Book Reviews


Reviewed by Stefano Guzzini, Danish Institute for International Studies, and Uppsala University, Sweden

Why would the Soviet government consider the Marshall Plan more threatening than the Truman Doctrine? How could Yugoslavia move from being a stalwart of socialism in Europe to a renegade pariah, expelled from the Soviet sphere of influence a few months after states in Western Europe signed the Brussels defense pact? Why would Yugoslavia be welcomed back into the socialist family, with profuse acknowledgments of previous mistakes, when the country’s defense contribution was much less needed? Why would the USSR allow its most important alliance with China to falter? Why would Iosif Stalin completely neglect the de-colonizing world as a potential ally in the global power competition? Why did the USSR start an offensive global power strategy in the Third World only after de-Stalinization?

Ted Hopf answers these puzzles by suggesting that instead of realist theories of international relations (IR) or personality-centered diplomatic history, a constructivist take provides a more promising path. Developing his earlier approach to “societal constructivism,” Hopf argues that Soviet identity discourses at home explain relations abroad. For each of these puzzles, he shows that Soviet external policy was driven by a particular way the Soviet Union came to understand itself. Once an identity “dis-course of difference” was empowered, relations with Yugoslavia, the Eastern bloc, China, and the Third World were redefined. Covering 1945–1958, the book is the first of a planned trilogy that will cover Soviet foreign policy through the end of the Cold War.

In today’s environment of overwhelming academic output, Hopf stands out as a scholar whose research one is always inspired to read and reflect upon. This book is no exception. It is a must-read for its combination of IR theory and history, precisely because history is not used simply for quick theoretical points. Instead, Hopf devises a theoretical framework for understanding the history of Soviet foreign policy. In return, his meticulous historical analysis feeds back to IR theory, especially constructivist foreign policy analysis (FPA)—in content and methodology.

His contribution to FPA lies precisely in his careful distinction between his approach and what FPA has come to mean. Whereas FPA has become centered on the analysis of individual decisions, thereby harnessing a multitude of factors from stan-
dard operating procedures to cognitive psychological dispositions, Hopf’s approach harks back to a more classical study of national foreign policy *traditions*, a form of study that was never purely deductive from sheer power positions.

Before we know what the Soviet Union *stands for* in its international relations, Hopf argues, we need to know what the Soviet Union *stands for* in its self-understanding. To this end, he charts a medium course of analysis in which foreign policy is driven not mainly by international (systemic) constraints or individual agency but by identity discourses that inform/predispose for decisions, make them possible, but do not determine them.

Hopf’s theoretical contribution is the development of a specific “societal” version of constructivism, an approach that builds on work presented in his earlier award-winning book. In this approach, the reference group of recognition (for identity is always relational) is domestic not international society. He therefore carefully tries to identify the sources of the identity discourses he finds in the institutions of civil society that deal with ideas and their expression, that is, the arts (mainly written), the university and scientific system, and the press. In the present book, he explicitly adds an institutional component to his approach, insisting on the ways certain formal and informal institutions can become carriers of ideas—or their temporarily silent depository.

Analyzing identity in such places as novels is necessary because looking for identity discourses is looking for the taken-for-granted, for the things that go without saying. This has methodological implications because it makes a quantitative content analysis (which usually checks for key words and their relations) quite difficult, and it explains Hopf’s preference for an interpretive reconstruction of such underlying identities in their overall context. Hence the book is, with the exception of one chapter, not theoretical as this review may suggest; instead, it provides an interpretive empirical reconstruction over almost 300 pages, based on mainly primary sources.

This interpretative reconstruction follows a two-step logic that amounts, according to Hopf, to a “causal” analysis (quotation marks in original, p. 24). Self-understandings (which are the independent variable) affect elite understandings (intermediate variable), which, in turn, affect external relations (dependent variable). Hopf claims that the book answers the legitimate criticism leveled against constructivist analysis, namely, that it cannot explain why certain (identity) discourses prevail (p. 17). This is where his new institutional component is important. Alternative identity discourses can be mobilized from such institutional depositories when “a previous discourse has been discredited or abandoned” (p. 23).

Yet that raises the question: why was it abandoned? Although it may sound self-evident that Stalinist visions of an identity “discourse of danger” would be discredited after the Soviet dictator’s death, such an outlook could and did survive and even thrive (Vyacheslav Molotov being the obvious reminder). Hopf does not show why it had to be discredited in the face of alternative identity discourses. Constructivism can show only that certain identity discourses are present in the taken-for-granted terms of the debate; it can counterfactually show what has been excluded; but so far it cannot show why a specific remaining discourse had to prevail.
But then, the question may be less about whether constructivism is able to provide this determinacy, and more about whether such determinacy can be had in the first place. Social ontologies arguably do not allow such determinacy. Hopf’s next book could perhaps develop on the nature of causality within his approach. In fact, Hopf shifts from the “causal” statement to one in which he shows how alternative identity discourses can appear even in a most totalitarian regime and how they can become mobilized later (that is his analysis of the role of institutions). Hence, it can be shown that “new discourses” come from somewhere—although one could also conceive of incremental shifts of dominant discourses rather than their replacement. This is an analysis not in terms of efficient causality (if X, then Y) but in terms of “how-causality” (how X can lead to Y). It points to an analysis of social or causal mechanisms that indeed can be perfectly coherent with interpretivist approaches like constructivism. Hence, the critics are right to ask constructivists for their stance on causality in their analysis. But they may be wrong for the specific conception of causality they imply (a point on which many historians would be potential allies).

Finally, Hopf tries to make his approach falsifiable. Constructivism shares with rationalism the risk that any outcome can be made to fit the approach ex post inasmuch as one can always find an identity story or a rational explanation that works. Hopf specifies the conditions under which his theory would not work; namely, if identity discourses in the elite were unconnected to the ones in society. He finds this with the “great-power” identity discourse he sees present in particular in Soviet relations with the United States but which does not appear at a societal level. Yet it is not entirely clear whether such a discourse is indeed absent at the societal level: it may go without saying—that is, be implicit in other identity discourses. After all, both the United States and the Soviet Union saw themselves as model societies for liberalism and socialism respectively, above the usual crowd, whether for manifest destiny or as the revolutionary avant-garde. Such self-understandings, one can argue, prompt a special great-power identity, one that exempts both from normal constraints and comparisons. In addition to a great-power identity, each state claimed to deserve recognition for its special role as a superpower—consistent with certain societal identity discourses. As a corollary, they would recognize each other only as significant others. This comment spells out Hopf’s point that an international identity such as “great power” is not necessarily constituted in the international realm but can be generated by civil society, too.

A second reservation I have is theoretical. After Hopf repeatedly stresses that any (relational) foreign policy identity has two realms of recognition, domestic/societal and international, it seems odd that he then constructs a one-sided discourse that can be falsified by an equally one-sided analysis. His theoretical discussion had already established that both realms can be sources for identity discourses and need to be considered together, as the book does. This is theoretically more consistent—but then not falsifiable in this manner.

In his conclusion, Hopf explicitly validates what he sees as George F. Kennan’s vision of the nature of the Cold War competition. Kennan, Hopf asserts, saw the threat not as military but political and psychological, opposed NATO, and envisaged the
Marshall Plan as a way to avoid the demoralization of Western Europe. But in fact Kennan was a more complex figure than this, one who in 1948 pressured the newly created Central Intelligence Agency to adopt an aggressive program of covert warfare against the Soviet bloc, including paramilitary operations, sabotage, and demolition. Later, in his Reith Lectures, Kennan invited the West to improve the practice of its democratic governance. In Hopf’s view, this included learning from some of the Soviet Union’s public policies (sic!), and he argues that this was the best way to endure the Cold War and eventually to change the nature of the USSR. The next two volumes of Hopf’s trilogy will further elaborate on how “the West just had to be itself” to help mobilize a Soviet self-identification that was no longer alien to it. Our understanding of both Soviet foreign policy and the Cold War will be taken another step further.

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Reviewed by Martin van Creveld, Hebrew University (Israel)

This is an original, interesting, and thought-provoking book. Others have attempted to pinpoint the origins of Western military superiority, often placing it so far in the past as to make it appear almost God-given. Some, notably Victor Davis Hanson in The Western Way of War (2009), have traced it all the way back to ancient Greece with its frontal battles between phalanxes of heavily armed hoplites. John France, a professor emeritus of medieval history at Swansea University and the author of previous works on crusader warfare, strongly disagrees. A specific Western way of war, he suggests, has never existed; rather, Western warfare was a subspecies of the “agro-urban” style of war whose chief characteristic is a combination of heavy, slow-moving infantry and smaller, mobile units of missile forces and cavalry. That combination, from the time it was first invented in Mesopotamia around 3,000 B.C., has been characteristic of all settled societies on the Euro-Asian continent.

During most of the five millennia that have passed since then, by far the most important rivals of “agro-urban” warfare were the steppe people. Relying first on chariots and then on hordes of light cavalry armed with the composite bow, at various times they overran the materially far superior empires of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China. As late as 1241 the Mongols invaded Europe. They got as far as Poland and Silesia and finally retreated only because of internal divisions. Still, a century later Timur’s hordes devastated the settled civilizations of Mesopotamia, Persia, and northern India. Only during the second half of the seventeenth century was the situation finally changed. Thanks to the new combination of firearms and discipline, Westerners (or, to be precise, non-Westerners such as Peter the Great who had adopted their military methods) started making real progress. Even so, the great non-European “steppe empires”—a term that is surely something of an oxymoron—in the Middle
East and India remained largely immune to European penetration until 1750 or so. China held out longer still, beginning to open its doors only after the Opium Wars of 1839–1860.

True, military technological progress is nothing new. However, “before the nineteenth century . . . in general [changes] were introduced so slowly that nobody got a decisive advantage” (p. 13). So gradual was tactical change that even late-seventeenth-century war was “remarkably like that which had dominated warfare since ancient times” (p. 186). Quite often, as under the Dutch commander Maurice of Nassau, the link to antiquity was made explicit. Only around 1800, and then as a direct result of the Industrial Revolution, did Western warfare, having finally abandoned the traditional combination of heavy infantry with missile-throwers and horsemen, really start forging ahead. By 1900, following a mighty “military revolution”—a term more often applied to the second half of the seventeenth century—it had left all the rest so far behind that it was no contest. As Hillaire Belloc, whom France quotes, famously put it in his 1898 volume The Modern Traveller: “Whatever happens, we have got/the Maxim gun, and they have not.” Concrete proof of this advantage came in the form of the battle of Omdurman, which was fought in the same year.

Perhaps even more important are the conclusions France draws from the processes he traces. He calls European military superiority “perilous” precisely because it is relatively recent. Unless the necessary steps are taken, and soon, he argues, it may well disappear as quickly as it emerged. Specifically, France wants Westerners to forget “their cultural disposition to pursue happy ideals, like free-range chickens or a carbon-free world, to contemplate illusions like the ‘peace dividend’, and to turn away from the nasty realities like the face of war” (p. 388). Instead, they should “sharpen their perception of threats and steel themselves to the unpleasant task of doing something about them”; the need to do so is “the central concern of this book.”

That, in essence, is France’s argument. How well does it hold up? Quite well, if one sticks to land warfare, as he largely does, though even here the emphasis on continuity lures him into making some quaint statements; for example, when he says that eighteenth-century armies “fought in phalanxes” (meaning, in this case, long lines no more than three men deep) and that “gunpowder weapons . . . acted as a kind of longsword” (p. 189). Phalanxes, indeed, are a great favorite of the author, appearing and reappearing on his pages regardless of whether they really fit the formations he describes (pp. 270, 297). When it comes to sea warfare, though, the situation is more problematic. Although Perilous Glory does not ignore naval affairs altogether, naval warfare receives rather skimpy treatment compared to the wars and campaigns that took place on land. For example, the land campaigns of King Ramesses III (1192–1160 BC) are discussed in some detail in the opening pages of the book. However, not a word is said about the fact that Ramesses III’s reign also witnessed the first known salt-water battle in history.

