of the world’s economic crisis.

These comments, apparently inserted just as the manuscript was about to go to press, are not typical of what is a level-headed and balanced account of the 40-year confrontation. In tune with most of the recent scholarship, Romero sees the Cold War as neither foreseen nor inevitable. Although determined by ideological and cultural factors, the Cold War was neither an “absolute ideological conflict” nor a “normal” struggle for power but much of both (p. 6). It was a “global conflict, animated by multiple local and trans-national dynamisms” (p. 13).

Romero does not set much store by the Cold War’s “secret and mysterious dimensions,” such as the activities of intelligence agencies, which, although often exciting to read about, rarely made a difference in the larger picture (p. 14). He rightly regards the public discourse as more revealing of the true dimensions of the conflict. Nor does he spend much time on the arcane details of the superpowers’ nuclear policies that so preoccupied contemporaries. He judges nuclear deterrence redundant rather than indispensable for keeping the war cold.

“Bipolar disorder” (p. 173) is the felicitous metaphor Romero applies to the state of affairs brought about by the competition between the two superpowers in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This competition fueled “tension between strategic bipolarity
and nascent economic, political, and cultural multipolarity” (p. 176). Accentuating security in its nonmilitary dimensions, the tension presaged the international order that would eventually emerge from the Cold War, although hardly anybody saw it that way at the time. But describing that order as a “security community” based on the “indisputable pre-eminence of the United States” (p. 338) may be similarly off the mark.

Romero, Italy’s foremost historian of U.S. foreign policy and European-American relations, is resistant to both left-wing and right-wing preconceptions. He knows better than to bash the United States for allegedly making the Cold War its “imperial project” (p. 345) or to indulge in “triumphalism” about America’s defeat of its Soviet adversary. At the same time, he leaves no doubt about the superiority of the West’s dynamic capitalist system over static, Soviet-style socialism. Rather than see this as a victory of particular Western liberal values, however, Romero considers the outcome a victory of universal human values, most striking in rendering major wars obsolescent and setting an irreversible trend toward multilateralism.

Pointedly subtitled “The Last Struggle for Europe,” the book presents a more balanced picture than America-centric U.S. historians prefer to paint. Romero rightly focuses on Europe as the region of the world in which the Cold War both started and ended and in which an all-out war was most likely to be fought. Not surprisingly, the Old Continent is also where the Cold War proved to have the most profound and lasting consequences, epitomized by the rise of European integration as a new security model. On that subject, however, Romero has little to say.

Romero does not share the belief in the centrality of Third World political and social issues in the Cold War, as argued by Odd Arne Westad in The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Instead, he sees the larger conflict as one of the contributing factors in the spread of globalization as well as in the rise to prominence of East Asia, the Middle East, and other parts of the non-Western world. East-West rivalry had contradictory effects: it added to suffering in places like South Africa, Southwest Asia, and Guatemala but also promoted “values of independence, autonomy, and [human] rights” (p. 12). The superpower rivalry was not the root cause of the suffering, and its promotion of values did not proceed without setbacks.

This is not “a history with Italy at the center, not even implicitly” (p. 13). Yet Italians will greatly benefit from having in their language a thoughtful authoritative account, well informed by the best of international research. In finding their way, however, readers should not count on the pitiful European-style index, which lists nothing but a pell-mell of names, from Leffler to Lenin (“pseudonimo di Vladimir Il’Ic Ul’janov”). Instead, they and any other readers should consult the footnotes, which add up to one of the best selections of readings on the manifold aspects of the 40-year conflict that can be found anywhere. Representative of the flourishing Italian scholarship about the Cold War, Romero’s study is well deserving of translation into English.
Neutral and nonaligned states (N+Ns) were generally not much appreciated in Washington during the Cold War. U.S. leaders tended to believe that in such perilous times everyone should stand up and be counted on one side or the other. Yet for a few years in the 1970s these states proved extremely useful. This was during the negotiation of the Helsinki Final Act from 1972 to 1975. The N+Ns played a surprisingly important role in establishing procedures, mediating between the blocs, hammering out compromises, and nudging the vast, unwieldy assembly of 35 states toward agreement. In doing so they earned much praise and occasional exasperation from the major players. The N+Ns included four neutral states (Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland), three nonaligned states (Yugoslavia, Cyprus, and Malta) and two microstates (Liechtenstein and San Marino). Monaco and the Holy See also participated but were never part of the loose grouping formed gradually by the others.