Furthermore, whereas Karl von Clausewitz (who never addressed naval warfare) is mentioned on twelve pages, his naval equivalent, Alfred Mahan, is not referred to even once. The battle of Jutland receives one sentence, the one at Trafalgar none at all. The scant discussions of naval warfare that may be found here (as on pp. 192–195),
tend to focus on intra-European struggles. This reflects the fact that, whatever the force-relationship on land may have been, Western superiority at sea had become firmly established by, at the latest, 1571—the date of the great naval battle of Lepanto. As Carlo Cipolla in *Guns, Sails and Empires* (1965) shows in some detail, the military advantage enjoyed by the West outside the Mediterranean, on the world’s great oceans, was even more lopsided. Rarely during the entire so-called “Columbian Period,” which lasted roughly from the voyages of discovery to the introduction of railways and steamships, did any non-European rulers even try to compete on the sea. As a result, not once did any non-European ship disembark soldiers who then went on to set up a beachhead, let alone a more-or-less permanent stronghold, on European shores.

By limiting himself mainly to land warfare, in other words, France pushes forward the date at which Western military superiority became established and overestimates the speed with which the process unfolded. In fact, when speaking about the “substantial and deep-seated European advantage in naval warfare” (p. 130) that first started showing itself during the Crusades, he himself admits as much. Might he also be overestimating the speed with which the West is apt to decline? At first sight, the answer is no. Think of the French in Algeria, the Americans in Vietnam, the Soviet Army in Afghanistan, and countless other colonial and neocolonial campaigns that have taken place since World War II. Clearly, Western powers’ ability to defeat and occupy the rest is no longer what it used to be.

Equally clearly, though, in all of these cases without exception the imperialists, or colonialists, or forces of order, or counterinsurgents, or whatever they may have been called or called themselves, were defeated on land. In not one case was there any question of the same happening at sea (or in the air, but that is immaterial here). As France himself notes, to this day Western, meaning principally U.S., armed forces might use the sea to reach out to, and invade, many non-Western countries at any time they choose to do so. However, so preposterous is the idea of the opposite—for example, Libya invading Italy or mighty China invading the far mightier United States—that it does not even merit discussion.

Supposing this line of reasoning to be correct, then the dangers to which France points, and which he thinks should be countered, are not as close at hand as he tries to make out. To be sure, some non-Western countries have also started constructing navies, small aircraft carriers included. Yet to date none of those carriers, existing or planned, is suitable for more than projecting small forces over relatively small distances for a limited period of time. Doing more, in fact, would be far beyond the resources of any country apart from the United States. Other non-Western countries have built, or are building, nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles. By so doing, though, they have merely entangled themselves in the nuclear balance of power. Since 1949 the latter has prevented any important country, and a growing number of less important ones as well, from fighting each other in earnest; that applies to Westerners and non-Westerners alike. The day when any non-Western country will be able to land troops on the shores of a Western one appears more remote today than it was
around the middle of the sixteenth century, the last period when the Ottoman Empire was still able to do so.

As far as conventional war is concerned, France does not need to worry as much as he seems to. The West appears to be secure for the foreseeable future. Indeed the widespread feeling that it is secure accounts for the drastic decline in the defense budgets of most Western countries that has taken place since the end of the Cold War, as well as the neglect of the “military virtues” (p. 349). But how about that other threat, terrorism? When it comes to terrorism, the ability to repulse conventional attacks either by sea or by air is largely irrelevant. Nor will international terrorism be abolished if, giving up carbon-free air, free-ranging chickens, legalism, and “respect for the individual” (p. 390), we return to some of the ruthless “techniques of repression” (p. 366) that the Europeans, like everybody else, often used in the past; perhaps, indeed, the contrary is the case.

As I know from my own experience, a book as far-ranging as this one will inevitably contain some errors. For example, Bismarck’s statement (p. 15) that the Balkans were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier was made in 1876, not 1851. On p. 62 we are told that it cost the Athenians in 431 B.C a talent a day to besiege Potidaea and that the two-year siege therefore drained their treasury of 2,000 talents. Clearly this statement is based on a misreading of either Thucydides himself or some modern author who used him.

There are more such errors. On p. 189, Prussia’s Frederick the Great is confused with the same country’s Great Elector who was active a century before him. Flogging in the British Royal Army did not continue “throughout the nineteenth century” (p. 191); it was abolished in 1881. The Germans isolated Napoleon III and his army at Sedan, not Metz (p. 250). A trained British infantryman of 1914 could fire “twelve, aimed” rounds per minute, not thirty (p. 253). Had the latter figure been correct, the soldier would almost have become a living machine gun. The Kesselschlacht was developed earlier than Auftragstaktik and had little if anything to do with infiltration (p. 313). In 1935 the Rhineland was remilitarized, not demilitarized (p. 323). The Battle of Khalkin Gol was fought in 1939, not 1938 (p. 323). There was no B-19 Liberator, only a B-24. The plant at Willow Run did not produce 400 of them per day but only one per hour (p. 340). It may come as news to some readers that Germany’s anti-tank weapon was called Panzerwerfer (p. 343; the real name was Panzerfaust). It is not at all “certain” that President Nixon’s ferocious bombing of North Vietnam in 1972 “worked well” (p. 370). The Palestinian terrorists who attacked the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona in 1974 did not throw “small children” out of windows (p. 379; France appears to have confused several different incidents here, but the one he describes never took place in that form). The U.S. military in 1991 had 520,000, not 700,000, troops in the Gulf (p. 374).

The list of errors could be extended almost indefinitely, making the volume somewhat unreliable and less suitable as a source of facts than it should have been. Furthermore, I doubt whether calling on Western peoples to adapt their culture to the terrible needs of war, France means that they should now start throwing children out
of windows. Still, I found the book original, interesting, and thought-provoking. Even those who do not agree with its central thesis will read it with considerable profit.

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Reviewed by Simon Duke, European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht

Over There is a splendid, important addition to the burgeoning literature on overseas U.S. military basing. Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon bring their considerable experience as authors on basing issues, especially regarding the aspects of core interest to this volume (gender, sexuality, race, and class), to this impressive volume. The interdisciplinary backgrounds of the six contributors, who draw on historical, ethnographic, gender studies, and sociological perspectives, and their familiarity with the basing arrangements in their locales of interest (Germany, Okinawa, and South Korea), make this a particularly rich contribution to our understanding of the complex dynamics of U.S. overseas military basing and the effects on the societies in which they are located.

The volume is organized around four interlinked themes or parts. In the first part Höhn, Moon, and Michiko Takeuchi examine the regulation of relations between servicemen and local women in Germany, South Korea, and Japan in the aftermath of World War II and the Korean War. In the second part Donna Alvah, Christopher Ames, and Robin Riley consider how U.S. and foreign women interact in what they call the “hybrid spaces made possible by the transnational empire.” In the third part Höhn and Moon return, along with Christopher Nelson, to consider more recent basing arrangements and the notion of “postcolonial agency” found in the hybrid spaces in and around military bases. In part IV Höhn discusses the U.S. military’s racial crisis in the 1970s in West Germany and South Korea; Moon examines “Camptown Prostitution and the Imperial Statute of Forces Agreement (SOFA)”; and Jeff Bennett provides a notable chapter on Abu Ghraib.

Over There is an ambitious book, although it is not until the end that the reader understands the intended impact of the volume. Höhn and Moon lament the “neglect of the overseas bases by scholars of American History and American Studies,” which reveals “the extent to which the U.S. military empire is marginal to America’s sense of its own history and identity” (p. 399). With some exceptions, Over There succeeds in making a valuable contribution to addressing this neglect. The neglect, however, is only partial insofar as other scholars, such as Valur Ingimundarson, have considered race, nationalism, and gender issues pertaining to postwar U.S. military basing in cases that fall outside the remit of this volume (see Ingimundarson’s article “Immunizing against the American Other: Racism, Nationalism, and Gender in U.S.-Icelandic Military Relations during the Cold War, JCWS, Vol. 6, No. 4, Fall 2004,
Nevertheless, the comparative nature and the historical sweep of this volume make it a useful work and a valuable addition to the existing literature.

In spite of the comprehensiveness (and length) of the book, there are some surprising gaps. For instance, are the authors describing a specifically U.S. phenomenon, or are other militaries equally "masculinized" in their military behavior overseas? In this regard it might have been illuminating to extend the comparative perspective to the effects of the integration of the British and American zones in 1947 (Bizonia) or even to the "Trizone" with France the following year. The experience of the British Army of the Rhine from 1945 to 1994 could provide an interesting comparative perspective (and would support the editors' aspiration that Over There spur further research).

Perhaps more surprisingly, Over There does not consider the role of basic training in creating a permissive environment in which soldiers can develop highly sexualized, gendered ("hyper-masculine"), racially superior, and imperial notions of the world around them. Jeff Bennett comments en passant that, because of the language employed in training, "new recruits are radically de-socialized" (p. 377). This seems like an important part of the story that merited further exploration.

The discontinuation of the draft and the shift to an all-volunteer force in 1973 are noted in several places in the book. It would, however, have been interesting if an essay had looked more systematically at the effects of the growing numbers of women in the U.S. armed forces (in November 2011 almost 15 percent of active duty forces, 19.5 percent of reserve forces, and 15.5 percent of the National Guard were women). This might, for instance, be important to Donna Alvah's excellent chapter on military families abroad and the "re-masculization" of the U.S. military.

Over There risks possible overstretch in Robin Riley's chapter on "Hidden Soldiers," which is the only chapter to depart from the theme of overseas basing. Instead, Riley discusses women who work in U.S. defense industries, where, the author claims, they "practice a militarized form of femininity," meaning that "they can contribute to the waging of war while not believing that they do so and give tacit agreement to global imperialism" (p. 203–204). The interviews of two groups of women working for private defense corporations in small cities in upstate New York left the reviewer wondering whether such sweeping conclusions can be made on the basis of such a small sample. Although we do not know the identity of "Universal Exports" (which will delight Ian Fleming fans), defense industries are vital to the economy of the state, and Lockheed Martin is the largest private employer in the Syracuse area. With the ongoing Revolution in Military Affairs and the increasing emphasis on asymmetric warfare, many defense industries have been engaged in the production of dual-use goods, often with significant (claimed) civilian spin-offs. The conclusions may therefore be more nuanced than Riley suggests. Assessing a defense industry worker's role may depend on whether the factory in question is producing tactical bombers, sophisticated radars, or Kevlar body protection.

In their conclusions the editors describe Over There as a "first effort to analyze the conditions central to the differentiated working of the military empire on the ground" (p. 399). As such, Over There is impressive and important, and, as the editors hope,
will undoubtedly provide a spur to future scholarship. The editors hint that this could either be extended to other comparative experiences of U.S. military basing or be updated to address a military more oriented toward expeditionary forces, complete with jumping-off points (“lily pads”) and remarkably different host nations. Whatever direction future scholarship may take, Over There provides an inspiring foundation.


Reviewed by John Earl Haynes, Library of Congress (ret.)

Jennifer Luff’s Commonsense Anticommunism is an unusually good book about a subject usually dealt with poorly. Luff discusses the trade union philosophy of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and delineates how those principles shaped the AFL’s attitudes toward and approaches to the Communist Party in the United States and toward civil liberties more generally in the period from World War I to the U.S. entry into World War II. She skillfully lays out how Samuel Gompers’s concerns about German attempts to manipulate the labor movement to keep the United States out of the First World War fused with his long-standing hostility to Socialists and other radicals who also supported non-intervention. These differing concerns ultimately spurred the AFL to adopt an overtly patriotic stance. In line with this stance, AFL leaders secretly established intelligence cooperation with Ralph Easley of the National Civic Federation and with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Luff then examines how the AFL’s tactics and its views about free speech and civil liberties evolved in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s as it sought to counter attempts by Communists and other radicals to infiltrate and influence the labor movement.