Research on the subject has been somewhat patchy. Many scholars have addressed aspects of the role of N+Ns, and numerous references to them can be found in U.S., British, and West German documents. Leading participants from Switzerland, Austria, and Finland have provided valuable personal accounts, and Christian Nuenlist has written an excellent brief overview in *Origins of the European Security System*. Thomas Fischer has now pulled together all the available oral and written sources (still incomplete) along with his own extensive interviews to write a detailed and fully sourced assessment of what he boldly describes as the “decisive role” (p. 17) played by the N+Ns.

Fischer challenges the common assumption that Finland was merely acting on behalf of the Soviet Union when, on 5 May 1969, it sent a memorandum to 32 states (more were added later) offering to host preparatory talks in Helsinki. He suggests a more interesting explanation. After the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968, Moscow was perceived as threatening Finnish neutrality by reminding it of its military obligations under the Friendship Treaty of 1948. At the same time, Soviet leaders were pressing Finland to recognize East Germany, which would have meant a rupture with West Germany. Hence the real aim of the Finnish memorandum was to buy time, postpone a decision on Germany, and extract from the Soviet Union a more explicit recognition of Finnish neutrality. The conference itself, writes Fischer, seemed to have no real purpose for Finland, and, as the records show, neither the Finnish president nor the Finnish Foreign Ministry expected anything much to come of it.

Nor did the N+Ns expect to form a group when the multilateral preparatory talks got under way on 22 November 1972 and soon turned into substantive negotiations. Quite the contrary. They approached the gathering with different aims and interests and some mutual suspicion. What brought the N+Ns gradually together was an increasing degree of pragmatic cooperation and a realization that the future of Eu-
Europe should not be left solely to the two blocs. Early on, Switzerland, Sweden, and Austria joined in support of a Romanian proposal for the rule of consensus. This provided the essential basis for the influence of smaller countries, technically giving equal status to Liechtenstein and the Soviet Union. Then came the famous “baskets” into which proposals were grouped. Usually attributed to Ambassador Samuel Campiche of Switzerland, Fischer traces the origin of this highly successful procedure to a Dutch proposal picked up by the Austrians and then developed and christened by the Swiss and further developed by the Austrians.

By January 1973, Switzerland, Sweden, and Austria had come together to support one another’s pet proposals. None made much headway, but they initiated closer cooperation and mutual bargaining. At the same time the principal negotiating groups were proving too cumbersome, so the Swiss proposed “mini-groups,” which became remarkably effective under neutral chairmen. Gradually Yugoslavia was drawn into consultations on military confidence-building measures. By January 1974, after the talks had moved to Geneva, the N+Ns had formed a quasi-institutionalized group in which they acted as both negotiators and mediators and were much sought after by East and West. Several of their diplomats proved highly skilled. Fischer describes Edouard Brunner of the Swiss team as “navigating like a fish in the sea in the multilateral talks” (p. 333). Fortunately, most of them put their main weight on the Western side of the scales, particularly on human rights and the freer movement of people and information. They were also instrumental in establishing the follow-up meetings, which became valuable forums for maintaining pressure on the Soviet bloc.

The high point of N+N influence came in the spring of 1974, when the two blocs were deadlocked over Basket III because the Soviet side wanted to establish the principle of state control over human contacts, culture, and information. Fischer makes an interesting point, citing the U.S. State Department’s Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Vol. XXXIX, p. 202, to show that the Finnish proposal of 4 June 1974 for breaking the deadlock originated with a tactical agreement reached between Henry Kissinger and Andrei Gromyko in Cyprus on 7 May 1974. Fischer offers this as an example of superpower influence, but it could equally demonstrate the opposite. True, the superpowers set wheels turning, but the original Finnish proposal ran into heavy opposition from other N+Ns and from many West European countries, forcing it to be substantially modified. U.S. and Soviet pressure on Europe over this issue provoked intense irritation. Moreover, the negotiations continued for another year. Hence, the Kissinger-Gromyko meeting was less important to the outcome than the skill and steadfastness with which N+N and West European delegates in Geneva resisted pressure from Moscow, Washington, and, in some cases, their own capitals, where there was often little understanding of the issues. Yet Fischer is clearly right to emphasize the catalytic role of the N+Ns.