Although Luff’s focus is on labor movement anti-Communism and attitudes toward civil liberties, in the process she also presents astute glimpses of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover, Easley, and the Dies Committee. Her research in primary records and papers is impressively deep and matched by a comprehensive and insightful reading of the relevant secondary literature.

In too many historical accounts the wide array of different types and motivations for opposition to Communism are forced to conform to a caricature of a demonic McCarthyism of the 1950s. Luff’s account of labor anti-Communism, however, is history with nuance, sensitivity to the times, and a close reading of documentary evidence. Mainstream labor leaders, she argues, displayed consistent hostility to Communism and other form of subversive radicalism, but this attitude masked changing tactics and strategies depending on historical circumstances. In the aftermath of World War I and well into the 1930s the AFL leadership pursued what Luff calls “a commonsense approach to Communism.” She elucidates how the AFL’s long-standing distrust of the regulatory state and some lessons learned from its World War I ex-
perience led it to disapprove of sedition legislation and oppose overt use of state police powers to defeat subversion. Realistically judging that Communism appealed only to a small minority of U.S. workers, the AFL “pursued a voluntarist program of evangelizing about the evils of Communism and excluding Communists from AFL unions” (p. 1). The consequence, Luff notes, was that the AFL directly or indirectly was a significant barrier to the goals of those such as Easley, earlier its ally, who sought to create a federal internal security and political surveillance state in the 1920s and 1930s.

Nonetheless, as Luff documents, the AFL’s attitudes changed in the late 1930s. As competition with the upstart rival Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) intensified—and angered by the National Labor Relations Board’s bias toward the CIO (blamed, with some justification, on covert Communist influence), key AFL leaders, with John Frey in the fore, shifted to support of anti-subversion laws, endorsed passage of the Smith Act, and cheered on the Dies Committee’s pursuit of Communists in the government. Luff also notes that while the AFL shifted from its commonsense anti-Communism to a more governmentally coercive “Red scare” approach, the circumstances of the times and revulsion at the Communist Party’s warm endorsement of the Nazi-Soviet Pact induced the ACLU and CIO anti-Communists to shift from their de facto alliance with Communists to embrace the equivalent of the AFL’s earlier voluntarist anti-Communism.

Luff departs from conventional historiographical stereotypes in regard to labor anti-Communism. Her close attention to the evidence prompts her to observe that J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI in the 1930s resisted pressure to police radicals without explicit statutory authority. Additionally, in several key labor conflicts the FBI investigated and refuted AFL claims (usually made when in heated competition with the CIO) that Communists or Nazi-aligned Germans were fomenting strife and sabotage.

Commonsense Anticommunism is Luff’s first book, and although it shows the occasional infelicities of a dissertation converted to a book, these are few. More impressive is the detailed archival research, fidelity to the evidence, and willingness to complicate and challenge conventional historical narratives. Commonsense Anticommunism is a genuine contribution to historical literature, and one can only hope that Luff has the opportunity to make more such contributions as she matures as a historian.


This is a fun book to read, full of rhetorical flourishes and swing-for-the-fences statements. It is a book aimed at like-minded people, readers who do not need car-
ful formulations and solid research to be convinced of an idea but who instead want to be thrilled by what a blurb on the back cover describes as “rebel reading for right now.”

The topic of the book is the interaction of black elites and cultural figures from the United States with global Islam in the post-1945 era. The overall theme is that, faced with racism at home, some in the U.S. black community found fulfillment and inspiration through affiliation with overseas Muslim organizations, or even through conversion. This is not an original theme, having been explored by scholars such as Michael L. Krenn and James L. Roark, but Sohail Daulatzai’s work is not meant to be an original work of scholarship. Instead (and despite the publisher’s suggestion that it be catalogued as a book of history), it must be seen as an essay meant to rouse the troops. The author is forthright about this. In the introduction he says he wants to use these tales from the past to illuminate U.S. racism today, especially in the post-9/11 era. In the conclusion, he says he hopes that immigrants will not buy into conventional U.S. values but will keep a critical and radical distance from the mainstream.

Works of opinion are fine (although in today’s society we seem to be overwhelmed by them), but it is a pity that the author and his academic backers cloak this pamphlet as an academic work—published by a university press with a grant from another university (University of California, Irvine) and featuring the full scholarly apparatus of endnotes and an index—all of which might give the unsuspecting reader the impression that the book will offer a comprehensive or fair treatment of the topic. (Daulatzai, who teaches in the subjective world of film studies, might question the idea that any work can or should try to be even-handed or fair.)

Instead, we have superimposed on an unremarkable thesis a barrage of clever-sounding phrases. We learn that from the 1960s to the 21st century, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton (although apparently not Jimmy Carter) launched policies that “gave birth to an urban police state” (p. 90). It is probably priggish to point out that the United States is not actually a police state. The book contains the de rigueur use of “empire” or “imperial” to describe the United States (pp. ix, xiii, 1), without any attempt at a definition. Unargued, these words and phrases are empty and might turn off people who care about scholarly or linguistic precision.

Other choices belie a disturbing smugness. Although probably meant to be playful, making fun of people’s accents seems at best juvenile. Discussing Ohio voters and the issue of Barack Obama’s education in a madrassa, Daulatzai parodies their pronunciation of the word “Muslim” as “Muzz-lum” (p. xiv). Unmentioned is the fact that Ohio during that same 2008 campaign voted for Obama by a hefty 4.6 percent margin, indicating that a majority of Ohioans overcame the underlying racism supposedly indicated by their thick accents.

In this genre of writing, the breezy terminology and mockery are meant to show the author’s insight and ability to see beyond the veil. The idea is that the author and reader share the same beliefs and suppositions and thus do not need to go down the
silly road of having to define terms and trying to present the already discredited side of an argument. One can have a good time and laugh at the people in the flyover zone.

The problem is that one can ignore one’s own suppositions. Daulatzai does not really explore, for example, the way African Americans were themselves indulging in Orientalism by treating Islam as a prop. Daulatzai refers to this euphemistically as “mapping Third World solidarity against white supremacy onto the racial terrain of the United States” (p. 29), but he means it in a positive way. He lauds Malcolm X as a theorizer of global exploitation, whose essays “laid bare to both U.S.-based Blacks and those in the Third World, that white supremacy is a global phenomenon endemic to the very fabric of European and American identity” (p. 29). Surely the works of African decolonizers made this clear, too, and it was not all due to the (relatively late-to-the-game) Malcolm X? Did they really need an American to tell them these obvious truths? In any case, Daulatzai provides no evidence for his statements; we are just meant to accept them and celebrate Malcolm X’s wisdom and daring.

Despite the grave flaws of this book, it occasionally offers some interesting insights. The interaction of African Americans with Islam is a great topic, and Daulatzai has clearly read and thought a lot about it. He is right to say that overseas religions and ideologies remain attractive for many Americans who do not feel part of the mainstream. He is also bold in linking Cold War interactions with the late to post–Cold War era, the sort of broad-brush look at an issue that is too often missing from small-bore academic writing. It is also interesting to see Daulatzai overlay cultural phenomena such as blaxploitation films or hip-hop on the historical narrative, although again a lot of these artists may simply be indulging in exoticism.

In this sense, the book is a reaction to traditional academic writing. Even if one can applaud Daulatzai’s desire to blend history with kulturkritik, it is a pity that he so quickly discards the good aspects of the scientific approach. Choosing one’s words prudently and arguing from a carefully constructed platform of factuality are far more powerful and enduring than a rhetorical blast.


Reviewed by Steven Aftergood, Federation of American Scientists

The President’s Intelligence Advisory Board is a little-known, rarely studied appendage of the U.S. intelligence community. Although the board is a purely advisory body with no executive or operational function, and although its handful of members meet only intermittently, it has played a surprisingly influential role at crucial moments in the history of U.S. intelligence since it was established by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1956.
Many fundamental developments in the structure of today’s intelligence community are traceable, at least in part, to the advisory board’s studies and recommendations. These include the creation of the Defense Intelligence Agency, the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency’s directorate of science and technology, and the rise of the defense attaché system, among other building blocks of the intelligence bureaucracy. More generally, the board has been engaged in almost every intelligence policy issue of consequence over more than five decades, from defining the role of the Director of Central Intelligence, to evaluating the conduct of covert action, overhead reconnaissance, counterintelligence policy, and other activities.

The advisory board appears to have been most effective in its earlier years, when the structures of Cold War intelligence were at a formative stage. At that time, presidents were more frequently attentive to the board’s advice, and the apparatus of congressional intelligence oversight was not yet in place. The board suffered a self-inflicted blow to its prestige from the 1976 Team B exercise, which produced a scathing review of intelligence on the Soviet threat that was perceived to be an intensely partisan rather than impartial product. In later years, the stature of the board was further diminished by the practice of using appointments to it as a reward for presidential campaign supporters and fundraisers who had no particular expertise in intelligence matters. When George W. Bush was president, appointees to the board included the owner of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team and the co-owner of the Cleveland Browns football team. Their contribution to U.S. intelligence policy, if any, is unknown.

The book under review is the first sustained treatment of the advisory board (better known through most of its duration as the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board or PFIAB), recounting its origins, development, and activities, as far as these can be known or discovered.

Even within the challenging domain of intelligence studies, the history of the PFIAB is a particularly daunting subject. Not only do many the board’s records from the Cold War period remain classified, so do almost all of the relevant files since George H. W. Bush’s presidency. Even records that might have been declassified often remain sequestered behind an independent claim of executive privilege.

The authors of Privileged and Confidential have scoured presidential libraries for every scrap of available information regarding the PFIAB and have filled in numerous gaps through dozens of interviews with former board members and staff. With abundant footnotes to archival sources as well as references to board products and other records that remain currently inaccessible, the authors have provided a useful and stimulating guide for future research. While unavoidably incomplete, the book is the most thorough account of the PFIAB we are likely to have for some years to come.

In some respects, the book is almost too thorough. The authors seem to have included every last bit of information they uncovered, no matter how ephemeral or slight its meaning. While the capsule biographies of all of the dozens of past PFIAB members may be useful, the discussion of candidates who were not actually named to the board is of less interest. The number of meetings between a president and the
board may be a measure of the board’s activity and an indication of its access, but the potential significance of the fact that President John F. Kennedy’s meeting with the board on 9 March 1963, lasted from precisely “10:23 to 11:15 a.m.” (p. 107) is harder to conceive. This all-inclusive approach occasionally gives the book a raw, undigested texture.

At some points, the authors seem to succumb to the vocational hazard of over-estimating the importance of their chosen topic. It is hard to credit the view that the PFIAB, a part-time advisory board, is one of the “potentially most influential parts of the U.S. intelligence community” (p. 3). It is even harder to accept the claim that after President Jimmy Carter disbanded the board he “paid a political price for doing so in the 1980 election” (p. 2). It is difficult to imagine that even a single vote could have turned on the fate of the PFIAB (which was soon revived by President Ronald Reagan).

Throughout the book, the authors seek to identify the sources of the board’s value and its shifting influence. Key factors appear to be the qualifications of the members, the board’s relationship to the president, the president’s own management style, the pressure of events, and the “bureaucratic space” remaining after the growth of the national security establishment, including the creation of the congressional oversight committees.

Beyond its documentary and analytical components, the book also contains an overlay of advocacy. The authors wish to see an invigorated advisory board, with formalized functions and responsibilities. To that end, they present a menu of recommendations, including term limits for members, annual reports, and even an independent panel to study the PFIAB itself. But because the board’s most fruitful periods of activity derived from its informal, freewheeling character, as the book itself amply shows, recommendations to institutionalize the PFIAB may strike readers as incongruous and even counterproductive.