Fischer’s style is sometimes cumbersome, and the book includes minor linguistic problems that should have been picked up by an editor. Also, the book has no index, just a usefully detailed table of contents. Nonetheless, Fischer’s Neutral Power in the CSCE contains a great deal of valuable, deeply researched detail and some new insights into an important and often neglected aspect of the Helsinki story.

Reviewed by Gerhard Wettig, Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien (Köln), emeritus

The articles in this publication focus on relations within the Warsaw Pact. After an introductory outline of its history by Winfried Heinemann, Christian Nünlist discusses why Nikita Khrushchev decided to add a multilateral alliance to bilateral arrangements on mutual assistance. He shares the view that the Soviet leader’s motive was political. Until the early 1960s, the Pact was militarily unimportant but demonstrated Soviet determination to counter West German accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Pact was also designed to make Western publics believe that the USSR was willing to sacrifice alliance with the other socialist countries in exchange for a system of European security that allegedly would overcome East-West conflict. Underlying the Soviet move was a calculus that this would eliminate NATO, terminate U.S. presence in Europe, and establish Soviet hegemony on the Continent.

In Moscow’s view, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was the crucial ally. Rüdiger Wenzke argues that the USSR needed the GDR not only as a glacis against Western Europe but as an indispensable source of uranium for nuclear weapons. The National People’s Army was under tight Soviet control. The Group of Soviet Forces in Germany had a privileged status and were even exempt from the country’s legal order.

Torsten Diedrich addresses the problems that resulted from the conflicting objectives of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) regime in the GDR—its unwavering commitment to alliance with the USSR and at the same time its inability to rid itself of ties to West Germany. The GDR population’s attention was directed toward the Federal Republic as the nation’s other, infinitely more attractive, state. The SED regime also failed to overcome economic weakness. Despite a major effort to “eliminate disturbance,” SED leaders remained economically dependent on deliveries and, from the early 1970s onward, even on material aid from West Germany. As a result, alliance relations with the Soviet Union were continually, if slowly, undermined.

Andrzej Paczkowski describes Iosif Stalin’s extreme distrust of Poland as a country strongly opposed to his rule and policy. Although Polish society underwent the harshest repression, Polish military forces were put under the command of Soviet generals and officers to an unheard-of extent. Even after Soviet personnel no longer formed the majority of the Polish officer corps, they continued to hold both the key positions at the military center and the higher troop commands. When, during the “Polish October” of 1956, Defense Minister Konstanty Rokossowski, a Soviet citizen, was finally removed from Poland, the whole country—including the most devoted Communists—rejoiced. What remained, though, was a group of Soviet military advisers who participated in major decisions. Also, Moscow’s strategic guidelines and military in-
structions continued to be obligatory. Soviet control of the Polish army was loosened but not terminated. At the political level, however, the USSR was less able to enforce agreement. As Wanda Jarząbek states in her article, the conflict between Warsaw and Moscow became significant when, from 1966 onward, the Federal Republic of Germany embarked on a policy of active Ostpolitik.