Reviewed by Günter Bischof, University of New Orleans

The study of World War II prisoners of war (POWs) has been a cottage industry over the past decade. The comparative treatment of POWs on all fronts has been the main focus. Many diaries and other documents of POWs have been published, and exhibits have been staged (an exhibit on U.S. POWs in Nazi Germany, “Guest of the Third Reich,” enjoyed large audiences in the first half of 2013 at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans). Now comes this richly illustrated volume of essays on “representations” (visual, film, literature, exhibitions) and the historical memory of returned German POWs in the Soviet Union after World War II. The German case of-
fers complexity because circumstances for returning POWs in the two Germanys (the Federal Republic of Germany and the Communist German Democratic of Germany) differed so markedly. The reception of the “Heimkehrer” and the production of public memories clashed. As Frank Biess has already shown in Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany (2006), West Germany pampered its returning POWs as “victims” of Stalinism, whereas East Germany eschewed any mention of their traumatization in the Soviet camps. The horrific tales of the returned POWs helped form the core anti-Communist identity in the FRG, but similar accounts had to be suppressed in the GDR to demonstrate solidarity with the Soviet ally. What later became known as post-traumatic stress disorder was treated among returnees to the FRG, but it had to be glossed over in the GDR and thus must have continued to weigh heavily on the returned POWs.

The essays in the volume under review add considerable depth to this tale of POW returnees to the two postwar German states. The volume is based on papers written for a 2008 conference organized by the German Historical Museum and the Institute of Contemporary History in Berlin. The essays blend together unusually well for an edited volume. Elke Scherstjanoi’s introduction on all kinds of “pictures” (Bilder) under discussion here—“constructs” of visual, acoustic, and both self-experienced and mediated impressions (p. 2)—is tight; her historiographical grounding of the growing field of POWs studies anemic. Scherstjanoi adds two more essays to the volume—one on the images of POWs proliferating individual and (the formerly two) Germanys’ cultural memories, the other on Soviet female doctors. Based on more than ten years of collecting oral histories of voennoplennye (Russian for POWs), most of them living in the former East Germany, she constructs a multiplicity of competing images of German POWs kept in Soviet captivity. They are associated with the principal stations of their captivity (capture, transport in cattle cars, being robbed of all possessions, work and life behind barbed wire, tensions between regular and privileged Antifa POWs, helpful Russian female doctors). These “images” are also the principal topoi recurring in all the representations in film and literature discussed by the contributors to this book. They are richly illustrated by Günter Agde’s documentation of images from the best-known West German postwar POW movies and Soviet documentaries about World War II.

Both Birgit Schwelling’s and Andrea von Hengel’s contributions deal with the little-known Verband der Heimkehrer, Kriegsgefangenen und Vermisstenangehörigen (VdH), a powerful West German organization started in 1950 to lobby for the return of some 30,000 German POWs still held in Soviet captivity years after the war ended. They had been put on trial in 1947–1949 and convicted as “war criminals,” often in show trials. The VdR lobbied with the West German public to keep alive the memory of the suffering German “victims” held in Soviet camps, some of them until 1956. In addition, the VdH lobbied in the political arena to give the returnees compensation for their suffering. Von Hegel analyzes the traveling exhibit the VdH put together in 1951 and sent to 138 German cities until the 1970s—with changing content over time. Some 2.15 million Germans saw this traveling exhibit (p. 72), which defined in
the West German public memory the “martyrdom” of German POWs—the crimes of perpetrators on the Eastern front were simply ignored. The exhibit contained personal items smuggled out of the Soviet camps from returned POWs, as well as many works of art and images. The exhibit was staged dramatically in a sacred space attacking Soviet abuses. The “one-sided” show sent a message that relied on Nazi propaganda of “Bolshevist inferior human beings” and culturally superior Germans who nobly suffered the indignities of Soviet captivity. Iconic images of German POWs with a bald pate suffering behind barbed wire illustrate this fine analysis of a theme rarely addressed in POW research.

Essays on West German and East German literary works dealing with the fate of POWs illustrate key themes. Berthold Petzinna’s two articles focus on autobiographical reports and illustrations in books by returned POWs from the 1950s. These starkly illustrated autobiographical reports by returned POWs became huge bestsellers in the FRG in the 1950s. The suffering, huddled masses of clean-shaven POWs behind iconic barbed wire in far-flung and snow-covered Siberian camps defined this master narrative (also advocated by the VdH), providing the FRG core images of Soviet captivity. Helmut Peitsch shows how West German writers such as Hans Bender wrote novels in the 1960s demythologizing the heroization and the wallowing in self-pity characteristic of the earlier uncritical autobiographical representations. Lenore Krenzlin analyzes how the East German authorities put together a counternarrative to challenge the West German image of the “barbaric” Soviet military prisons. The official GDR publication Kriegsgefangene in der Sowjetunion (1949) reminded the Germans that the Soviet Union had been attacked by Nazi Germany—with large swaths of the country destroyed and millions killed. In the East German reading, the German POWs made amends for German war guilt, rebuilding the suffering Soviet Union in the form of labor reparations. In this competing East German narrative of relative victimization, German POWs were treated decently in Soviet camps and suffered no more than Soviet civilians had during the war.

Cinematic production was similarly bifurcated between the two Germanys. West German film and television productions in the 1960s followed the lead of autobiographical and artistic narratives and portrayed heroic POWs who were “intellectually and morally superior” (p. 158) to the barbaric and “ Asiatic” Soviet captors. East German DEFA film production ignored the topic of the Eastern front and German POWs in the Soviet Union altogether until the 1970s. The few movies made in the GDR about German POWs were differentiating and psychologically subtle, portraying anti-fascist heroes critical of the Nazis and rebutting Western tales of atrocities and Soviet Untermenschen. Elena Müller adds an essay about German POWs in Soviet/Russian film production. Soviet citizens had private memories of German POWs, but public memory ignored them. In postwar Soviet society the fate of German POWs was a taboo subject. Literary and film production during the perestroika years began to pay attention to the millions of German POWs who had helped to rebuild the Soviet Union. Film production under Vladimir Putin returned to the image of German POWs as “craven snitches” (p. 218), conforming to Putin’s desire for a set public nar-
The theme of this short collection of essays is stated early and plainly: “In the end, crises have strengthened European integration” (p. 3), and “There has never been more European integration than in the context or aftermath of crisis” (p. 6). These statements are true but are hardly new. The same point has been made by many in the past. This is perhaps why the process “causes both fascination and frustration” (p. 79), resulting in too much crisis talk that, Jurgen Elvert notes, is “inspired by staunch euro-skeptics to back up their respective points of view” (p. 53). “Of all the international bodies I have known,” Belgium’s Paul-Henry Spaak once thundered, “I have never found any more timorous and more impotent.” This was when the European project was small and rather modest, not yet even a Common Market. Even so, the theme is worth repeating, especially now when an existential crisis threatens Europe’s capacity to sustain its past achievements, let alone proceed with new steps toward institutional finality.

The case studies presented by the authors of this volume, who are all Germans, paradoxically make of each crisis a compelling reason for hope in the future. They take the analyst away from fashionable predictions of an imminent collapse of European institutions, an outcome that has often been announced but has never actually materialized. No surprise that the relance européenne to which this pattern refers escapes translation: Europe, too, has a logic that is difficult to comprehend—even in French. What Mathias Jopp and Udo Diedrichs conclude from the Yugoslav crisis is meant specifically for the foreign, security, and defense policy of the European Union (EU), but it applies equally to the entire EU process: “It is more promising to analyze [Europe] in a long term perspective” and compare what the EU can do now to what it (in its earlier incarnations) was able to do many years or decades before (p. 105).

These essays were written at a time when two negative referenda on the European Constitutional Treaty, in France and the Netherlands, looked especially damaging and potentially fatal. To guide the “time of reflection” ahead, Ludger Kuhnhardt, an able scholar but also a past policy practitioner, helped organize a series of seminars at St Antony’s College, Oxford. From the European Defense Community to the failed ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, we are reminded of past crossroads when Europe was seemingly about to go astray: the identity crises of the 1960s, the “empty
chair” crisis and the Luxembourg Compromise, the Werner commission’s feckless plans for economic and monetary union, the Danish “No to Maastricht” (and the near-no from the French), and the endless debate over a so-called constitution for the then-12 EU members—not to mention the “unexpected detours” of enlargement and economic and monetary union. We know now that these were not all “existential crises,” though we must also remember they were “severe” in their days (p. 50). Even though the cases are well known, they still remind their readers of this odd reality about hard things: they are indeed hard. Bringing Europe back to life after the suicidal wars fought in the first half of the century, and recasting it as the European Union it is today, is “truly remarkable,” insists Hans-Gert Pottering (at the time president of the European Parliament), and is “perhaps the most seriously underrated political achievement” of the past century (p. 132). On this score at least, there can be no doubt: the three phases of the integration process—implementation, reconstruction, and Europeanization—have produced an unfinished “region-state” (as Vivien Schmidt puts it) and, whatever happens next, the age of the Westphalian nation-states is finished.

Although this short volume delivers on its main theme, its individual case studies are often incomplete, certainly uneven, and regretfully dated. Given the caliber of the contributors, this is likely to be a matter of space: most of the cases introduced here need more than the few pages they were offered. Sources, too, are surprisingly limited—almost exclusively in English or German (and few in translation). Nor is much attention placed on the U.S. role in precipitating or defusing any of these crises. Yet, surrounding the European Defense Community (EDC) was the U.S. (empty) threat of an “agonizing reappraisal,” and between the “no” vote at the French National Assembly and the relance meeting in Messina the following year was the U.S.-managed Paris Treaty in October 1955. The volume, however, contains not a word about the U.S. role, as if the EDC debate had unfolded in an Atlantic vacuum. The U.S. role is similarly neglected, even ignored, when discussing the Yugoslav crisis and several attempts at fiscal and political union.

The release of this volume’s first paperback edition in 2011 is not surprising. Once again, Europe faces a serious crisis—truly existential, this time. Surprisingly, no new contribution was specifically written for this edition. I know: the conference is over, the funding is exhausted, the publisher was unwilling to wait, and the participants may have been unavailable. But somehow a not-so-”select” bibliography with nearly 240 titles should include more than only one entry with a publication date past 2006. More substantively, at least an editor’s preface to the paperback edition would have helped update the relevance of the book. As it now stands, the volume’s contributions all look so dated as to be nearly quaint. Thus, Michael Gehler relies on the Austrian presidency as “a case study for the structural dilemmas of short-term EU presidencies” (p. 110), and, closing the book, Pottering’s “final reflection” is limited to “European and German politics as they have developed in 2005 and 2006” (p. 140)—“in” 2005 and 2006, not “since.” That allows George W. Bush and Angela Merkel to make their first and only appearance (p. 141), as if the U.S. president had been a pot-
ted plant during the previous five to six years, “in” 2001–2006, and as if the German chancellor has not been testing the boundaries of any new relance “since” that time. That is not enough.


Reviewed by Carole Fink, Ohio State University

In this meticulously researched, well-written account, A. Dirk Moses challenges the widespread belief that the Federal Republic of Germany “developed a healthy democratic culture centered around [sic] memory of the Holocaust” and, indeed, “has become a model of how post-totalitarian and postgenocidal societies ‘come to terms with the past’” (p. 1). Underscoring the many shocks that have racked the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) since 1990—the assaults on asylum seekers and foreigners, the persistent gulf between Ossis and Wessis, the fierce controversy over the Holocaust memorial in the country’s capital, the revelations of the Nazi pasts of key FRG eminences, the swell of literature of Allied war crimes and of German victimization during and after World War II, and the calls to “normalize” and extol the German identity—Moses has set out to reexamine the political, intellectual, and cultural history of Cold War West Germany and the nature of its transformation since 1949.

According to Moses, for 60 years the “1945 generation” has been the key interpreter of West Germany’s “legitimacy dilemma” (p. 51): its links with the Third Reich and the Holocaust. After coming of age in Nazi Germany and experiencing the full brunt of defeat at the end of World War II, a distinctive cohort of primarily male historians, social scientists, writers, and journalists immediately split into two camps: the “German Germans” who, despite the Nazi aberration, held largely positive views of the German past and its institutions and promoted an “integrative” republicanism; and the “non-German-Germans” who stressed the need to cleanse German politics and society of totalitarian remnants and promoted a “redemptive” republicanism. For Moses, this fundamental dichotomy—far more than the economic modernization of the 1950s or the cultural modernization that emerged from 1968—formed the essential political and intellectual structure in which the past and present were assimilated by the West German population and also permeated the early years of the Federal Republic.

After presenting his intellectual framework in chapters 1–3, Moses selects two representative figures: in chapter 4, the German-German Wilhelm Hennis (b. 1923), a World War II sailor, front soldier, prisoner of war, and prominent postwar right-liberal political scientist who sought to distance the FRG from the Third Reich by linking fascism with the travails of modernizing societies; and in chapter 5 the non-German-German Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), a former Hitler Youth member, wartime field nurse, and prolific postwar social philosopher who from the start cast doubt
on the FRG establishment for its virulent anti-Communism, failure to purge former Nazis, and uncritical reverence for the “fiery Moloch of technology” (p. 121). In chapter 6, Moses describes one of the chief battlegrounds in the 1960s, university reform, in which Habermas was pitted against the political philosopher and education minister Hermann Lübke in a debate over cleansing higher education of historical myths, with the former urging more rigorous critical thinking and the latter calling for the removal of all politics from the campus. Moving into the national realm, in chapter 7 Moses deftly links the intellectuals’ swelling historical debates with the FRG’s rocky transition from Christian Democratic Union to Social Democratic Party leadership. In chapter 8 he examines the challenges of student radicalism in the late 1960s and the terrorism of the 1970s, and in chapters 9–11 he discusses the nationalist revival under Helmut Kohl, the raucous Historikerstreit, the new challenges of multiculturalism, and the post-1990 debates over the future of the nation-state. The climax came in 1998 with Martin Walser’s controversial speech demanding the end of Germany’s eternal stigma and the immediate rejoinders by the non-German side that stirred the waters nationally and internationally.

But is the German stigma eternal? In his concluding chapter, Moses suggests that the long dispute over German national memory—based either on solidarity with the Third Reich’s victims or with the perpetrators—has begun to “dissolve with the generational change early in the twenty-first century” (p. 263). Moses identifies the moment of transition in 2006, when the hotly contested Berlin Holocaust Memorial was finally completed (and at once became less a site of mourning or contrition than a lucrative tourist attraction and local playground). This was also the year of Germany’s festive hosting of the World Cup as well as of the dispatch of FRG troops to patrol the border between Israel and Lebanon, an unprecedented moment in national and international history. Moses concludes that with the ’45ers’ debates now receding into history, today’s Germans are negotiating “their identity dilemmas around the axes of ethnicity and immigration—just like any other country” (p. 283).

The book’s compelling schema has added considerable depth and detail to FRG history, but it also raises important questions. Traumatic national memory remains a slippery intellectual category, one that is always difficult to document precisely, especially in the gray areas of scholarly polemics and politics. Moreover, any binary formulation is subject to question, and this book—which largely excludes female, non-ethnic German, and younger voices—offers an incomplete picture of the range of West German intellectual and political culture over an eventful 60-year period. Although almost absent until the 1990s from the chaired professorships, research institutes, and elite publications, all three groups contributed to the FRG’s ideological transformation during the Cold War—as teachers and journalists; local and national politicians; and students, workers, and civil-rights activists.

Finally, the supposed extinction of the ’45ers’ debate is a highly speculative guess: how can we determine whether Germans 50 years hence will have ceased to dispute the singularity of Adolf Hitler and Auschwitz and their relationship to them?
As any other work in an as yet seldom frequented field, this book should be seen as a most welcome addition to an emerging body of literature that discusses various aspects of private and everyday life in Communist times and the ways of remembering life under Communism in the post-socialist era in Eastern Europe. Much of the book, authored exclusively by female scholars, is devoted to women’s experiences. Even though the volume includes one essay each on Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, the majority of the essays deal with the Balkan countries, especially the lands of the former Yugoslavia. In spite of the suggestive book title and the ambitious, conceptually oriented introductory essay by the editor, the essays in the book are notable for a wide range of diverse themes, organizing concepts, methodological approaches, and source material. In this respect, the lack of explicit discussion in the book (the introductory essay excepted) about “normality,” and about how this “normality” was negotiated in state-socialist daily life, is very surprising.

Historians might find too many of the chapters lacking in contextualization and less than satisfactory in providing a sense of temporality within the Communist era of the particular countries discussed. Sanja Potkonjak’s essay (pp. 195–215) discussing the lives of three generations of women under Yugoslav socialism offers little reflection on or questioning of the changes that at least her grandmother and her mother must have experienced under and directly after Josip Broz Tito. When a narrative about lived experience under state socialism is to be assessed, “born in the 1970s” (p. 202) is a rather loose way of determining the age of someone whose experience is being considered. After all, it presumably matters whether the person in question lived through the last short decade of Communist Yugoslavia as a small child (which would have been the case for those born in 1979) or as a teenager or young adult (for those born at the start of the 1970s).

Oral history has been extensively used by many of the authors, which is understandable considering the nature of the project. But the craftsmanship spent on source-critical work, on considering the “demography” of the interviewees, on discussing the nature of the narratives they tell, and on providing the general historical context is highly uneven. For example, the contrast between Eszter Zsófia Tóth’s judicious work in her outstanding essay on identity construction in the life stories of former members of the Liberation Brigade of the Budapest Hosiery Factory and Hana Pelikánová’s chapter on housing in everyday life strategies under the post-1968 normalization regime in Czechoslovakia is formidable. Pelikánová fails to consider that the stories “ordinary people” tell in oral history interviews are not merely innocent “recollections” conveying facts from the past but also discourses catering to present needs and interests of self-justification. This should have been quite obvious from the “asymmetry” apparent in the narratives in which respondents explained the connec-
tion between Communist party membership and access to council flats in their own
and in others’ cases (pp. 189–190).

Apparently, no essay collection on modern everyday life is conceivable without
the presence of Michel de Certeau’s ideas about the tacit resistance against the con-
sumerist regime evident in everyday practices of consumers. Valentina Gueorguieva’s
highly interesting piece, “Resistance in Consumption: In Search of a Negotiating
Agent,” starts out with a perceptive rendering of de Certeau’s theory of consumption
as not merely assimilation or internalization but as appropriation. Then she proceeds
to discuss the daily consumption of a Mr. Kumanov, a secondary school teacher in
Bulgaria, and his family from the early 1960s until the early 1990s. Thanks to
Kumanov’s meticulous diary entries, Gueorguieva was able to reconstruct the family’s
food consumption over four decades. Revealing a striking feature of the Kumanovs’
eating habits (the fact that they bought very little meat or other ingredients for cook-
ing because they relied extensively on the services of canteens at their work places and
schools), Gueorguieva claims that the family represents a de-Certeaudian case of
“making do,” a tactic of “poaching,” or a victory of the “weak” over the “powerful.” To
this reviewer’s mind, however, the phenomenon in question is neither “poaching” nor
a victory over the system and its powerful managers, nor is it a practice of “resistance.”
On the contrary, the Kumanovs acted as “rational consumers” and acquired their daily
meat in the form that was cheapest and most easily accessible: as meals in (or taken
away from) the canteens. But this was also a choice “the system” intended for them to
make. The widespread infrastructure of canteens at work places in the socialist coun-
tries of Eastern Europe was a way of regimenting the workforce and keeping good dis-
cipline, which would have been much harder had they been allowed to take a long
enough break to go home for lunch in the middle of the day (especially because the
women, who traditionally would have cooked those lunches, were also employed in
various industries that needed as many workers as were available). The Kumanovs’
choice also fit the regime’s conception of an “ideologically correct” (because collectiv-
ist) form of consumption.

This should hardly be a reason to be disappointed with the Kumanovs or with
Hana Pelikánová’s respondents who did whatever was necessary to solve their housing
problem. We cannot blame, and it is not for us to judge them for how they failed to
put up “resistance.” As a former East German citizen states in Péter Forgács’s recent art
documentary, German Unity @ Balaton, “even when the political circumstances aren’t
always ideal, you need to make the best of everyday life.” One of the main advantages
of the study of everyday life is that it prompts the historian to take the complexities of
the social world seriously and go beyond the black-and-white images of the politically
and ideologically preconceived cliché, as is well shown by Simina Bădică’s contribu-
tion to the book under review (pp. 121–149). Everyday life is a domain in which
Vaclav Havel’s distinction between “a life in truth” versus “a life in lies” has little if any
relevance.
In this study Werner Lippert provides an account of West German Ostpolitik and U.S. détente, comparing and tracking their interaction. He covers the period 1968–1982, using U.S. and German archives extensively, as well as memoirs and other sources, to follow the flow of arguments within and between the two capitals, Washington and Bonn.

In interpreting his material, Lippert addresses three main questions. What were the similarities and differences, and hence the agreements and conflicts, between the policies of Willy Brandt, Egon Bahr, and Helmut Schmidt, on the one hand, and Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter, on the other? Did these policies, on balance, extend or truncate the life span of Communism in Europe? How did they contribute to what Lippert sees as the long-term energy dilemma facing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)?

In both narrative and interpretation Lippert offers a persuasive story. I have reservations about some of his conclusions, and the book has some weaknesses here and there. But it is a solid contribution to our understanding of a crucial part of Cold War history.

One thing that clearly emerges is that Bonn's and Washington's approaches to Moscow were not coordinated. During this period the two Western capitals were continually at loggerheads over their dealings with the Soviet Union. Nixon's suspicion of Brandt as a “socialist” was evidently instinctive. Lippert shows how Brandt was foiled time and again by Moscow in his search to have West Berlin formally treated as in some sense a part of West Germany, but he still managed to alarm Nixon and Kissinger over his pursuit of trade deals without, in their view, any political quid pro quo. Brandt, meanwhile, is shown to have been increasingly confident that he could act on his Eastern policies with considerable independence, without jeopardizing the security provided by the United States.

Lippert chronicles the ebb and flow of policies in considerable detail. He argues that, with the ratification of the Eastern Treaties by the Bundestag in May 1972, the Soviet Union began to be seen in West Germany as more of a “normal country” (pp. 99–100). This is a difficult proposition to test, but Lippert makes a good case for it.

Subsequent developments—the short-lived détente between the two superpowers, the Yom Kippur War and the OPEC price rises, the Helsinki Final Act, Afghanistan and the Carter-era sanctions—are all woven into Lippert’s account of well-nigh unrelieved misunderstandings and friction between Bonn and Washington.

The differences are clearly set out; the reasons for them not quite so clearly. Lippert cites a “structural divide” in the economic interests of Europe and the United States and between their perceptions of the Soviet Union (p. 151). It would have been helpful to point out the geographic basis for the differing economic interests. The is-
sue is not simply that West Germany was, as a united Germany still is, one of the world’s leading machinery exporters, and that the Soviet Union needed to import modern machinery. The gravity model of foreign trade, linking the relative size of bilateral trade flows to the economic size and distance between each pair of countries, predicts that Europe and the USSR, or these days Europe and Russia, will trade more intensively together than the USSR or Russia would be likely to trade with the United States. Distance matters. For example, in 2012, according to Russian customs data, 49.7 percent of Russia’s merchandise trade was with the European Union and only 3.5 percent with the United States.

Lippert’s answer to his second big question—did détente and Ostpolitik lengthen or shorten the life of the Communist political order in Europe?—is intriguing. He suggests that these policies, together with the Helsinki Accords, probably hastened the dismantling of Communism in Central-Eastern Europe but not in the USSR. He makes a case for this, but separating the two developments is surely problematic. After all, Gorbachev’s relaxation of Moscow’s control over its Warsaw Pact partners hastened the collapse of Communism in Central Europe from 1989 on.

Lippert’s third question concerns what he calls “NATO’s energy dilemma.” He argues that the oil and gas pipeline deals made between West Germany and the Soviet Union over the objections voiced by successive U.S. administrations left NATO with a problem of dependence on Soviet—or now Russian—hydrocarbons. Oil and gas unquestionably flow through pipelines, many of which were constructed during the Cold War. But if the pipelines had not been built then, they would probably have been built in the post-Soviet period.