As Csaba Békés’s article on internal argument with regard to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe makes clear, détente policy was a subject of heated controversy in the Warsaw Pact in the early 1970s. The USSR failed to make its views prevail, and Hungary played a mediating role. On the basis of much new Soviet source material, Mark Kramer provides an informative, detailed study on the USSR’s decision-making with regard to intra-alliance crises. Although Soviet leaders were quick in sending troops to crush the Hungarian revolt in 1956, they waited a good deal longer when orthodox Communist rule was challenged by Czechoslovak reformism in 1968 and by Poland’s Solidarność movement in 1980–1981. The leaders of the GDR and other socialist countries had wanted military intervention from the start. However, after Leonid Brezhnev had forcefully “pacified” Czechoslovakia, a process of East-West détente resulted in relative intrabloc tranquility for almost a dozen years. Only when East-West relations became tense again did unrest reemerge in the Warsaw Pact. Christopher Jones offers stimulating and highly controversial views on Mikhail Gorbachev’s new military doctrine in 1986–1987, which was based on the principle of “sufficient” rather than “reliable” (i.e., overwhelmingly strong) military power and renounced the postulate of immediate offensive action.

Whereas Bulgaria, as Jordan Baev argues, always served the USSR as a reliable and obedient military partner and, according to Imre Okváth’s article, the Hungarian army was put under firm Soviet control after the 1956 uprising, other Balkan countries were more obstinate. Ana Lalaj describes Albania—after having successfully sought alliance relations with the USSR and a Soviet submarine basis at the Bay of Vlorë only to discover that Albanian national sovereignty was not respected—took decisions in 1960–1961 that amounted to giving up both achievements. Because Yugoslav territory separated Albania from the other Warsaw Pact countries, Soviet leaders had no option but withdrawal and the loss of their listening post on the Mediterranean. Petre Opriş and Carmen Rîjnoaveanu each points out that Romania entered a course of deviation in matters of both military and alliance policy a few years later. Because internal Communist orthodoxy was never put at stake but invariably upheld in Romania and because Romania was a strategically marginal country, the Soviet Union tolerated Bucharest’s deviations.

Winfried Heinemann concludes that the Warsaw Pact was much less of a monolithic bloc than it appeared to be to the outside world. He qualifies his conclusion, however, by noting that although the source base has broadened, it continues to be incomplete, and thus the volume’s essays provide only interim results of research. Many questions do remain, but the chapters in this volume—originally presented and discussed at an international conference organized by the Office of Research on Military History in Potsdam and the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC—adds substantial new


Reviewed by Sergey Radchenko, University of Nottingham (Ningbo, China)

Archie Brown has written an absorbing and sophisticated book that will deservedly take its place among the top-caliber studies of Communism. Written in a fluid style and with brilliant wit, the book weaves together strands of the political, economic, and social history of the twentieth century, creating an exceedingly deep and multi-layered overview. This lengthy book is a demanding read, but after finding my way through this intellectual maze, I can say that it was well worth the effort.

Brown’s analysis is somewhat uneven. This is perhaps inevitable, for he set himself the unenviable task of describing a global phenomenon. The Soviet Union is at the center of his narrative, and rightly so. When discussing the USSR, Brown offers his readers a detailed, well-thought-out, and occasionally amusing account, supported by the unmatched advantage of his 45 years of study of the Soviet Union and Russia. Chapters on the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, Eastern Europe, are precise, sharp, and original.

The narrative runs into trouble when Brown deals with Asian Communism. Precision gives way to uncertainty, and conclusions are often blurred. The impact of Marxism-Leninism, as a Soviet import to China, on the specifically Chinese cultural and intellectual context is not properly addressed, and Chinese Communism is oversimplified as a result. Hence the difficulties Brown faces in the later chapters, when he considers the present and the future of Communism in China.

Notions like “chaos” and “harmony” and “all under heaven” are at least as useful in the analysis of Chinese Communism as Western imports like “class struggle.” This is not to say that class struggle was unimportant in the Chinese context; nor should we discount the enormous Soviet influence on China, as documented, for example, in the recent collection edited by Thomas P. Bernstein and Li Hua-yu, *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949–Present* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010). Similarly Qing Simei discusses the Chinese cultural context in his *Allies or Enemies: Visions of Moder-
Identity, and U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1945–1960 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). Understanding China's foreign policy from the 1940s to the present requires knowledge of certain continuities in China's history. Otherwise, many things make no sense. For example, Mao's “irresponsible” saber rattling (p. 320) in effect points to the importance of “moral superiority”—a notion that goes a long way toward explaining the twists and turns of Chinese foreign policy toward both the Soviet Union and the United States. Chen Jian has done excellent work in uncovering and making sense of some of these continuities in his Mao's China and the Cold War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Similar criticism may be made of Brown's analysis of Communism in other Asian countries. For example, the pages dealing with Communism in North Korea lack any mention of *juche* (the official ideology of self-reliance) although *juche* and, lately, *songun* are indispensable for understanding Pyongyang's domestic and foreign policy choices. Brown's discussion of Mongolian Communism is thin and superficial (with not a single footnote). The book does little to explain the intense mutual hostility among Asian Communist states, not least between China and Vietnam.