The NATO “problem” is with natural gas, not oil. Switching suppliers of oil is generally feasible. The Soviet Union was in no position to export natural gas to the United States, even if Washington had wanted it to. Pipelines to the United States were scarcely feasible. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) was in its early days in the 1970s and never existed in the Soviet Union. The first LNG facility on Russian soil (in Sakhalin) started operating in 2009, and the project that put it into place was led by Shell. For these reasons, internal NATO disagreements in the 1970s were not a necessary or sufficient reason for latter-day dependencies. It all came down to geography again.

Lippert’s deployment of primary German and U.S. sources is impressive. It would be unreasonable to expect him to cover the Soviet side of the story in similar depth. It is unfortunate, though, that he has not checked more carefully some of the Soviet details that he does cite. In particular, the book implies (pp. 105–106) that Marshal Andrei Grechko headed what Lippert refers to as the ‘International Department’. If Lippert has in mind the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, this looks odd. That International Department was not a part of the military, and from 1955 to 1986 it was headed by Boris Ponomarev. Grechko, a career army officer, was the minister of defense. The point is not an important one, but those who know Soviet history will find it irritating.

The same applies to a scattering of typographic errors (e.g., “posed to strike” on
p. 147) and occasional awkward turns of phrase. Here the author has been let down by
the publisher—or should we no longer expect publishers to provide decent editing?
The book remains, despite these quibbles, a solid and informative study.

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Michael David-Fox, Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western
xii + 396 pp.

Reviewed by Silvio Pons, Gramsci Institute and University of Rome

In this ambitious book, Michael David-Fox presents a multifaceted analysis of Soviet
cultural relations with the West during the interwar period. He explores the relation-
ship between Western intellectuals and the Soviet authorities by combining two cru-
cial issues that have been discussed separately in historical scholarship: the reception
of the Soviet experiment abroad and the construction of Soviet myths. “The center of
the book’s inquiry,” David-Fox writes, “is the mutual interaction between Western ob-
servers and travelers with their Soviet hosts and the Soviet system.” This approach is
profoundly innovative and marks a real breakthrough in the field.

David-Fox dismisses simplistic explanations of Western admiration of Soviet so-
cialism, arguing that the visitors’ reactions were often more nuanced—and sometimes
even less positive—than previously assumed, and that their motives and experiences
should be better understood. Two aspects seem particularly important in his analysis.
First, the Soviet myth formed a complex compound of different elements that could
exert attract people in various ways when confronted with the crisis of capitalism and
liberalism. Its attraction depended less on the revolutionary legacy than on images and
practices of modernity, such as state interventionism, social security, economic plan-
ning, mass mobilization, and women’s emancipation. Second, Soviet cultural diplo-
macy was seriously developed and effective in influencing a selected non-Communist
Western opinion. David-Fox focuses not only on the Western visitors but also on
leading Soviet actors and their capacities to build relations of “friendship,” convinc-
ingly demonstrating how the story of Soviet treatment of visitors was not just an en-
terprise in deception.

The book draws on extensive research in the Russian archives—particularly,
thought not uniquely, with the files of the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad
(VOKS)—which provides invaluable insight and helps to show how interactions be-
tween hosts and visitors actually worked. In a series of fascinating vignettes, David-
Fox takes the reader into an intricate world. The Soviet side reveals not only a bureau-
cratic face made of overlapping administrations but also the skills of Bolshevik intel-
lectuals who shaped cultural diplomacy and their ingenious approaches. David-Fox
groups them under the rubric of Stalinist Westernizers, different personalities master-
ing European languages and culture—such as Ol’ga Kameneva, the wife of Lev
Kamenev and sister of Lev Trotsky; Alexander Arosev; Mikhail Kol’tsov; Ilya Ehren-
burg; and, obviously, Maxim Gorky—played a very significant role. Before her removal in Iosif Stalin’s “Revolution from Above,” Kameneva created basic patterns of cultural relations in Berlin, London, and Paris—inventing a kind of “syncretism” between the Soviet discourse and non-Soviet sympathetic attitudes that was fueled by travel to and from the Soviet Union and that would reemerge by the mid-1930s during the season of anti-fascism (p. 90). The freelance Marxist intellectual Walter Benjamin traveled to Moscow in 1927 and afterward acknowledged the role of the Berlin Society of Friends, even though he criticized it for its de-politicization. But even non-Marxist personalities were occasionally involved in travel and contacts. Among them was John Maynard Keynes.

David-Fox analyzes the moral and intellectual ambiguities of Gorky—the most prominent symbol of Soviet cultural diplomacy by the end of the 1920s—as particularly revealing of the regime’s evolution. Gorky’s early criticism of the Red Terror did not prevent him from embracing the Stalinist perspective, tolerating its murderous consequences, and even praising its repressive institutions—as in the case of the Solovki concentration camp. His personal relationship with Stalin was based on the shared anti-peasant vision of a new advanced Russia that emerged from the Soviet experiment and would radically overcome its historical dilemmas in the competition with the West. Gorky’s vision was not that different from those of some foreigners and cannot be explained exclusively in terms of political calculations. What he did was to legitimize the discourse on Soviet achievements already developed in the 1920s by insisting on belief in human and cultural transformations. He shaped the fabric for a “redefinition of reality” (p. 155) that supported the Stalinist model, while producing self-deception on a massive scale.

In the light of new evidence on mutual interactions, the part of the book revisiting the “fellow travelers” is intriguing. Concrete exchanges encouraged public empathy and channeled praise of Soviet socialism. The flexibility of the Communist myth and the effectiveness of Soviet cultural diplomacy are best demonstrated by the case of Fabian socialists. George Bernard Shaw’s visit to the Soviet Union in 1931 was probably one of “the greatest success stories” in this respect (p. 212). The role of a prominent Soviet diplomat, Ivan Maiskii, in inspiring Beatrice and Sidney Webb to undertake their book on Soviet civilization—combined with their visits in 1932 and 1934—can hardly be overestimated. The exception represented by André Gide—who in 1936 broke the rules of friendship and famously criticized the Soviet Union after his visit—depended in many ways on the failure to seduce him, on the mistake to let him talk with Boris Pasternak, and on Stalin’s decision not to meet with him, quite probably in order to avoid the embarrassing issue of homosexual rights. Significantly, in the subsequent campaign launched against Gide as a class enemy, “the personal became the very essence of the political” (p. 268), whereas it had been overlooked when he was celebrated as a friend.

Although Western intellectuals may have been inclined to delude themselves about the Soviet Union, an explanatory framework for their blindness still has to be established. David-Fox’s study gets much closer than others to providing such a framework by showing how predetermined convictions and projections could work because
an entire set of relations, experiences, and discourses were constructed. The relationship in itself played a key role because it stimulated “illusions of influence” and enhanced the role of the visitors (p. 246). This is, however, only one side of the story. The other side, no less important, is that the Soviet Union’s constant effort to exert influence over the West also affected the portrayals in Soviet cultural diplomacy. Here a long-standing problem connected the Soviet experience to prerevolutionary history—the persistence of the Russian sense of inferiority generated by the imperative to overcome backwardness in order to face the Western challenge. This syndrome was not really removed by the Bolshevik image of an anti-capitalist “alternative modernity.” But in the aftermath of Stalin’s Revolution from Above, the outcome of the self-representation of Soviet achievements was a new Stalinist notion of “superiority” that aimed at overturning the inferiority complex rooted in the Russian past. This notion represented “more than an injection of nationalism into communist ideology” (p. 287); it put an end to the golden age of cultural diplomacy as the majority of its Soviet protagonists fell victim to the Great Terror. This notion at the end of the 1930s prepared the ground for the dogma of the superiority of the socialist system that emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War and fueled the Soviet Cold War thereafter.

David-Fox portrays cultural diplomacy as an integral part of the international thrust that was central to Communist identity and mission. He rightly maintains that historians have failed to treat the international dimension as a key to understanding the Soviet experience. As he puts it, “the grand narratives of Soviet history have been constructed around a largely domestic story about the development of Soviet communism, with diplomacy and external crises thrown into the mix as they affect the meaning of the Soviet system.” Consequently, “the history of a regime with global aspirations and a frequently obsessive concern with the ‘cultured’ West, set in a multinational communist Mecca and served by cosmopolitan and well-traveled political and intellectual elites, was largely de-internationalized” (p. 313). David-Fox’s book testifies to the significance of an approach reversing canonic historiographical views of the Soviet experience.

Nevertheless, for this very reason, the multiple aspects of Soviet international policies should be taken even more into account. The distinction recurring in the book between Soviet policies motivated by ideological universalism and those motivated by the diplomatic effort to prevent isolation may be too clear-cut; after all, this distinction follows categories and institutions created by the Bolsheviks. The twofold source of Soviet conduct abroad led to a division of labor as well as conflict between the Communist International and the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs—and sometimes VOKS and its orientation toward intellectuals came also to be disputed. But such duplicity was embedded at the core of the Soviet hegemonic project. An exclusive focus on one part of the question—namely, the characters and goals of cultural diplomacy—may present Soviet efforts to achieve influence as more consistent than they actually were. David-Fox appropriately underlines the “sharpening clash of hegemony versus vigilance” that fully emerged in the 1930s in the Soviet approach to the outside world (p. 288). The point, though, is that the concept of hegemony was...
understood and employed in different ways by divergent and often competing figures. To what extent, in particular, did the Communist anti-fascist turn of the mid-1930s rely on solid conceptual bases and provide coherent policies, even before being compromised by the Soviet state’s security syndrome?

These remarks by no means detract from the importance of the book. David-Fox has offered us a rich and successful inquiry into the complex relation between Soviet Russia and the West. His historical reconstruction of Soviet cultural diplomacy highlights the place of the Communist experience in the wider context of European interwar intellectual debates. Even more important, it helps us to conceptualize Soviet international history and demonstrates that any historical account should acknowledge its relevance.

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Reviewed by Bruce Parrott, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

One serious weakness of most social-science research is that investigators know too little about the historical context and development of their own specialized fields of study. Without a sound knowledge of the broad political and intellectual trends that shaped prior scholarship, they have trouble viewing their own work from a larger critical perspective. This problem is compounded by scholars’ natural tendency to view the internal history of their specialty from an angle that gives pride of place to their own writings and emphasizes the novelty of their current research.

Until now, scholars working on Soviet and Russian topics have lacked a comprehensive account that contextualizes trends within their chosen academic field. Abbott Gleason’s Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War shed valuable light on a central issue in the study of Soviet politics, and over the years numerous other publications have usefully explored the achievements and shortcomings of researchers working on the Soviet system from other disciplinary perspectives. But none of these writings has provided a reliable historical account of the development of Soviet Studies as a whole, or of the interplay between Soviet Studies and broader political and intellectual trends in the United States during the Cold War.

This lacuna makes the publication of David Engerman’s Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America’s Soviet Experts especially welcome. The book treats the interaction between U.S. politics and scholarship on the USSR with a depth and subtlety unmatched by previous writers. It is a fitting sequel to Engerman’s Modernization from the Other Shore: American Intellectuals and the Romance of Russian Development, which traced U.S. attitudes toward the USSR during the interwar period. Know Your Enemy is based on a sophisticated knowledge of postwar American scholarship on the Soviet Union in five academic disciplines—history, literary studies, economics, sociology, and political science. The chapters devoted to each of these disciplines are both nuanced and
penetrating—making them an impressive intellectual accomplishment. Drawing extensively on archival materials, the book also presents a revealing institutional analysis of how Soviet Studies developed under U.S. government sponsorship and changed over time. Engerman argues that the field grew rapidly in the 1940s and 1950s, flourished in the 1960s, and then declined during the USSR’s final two decades.

The central theme of the book is the complex relationship between “Mars and Minerva”—the pursuit of knowledge relevant to the needs of U.S. policymakers versus the pursuit of knowledge of the Soviet system for its own sake. Soviet Studies first crystallized in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, and the field expanded rapidly after the war as the U.S. government sought a better understanding of its new rival for global hegemony. Fortunately for scholarship, most of the entrepreneurial academics and government officials who championed Soviet Studies construed the boundaries of the field to encompass not only the USSR’s current policies but also its history, economy, society, and culture. This broad definition of the field mitigated the tensions between scholars and government administrators. One significant consequence was that several of the field’s academic pioneers were disciplinary specialists who were drawn to study the USSR as a distinctive model of political and social organization that constituted an important subject for the development of their particular discipline. This pattern was exemplified by Alex Inkeles in sociology and Adam Ulam in the study of Soviet foreign policy.

For several decades, the connections between scholars and government policymakers were largely symbiotic. Two major examples are the government-funded Refugee Interview Project that analyzed the attitudes of displaced Soviet citizens after World War II and the Soviet Interview Project of the late 1970s that investigated the attitudes of Soviet Jews who had been allowed to emigrate to the West as a result of superpower détente. Although the close linkage with the government provoked some frictions, it did not produce a homogeneous view of the USSR among academics. Despite the charged political atmosphere during the Cold War, scholars adopted no single “party line.” Academics disagreed markedly with one another about the character of the USSR, and their individual views changed substantially over time.

In the 1970s and 1980s the conditions for scholarship on the USSR worsened. Unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, when funding was abundant and faculty positions were multiplying, the field began encountering severe material and institutional constraints. Moreover, it became entangled with the bitter public debate over détente. Many hardline critics of U.S. policy, typified by the intelligence community’s “Team B” report on Soviet military programs and objectives, believed that most Sovietologists had misjudged the USSR’s nature and strategic goals. Moreover, the prevailing conception of the field grew narrower. By the 1980s history and literary studies were increasingly treated as expendable luxuries, even though much of the social-scientific research on the USSR also became less rigorous. Partly in consequence, many of the individuals who claimed expertise on the USSR built their credentials more through punditry than through serious scholarly research based on primary sources. These intellectual ailments were intensified by the post-Vietnam estrangement between the U.S. government and the academy, as well as by the growing gap in-
side academia between area studies and the social-science disciplines. In most disciplines the connection between mainline research methods and the techniques adopted to study the USSR became increasingly tenuous.

These circumstances sharpened public controversies and academic debates about the Soviet system and its international behavior. Engerman treats these disputes in a fair-minded way. He avoids taking sides in the polemics about the supposed failure of Sovietology that began in the years immediately before the Soviet breakup and crescendoed dramatically afterward. Unlike the harshest critics of the field, he is fully cognizant of the difficulties of studying a highly secretive sociopolitical regime that went to great lengths to conceal many essential facts about itself. He is not afraid to flag what he regards as scholarly misjudgments—noting, for example, that many academics underestimated the significance of Mikhail Gorbachev’s accession to power. But he reaches a judicious overall conclusion: Taken as a whole, Sovietology was “full of gaffes but correct in its broad outlines” (pp. 327, 329). Just how large these gaffes were in the years leading up to the Soviet collapse remains a contentious question, and the answer depends on crucial epistemological assumptions about historical causality and human agency. It makes a profound difference whether one assumes that the ultimate collapse of the Soviet state was inevitable from the early days of the regime or became unavoidable many decades later through the calculations and miscalculations of leaders such as Boris Yeltsin and Gorbachev. As I see it, the Soviet breakup became the most likely outcome only in 1989 or 1990, and this assessment should temper retrospective judgments about the past failings of scholarly observers.

In any case, persisting debates about the USSR’s demise should not affect judgments about this splendid book. Thanks to its deep research and sophisticated analysis, the book offers contemporary scholars a unique perspective on the forces and influences that have shaped our profession. Anyone with a serious interest in the study of the Soviet Union should read it closely and ponder its lessons.


 Reviewed by Denise J. Youngblood, University of Vermont

The subtitle of this excellent book is misleading. *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin* does not cover the entire political history of the Stalinist cinema, but only through 1940. The history of Soviet cinema in the 1930s has, however, been one of considerable obfuscation, especially by adherents of the totalitarian model. Jamie Miller offers a fresh approach, showing that although the state exerted considerable control over cinema, its efforts were often chaotic, contradictory, and counterproductive. He argues that because of the Bolsheviks’ defensive mentality, which sought to “protect the communist ideal and Soviet power from being exposed as fraudulent” (p. 14), the intricate nature of the cinema could hardly have been otherwise. In eight
thematic chapters, which can be read out of order or separately without sacrificing meaning, Miller shows that Soviet cinema was a complex organism that defies a simplistic totalitarian interpretation.

The first chapter provides an overview of the development of the film industry. Boris Shumiatskii, head of the Soyuzkino state film trust and of the State Directorate for the Film and Photographic Industry, had grand plans for creating an entertainment “cinema for the millions” (p. 48), complete with a cine-city constructed in the region of the Black Sea. Some of these plans came to fruition: the sparkling musical comedies of Grigorii Aleksandrov were produced on Shumyatskii’s watch, for example. Others, like the Soviet “Hollywood,” did not. Shumyatskii strove to make cinema economically independent, which was a state goal, but in so doing he forgot to pay sufficient attention to political content, and he was arrested and executed in 1938. Political micromanagers took over, and it became ever more difficult to complete a film.

Because of stringent censorship, the possibility of creating a mass-entertainment cinema was remote, Shumyatskii’s labors notwithstanding. The censorship organs formed a complex web, with layer upon layer added during the 1930s. Of course, the ultimate censor was Iosif Stalin himself. Stalin took an extraordinary interest in the movies, which Miller illustrates through the example of Aleksandr Dovzhenko’s film Shchors (1939), a Civil War commander whom Dovzhenko was supposed to glorify. Stalin found the Shchors in the first cut of the film to be “crude and uncultivated” (p. 65), and Dovzhenko had to return to filming. The most interesting part of the censorship, however, was its inconsistency, as numerous agencies competed with each other to show which was more politically correct.

The purges of the Great Terror (1936–1938) also had their effect on filmmaking, hastening its decline under Stalin. Although the earlier purges of 1929–1936 had limited impact on cinema, cinematic administrators and scenarists were swept away during the Great Purges and Great Terror, some to be executed, others imprisoned in the gulag. Miller argues that although film workers were arrested on the usual bogus charges, the connections that many of them had to Western colleagues aroused the usual Stalinist defensive thinking.

The annual thematic plans, which were closely tied to the state’s various political campaigns, also served to undermine cinema. Thematic plans sound like a good way for the state to maintain political control, but scriptwriters and directors did not always cooperate. The failure of the plans in the early 1930s led to an increased emphasis on organization, to no practical result. The obsession of officials with “correct” political messages only slowed down the filmmaking process, and many films were put “on the shelf” in varying degrees of completion. The waste of resources was considerable.

Filmmakers had few outlets to express their frustrations. The various cinematic unions and societies were more concerned about ideological conformity than about protecting the interests of workers. Some elite filmmakers, however, bought into the system and enjoyed not only a privileged lifestyle but also more control in decisions affecting their films. Nevertheless, the increasing centralization of the industry meant that the standard of living declined for the majority of film workers and that creative opportunities were stifled for most.
A partial exception was GTK, the state film school in Moscow. Some of the best-known avant-garde filmmakers, such as Sergei Eisenstein, taught there and established a rigorous curriculum with a strong academic component. This creative outlet meant, however, that a generation of film students were ill-prepared for the work force: the GTK curriculum emphatically deemphasized popular filmmaking.

Miller turns to the films themselves in his last chapter, and he presents only a few representative examples. (This reviewer would have welcomed a more comprehensive discussion of movies.) He looks at three genres: the musical comedy (Grigorii Aleksandrov’s *The Circus*, 1936), the “class enemy” drama (Ivan Pyrev’s *The Party Card*, 1936), and the “political/historical epic” (Fridrikh Ermler’s *The Great Citizen*, 1937–1939). Miller argues that the Pyrev and Ermler films and others like them sought to “transfer a large amount of the burden of political responsibility and compensation for the regime’s illegitimate foundations on to ordinary people” (p. 168). Finally, Miller takes a quick look at two films that seem to have subverted the regime’s goals: Aleksandr Medvedkin’s satire *Happiness* (1934), which was criticized for its folkloric style as much as for its content, and Yulii Raizman’s *The Last Night* (1937), for its individualized portrayal of the Bolshevik Revolution at a time when monumentalism was considered the only way to depict the great event. Medvedkin’s and Raizman’s works (and Aleksandrov’s) illustrate that there was a narrow window of creative opportunity even in the stifling 1930s. However, as Miller concludes, “in the end the Bolshevik obsession with defending and protecting the regime transformed Soviet cinema into a bureaucratic monolith in the 1930s” (p. 183).

This rich and informative book is well written and well researched, based on published and unpublished archival sources and wide reading in the press of the 1930s. Miller effectively portrays the dynamics of the times and shows how the regime, despite its support for cinema, continuously eroded the industry. After all the talk about a cinema for the millions, there was little to show for it, and the state never understood why, blaming wreckers and saboteurs for shortfalls in the various thematic and production plans. This book should appeal to all scholars interested in authoritarian cultures. Readers of the *Journal of Cold War Studies* will find it useful for explaining the antecedents of early Cold War cinema and the “film famine” that followed World War II.


Reviewed by Rein Taagepera, University of California, Irvine, and University of Tartu (Estonia)

For 31 years, from 1940 to 1971, August Torma was his country’s top official. This sounds impressive, until one specifies that his rank was “envoy.” He was tops because the Soviet occupation of Estonia eliminated all higher officials of his country. Estonia’s
only unoccupied territory was its legation in London, which is where Torma survived, in diplomatic limbo. His situation, along with that of his Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues, was highly unusual. One would have to think back to the demise of Poland 150 years earlier. Afterward, Turkey’s court ceremony kept calling out for the ambassador of Poland, who never responded. Torma’s case was the reverse: He kept appearing, even when uncalled for.

Torma was an agent without a principal. He was also the quintessential underling. He rarely offered personal opinions to his foreign counterparts. When asked, he would hedge, report the question to the foreign affairs ministry in Tallinn, sometimes receive a response two months later, and then report it to the inquirer—who had long ago lost interest. His voluminous reports back home conveyed what other diplomats and local officials had done or said. Except in trade matters, he hardly ever offered his own opinion, analysis, or characterization of a person. He seemed to consider himself a conduit, and he fulfilled this role to perfection.

Torma was good at his job, to the point of being at times considered for minister of foreign affairs. What would he have done in such a position? We know only how he acted after the Soviet takeover of Estonia. A more decision-minded personality might have collapsed, given a thoroughly maddening situation, but how could Torma collapse without proper authorization? He showed his habitual tenacity and attention to detail in cases such as saving Estonian merchant ships that the Soviet occupiers had ordered to return home. He satisfied his need to write reports by addressing them to the Estonian representative in the United States, Johannes Kaiv, even though the latter had a lesser diplomatic status—consul general in charge of legation. Torma sent the British Foreign Office drafts of memoranda before submitting them, inviting corrections (which were never offered).

Finally, two years after Estonia was occupied first by Soviet forces, “Torma found his own voice” (p. 137). The Foreign Office had dropped the Baltic ambassadors from the diplomatic list but maintained their personal status as diplomats. This was a concession to the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union, which still claimed the Baltic states, even while the three states were under German occupation. The ambiguity regarding Torma’s status “altered his perception of himself fundamentally” (p. 137). Told that he no longer represented a government, he began to see himself as the representative of the Estonian people. Because his captive nation was prevented from giving him instructions, he felt freer to form his own opinions.