Brown's chapters on the late Leonid Brezhnev era, the Soviet collapse, and the end of the Cold War in Europe are fantastic. Brown is basically correct in his analysis of the reasons for the end of the Cold War. His arguments reinforce the importance of the “Gorbachev factor” but with greater factual evidence than his previous book on the same subject permitted. By contrast, Ronald Reagan's Cold War rhetoric and the arms build-up of the “Second Cold War” are demoted from the list of important factors. Brown goes so far as to argue that the Cold War contributed to the survival of Communism rather than its demise (this argument has a revisionist tint and begs the question of realistic alternatives, especially in the Stalin era). Brown also dismisses the key arguments of Egor Gaidar’s popular history of the Soviet collapse—*Gibel’ imperii: Uroki sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006)—as economic determinism. In Brown's view, economic problems were not sufficient to cause the Soviet collapse. The Soviet Union, he writes, could have muddled through and rebounded on higher oil prices. Some economists will probably say this was doubtful, but we will never know, will we?

Brown's depiction of Mikhail Gorbachev is one-sided, and he neglects the role of economic hardship in influencing Gorbachev's foreign policy choices toward the end of his rule. By the same token, what Brown depicts as Gorbachev's tactical retreat in 1990–1991 (his distancing from the liberals in the policy circles) is much better understood as a loss of confidence, his running out of steam, and his growing uncertainty. Gorbachev's aide Anatoli Chernyaev gives in his diary, *Sovmestnyi iskhod: Dnevnik drukh epokh, 1972–1991 gody* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), an apt assessment of Gorbachev's problems in early 1991: “Once we have started on the downward slope, he [Gorbachev] sees opposition in every new idea, as something directed against him. And he is becoming more meager, poorer, intellectually defensive. He became unimaginative and boring in politics. . . . He is looking for ways not to change things.”

Perhaps Brown goes a notch too far in describing Gorbachev as a starry-eyed vi-
sionary. A visionary he certainly was, but he was also a politician, and his visions were too often distorted by political contingencies. Brown allows this sort of political maneuverability for Boris Yeltsin—who is portrayed as a quintessential opportunist—but not for Gorbachev.

Finally, in tackling the consequences of Communism, Brown does not analyze certain systemic features that actually survived the end of Communism, continuities that are easily identifiable in today’s Russia. These continuities can be readily linked to the practices of the past, whether it be the institution of nomenklatura, the relationship between the “party” and the “state” (with “United Russia” comfortably stepping into the larger shoes of the Soviet Communist Party), the role of the Federal Security Service and other “power ministries,” or the importance of blat (connections, string-pulling) in daily life. How much of this is the legacy of Communism, and how much was Communism shaped by these deeper “systemic” qualities of a specifically Russian mode of governance? Unfortunately, the book provides no answers.

However, no book can answer all the questions. Archie Brown’s book has its shortcomings, but overall it is a terrific piece of work, a gem of scholarship certain to shape views of many a brave reader willing to plunge into its stimulating depths.


Reviewed by Sarah B. Snyder, University College London

Although previous books have examined the international diplomacy that led to German unification and the development of a new structure for post–Cold War Europe, Mary Sarotte’s work will heretofore become the standard text. Her highly engaging, well-paced account heightens the reader’s attention by making the high stakes of the negotiations clear, humanizing her principal actors, and capturing the mood and intrigue of the diplomacy. In addition, her book is the product of impressive archival research in France, Germany, Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as interviews with numerous key actors. Conceptually, Sarotte’s book is one of the first to treat 1989 not as an endpoint in international relations but as a beginning. Another recent example is Jeffrey A. Engel’s excellent edited collection, The Fall of the Berlin Wall: The Revolutionary Legacy of 1989 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Although her account largely leaves the causes and dynamics of the 1989 revolutions aside, she makes important contributions to the debate over the end of the Cold War, arguing that the opening of the Berlin Wall was highly contingent, that the United States was not the dominant player in these events, and that the changes in 1989–1990 have lasting significance for Europe and transatlantic relations.

After the Berlin Wall is breached in the first chapter, Sarotte focuses her attention, as key leaders at the time did, on the debates regarding construction of a European structure in the aftermath of the Cold War. She effectively evokes the intense
uncertainty during 1989 about the shape intra-European relations would take, employing architectural terminology to explore the various models considered. She explains the four proposed models and why, given considerable time and political constraints, the “prefab model” of “taking the West’s prefabricated institutions, both for domestic order and international economic and military cooperation, and simply extending them eastward” (p. 8) emerged as the consensus choice among Western leaders in mid-1990. In Sarotte’s view, the “prefab model” promoted stability but was not the best choice because it led to continuing tension in Europe. For example, she addresses Russia’s current, awkward relationship with the West, suggesting it was perpetuated by the decisions made in 1989 and 1990 when an opportunity for cooperation with Russia existed and was lost. Sarotte is not alone in suggesting that decisions made, worldviews developed, and analyses written in 1989 have important significance today. But, whereas many of the other books published in the fall of 2009 to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall examine U.S. conceptions of the end of the Cold War for their influence on the United States invasion of Iraq—for example, the essays by Jeffrey A. Engel and by Melvyn P. Leffler in Engel, ed., The Fall of the Berlin Wall; and Michael Meyer, The Year That Changed the World: The Untold Story behind the Fall of the Berlin Wall (New York: Scribner, 2009)—Sarotte keeps her focus firmly on Europe.

Given her forward-looking approach, Sarotte devotes far more attention than other recent studies of 1989 to how the unanticipated opening of the Berlin Wall caught policymakers unprepared to confront German unification and a post–Cold War Europe. One of the many strengths of her account is the way she demonstrates how the backgrounds of the key actors, particularly their experiences during World War Two, influenced their attitudes toward possible German unification. Sarotte sees considerable European agency, arguing that the United States, and therefore the Soviet Union as well, “stepped back” from events. Although the George H. W. Bush administration receives credit for helping to shape events, Sarotte’s account unfortunately reduces Mikhail Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders to rather reactionary roles. Later, she becomes increasingly critical of Gorbachev’s conduct of Soviet diplomacy, describing at one point his “penchant for indecision and procrastination” (p. 101). Even as Sarotte disparages Gorbachev’s performance, her account makes clear how concerned Western leaders such as Helmut Kohl and Bush were about ensuring that the Soviet leader remained in power.

By keeping the focus on German agency, her book fits into a growing body of literature seeking to move attention away from Moscow and Washington and refocus it on Central Europe, with other examples including Victor Sebestyen, Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009); and Constantine Pleshakov, There Is No Freedom without Bread! 1989 and the Civil War That Brought Down Communism (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009). Her attention to Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, however, is refreshing, and her argument that he was a “savvy politician” (p. 63) who played a central role is convincing. In Sarotte’s analysis, Kohl drove the pace and content of discussions about German unification. At the same time, Sarotte does not wholly neglect lower-level actors.
She highlights the influence of grassroots activists in convincing Kohl that unity should and could be his goal. She also emphasizes French President François Mitterrand’s contribution, which has been largely ignored in the English-language literature, apart from Frédéric Bozo’s *Mitterrand: The End of the Cold War and German Unification*, trans. by Susan Emmanuel (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

Sarotte’s book shows that despite the challenges of writing contemporary history, excellent accounts can result. The book also confirms the increasing need for historians to look beyond the Cold War as a chronological endpoint.