The title of the book describes Torma as “soldier, diplomat, spy,” but his role as “spy” was limited to routine contacts with the British secret service. Attempts to beef up this eye-catching label are unconvincing. Torma’s career as a soldier in World War I and afterward in Arkhangel’sk (September 1918–November 1919) was brief. By December 1919, Estonia posted him as military representative in Lithuania. The hurried reader might wish to bypass the entire first chapter (1895–1930), which offers scant information about the young Torma and tries to compensate by providing sketches of marginal personalities. The second chapter (“Estonia on the Fringes of Europe, 1931–1939”) documents Torma’s passive style in Rome, Geneva, and London. His low-key
style fit well with the effort of the brand-new peasant republic of Estonia to pass unnoticed in the shadow of the Great Powers.

The drama builds in chapter 3 (1939–June 1940), which begins with the Soviet demand for military bases in Estonia and culminates with an ultimatum on 16 June 1940. Estonia’s authoritarian ruler caved in to Soviet demands without a shot. The world’s attention was riveted on Adolf Hitler’s forces entering Paris. The last message Torma received from Tallinn was that accommodation with the Soviet Union worked just fine; that message was followed by silence.

“Keep Calm and Carry On (1940–1944) is a superb chapter. In addition to describing the human drama of Torma the man, it casts a perceptive sidelight on the quandaries of the British Foreign Office (FO), torn between dearly held principles of international law and the blunt demands of the Soviet Union, well aware of the precariousness of the British military position. Britain came close to recognizing the Soviet Union’s annexation of the Baltic states but ultimately refrained, heeding the firm example of the United States. The diplomatic and journalistic activities of Torma and Kaiv made it more embarrassing to capitulate to Soviet demands. In the reports to and by the FO, “embarrassing” is a frequently used word. Embarrassment is what Torma tries to avoid yet inevitably causes for the FO. This is what internal FO correspondence expresses when forced to subdue Torma’s press activities in order to avoid stirring Soviet protests.

In the last major chapter (1944–1971), drama fades into still life. Torma likely saved some refugees in Germany from being sent back to Estonia (and on to Siberia). “He was not easily daunted . . . when it came to more immediate and practical tasks” (p. 155). He contributed to the British government’s decision not to recognize Soviet annexation of his country de jure, even in the face of encroaching de facto recognition. When Torma died in 1971, the embassy building lost its diplomatic tax exemption. The resulting duress forced the building to be sold in 1989, precisely when Estonia was rising from the ashes.

In sum, Tamman’s The Last Ambassador is worth reading at two levels. On one, it documents an unusual case in world diplomacy. On another, it describes a natural socio-psychological experiment: How does a perfect underling react when his superiors vanish overnight, yet his position is preserved?

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Reviewed by William B. Quandt, University of Virginia

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war is rightly seen by most scholars as a turning point in the history of the Middle East. Its consequences are still with us, and, like most important historical moments, it has given rise to an abundant literature and a plethora of con-
spiriatorial explanations of its causes. A big event, so it seems, must have a big cause. But as most of the authors of this fine volume would argue, none of the players in the 1967 game worked from a master script or a grand strategy that entailed war. The simpler, but truer explanation, now backed up with materials from the archives in several key capitals, makes clear that the war was the product of fears, misperceptions, and imprudent calculations of risk, but was not the outcome of a master plan made in Moscow, Washington, Cairo, or Jerusalem. Those who most recklessly fanned the embers of war—the hawks in Damascus and the Palestinian guerrillas—talked enthusiastically about war but were too weak to undertake it on their own. Nonetheless, their rhetoric and actions did add to the tensions that led to the May 1967 crisis and then, in a classic example of escalation, from crisis to actual war.

The editors of this volume have done what too rarely is found in collections of this sort. They have chosen a superb group of scholars and have urged them to dig deep into the available sources and engage with prevailing interpretations. The result is a uniformly excellent set of essays. Where archival material has been released—Israel, the United States, and Great Britain—the results are up-to-date accounts that help settle some old arguments. In other cases—the Arab countries and the former Soviet Union—the authors have interviewed participants and have dug through memoirs and secondary accounts to come up with convincing interpretations.

Avi Shlaim starts off with an excellent chapter on Israel. As a frequent critic of Israel, he might have been expected to point the finger of blame at the hawks in Tel Aviv for starting an unnecessary war. But he finds no evidence that such was the case before May 1967. This was not a war that Israel had planned long in advance, although some of its more reckless actions—the attack on the Jordanian village of Samu’ in November 1966 and some of the comments of its generals in the early weeks of May 1967—did have adverse consequences in spurring Arab leaders to believe that Israel had plans to launch some sort of offensive, most likely against Syria.

Laura James, without the benefit of access to the Egyptian archives, nonetheless does a noteworthy job of putting the pieces together from memoirs and interviews. She gives a reasonably convincing picture of the confusion that was Egyptian policy. Egypt was bogged down in Yemen, as one of the other chapters reminds us, and Gamal Abdel Nasser was hardly ready for war. Some of his generals, however, were more aggressive, and James provides an important reminder that authoritarian leaders such as Nasser were not always fully in control of policy. By the beginning of June, Nasser seemed resigned to war, but was not confident that he could prevail. Indeed, as he told the U.S. presidential envoy, Robert Anderson, on 2 June (a conversation for which the U.S. record is available but is curiously overlooked in this volume), Egypt would not start a war but Israel probably would. This time, however, he was confident that it would not be a debacle as in 1956, and when the war was over, he told Anderson, Egypt would want help from the two superpowers to end the conflict once and for all. For the moment, he just wanted the United States to stay out of the fray and let the parties go at it.

In recent years, Soviet policy in the crisis has come under scrutiny, especially in
the book *Foxbats over Dimona* by Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, who boldly assert that Moscow deliberately set out to provoke an Arab-Israeli war in 1967. That thesis has not gained much support among experts on Soviet foreign policy, and it is given little credence here in the well-researched piece by Rami Ginat. Nonetheless, I suspect that the argument will go on for some time until fuller records from the Russian Presidential Archive and Russian Ministry of Defense Archive are made available.

Charles Smith seems to have read everything concerning the role of the United States. This is a topic I have also carefully investigated when writing several books about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Each time I thought he might have overlooked a source, I found it in his footnotes. President Lyndon Johnson was the central figure on the U.S. side, and the Israelis were eager not to get on his wrong side—hard to do in this case inasmuch as Johnson was sympathetic to Israel and was surrounded by friends and advisers who shared that view. Still, Johnson was wary of war as the crisis unfolded and initially warned the Israelis not to preempt and to give him time to try to find a diplomatic solution. He was preoccupied with the escalating war in Vietnam and seemed to worry about egging Israel into a war that it might not easily win. If the war went badly, Israel might turn to the United States for help, and Johnson would be unable to do much. The Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency were confident that Israel could win on its own, but Johnson never seemed so sure that war was the way to go. Smith argues, and I agree, that Johnson became resigned to Israel’s taking action to reopen the Strait of Tiran, and he made sure the Israelis knew that his initial red light warnings had turned yellow. A few mysteries still linger about Johnson and how he came to change his views during the crisis, but no new evidence has yet emerged that can shed light on these minor puzzles.

There are a few places where the editors could have tried to resolve outstanding differences. For example, Shlaim (p. 25) mentions that Yitzhak Rabin threatened Syria on 12 May 1967, but he does not give a source. Later, Ginat (p. 206) refers to the same incident but raises doubts about whether Rabin ever made such a statement. He leans to the view that the source was a background briefing by General Aharon Yariv that got picked up and amplified by *The New York Times*, thus triggering Egypt’s decision to mobilize its forces. But Ginat does not cite the best source for the Yariv backgrounder, a tape-recorded transcript found in a book by journalist John Cooley. These are minor points, but by now they should be cleared up with a more carefully written version of the so-called Israeli threat to Damascus, an important point in the lead-up to war that is not adequately dealt with here.

In sum, this is an excellent addition to the literature. Historians will want to read it to see what is new. Students of the Middle East and its recent history will benefit from it. *The 1967 Arab-Israeli War* is a model of what solid, non-partisan scholarship can accomplish and is now the go-to book for those who want to know how the 1967 war occurred.
It is impossible to read Thomas Ahern’s magisterial account of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam without the mind wandering to America’s present-day wars in Iraq and, especially, Afghanistan. Ahern clearly intended for the book to be read against the backdrop of today’s conflicts, even though he seldom addresses the obvious parallels directly. When the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) commissioned Ahern, a retired career CIA officer who served around the globe (including Iran, where he was among the U.S. hostages held for 444 days during the Islamic Revolution), to write an official history of the agency’s counterinsurgency programs in Vietnam, it did not intend for the book to be for posterity alone. Ahern writes with urgency to inform the agency’s critical efforts in countering a new wave of insurgencies, and he effectively highlights many of the key problems that bedevil U.S. counterinsurgency efforts abroad to this day.

Ahern exhaustively traces the evolution of the vast array of CIA-sponsored pacification initiatives in Vietnam. Many focused on developing village-based defense forces to stand up to the Viet Cong. The Citizens’ Irregular Defense Groups, the Mountain Scouts, and the Strategic Hamlets represented early attempts to inoculate villages against Communist infiltration by empowering communities to defend themselves. Yet the establishment of local paramilitary forces outside the national command structure made the authoritarian South Vietnamese government (GVN) extremely uneasy. Ngo Dinh Diem and his revolving door of weak successors did not trust what they could not totally control. Ahern notes that the GVN was always pessimistic, even paranoid, in its assessments of the political loyalties of South Vietnam’s peasantry.

This view was not necessarily inaccurate. The GVN never succeeded in commanding wholehearted loyalty from its people. The CIA, and the U.S. government as a whole, spent considerable time trying to win popular support in provinces and rural areas for the GVN, without truly grasping the depth of the GVN’s legitimacy problems. Ho Chi Minh’s regime in North Vietnam was the heir to the national liberation movement against French colonialism. The South Vietnamese government of Diem and his military successors, by contrast, was in many ways the heir to the French colonial tradition. South Vietnam’s urban, Catholic elites had little in common with the majority of the country’s population and could not identify or empathize with it. They resisted meaningful political and economic reforms that might have undermined the appeal of the Communist message. Their efforts to preserve the existing order and the attendant privileges for those at the top forestalled attempts to redress legitimate grievances of the population.

The GVN was thus a difficult regime for which to generate much support. Yet the U.S. government and some South Vietnamese leaders—notably, Diem’s brother Ngo Dinh Nhu—kept attempting to cultivate a “revolutionary” anti-Communist ide-
ology among the people. The Force Populaire, a paramilitary force that was to deploy in the villages to perform good deeds by day and provide security by night, and the Census-Grievance teams, small units drawn from the local population that combined political action with intelligence-gathering, were examples of efforts to provide local security while generating anti-Communist fervor. Yet such programs failed to achieve more than tactical successes because they rarely produced significant improvements in peasants’ quality of life that could be tied to the GVN. Unsurprisingly, the stagnant, status quo GVN was unable to manufacture a dynamic ideology that would inspire mass support. Dramatic-sounding concepts such as “Revolutionary Development,” meant to seize the “revolutionary” mantle from the Communists, were little more than slogans in the face of persistent GVN opposition to land-reform initiatives and the empowerment of local leaders.

Ahern’s conclusions challenge much of the currently prevailing wisdom on counterinsurgency as it is being conducted today in Afghanistan. He is particularly critical of the U.S. failure to take advantage of the coup against Diem in 1963 to demand more far-reaching reforms of the GVN that would mobilize popular support and enhance the GVN’s political organization in the provinces to counter the Viet Cong’s political machine. Instead, the CIA and other U.S. government agencies saw the campaign’s tribulations to that point as personal failings on the part of Diem, and they erroneously believed that simply removing him from the picture would solve the problems. (One could replace “Diem” in the previous sentence with “Maliki” or “Karzai” and thus accurately describe the views of U.S. policymakers in 2007 or later.) Additionally, Ahern argues that the provision of economic development assistance to rural populations with no political strings attached was misguided, noting that aid handouts and promises of future prosperity were not a component of the Viet Cong’s more successful political program, and rarely inspired the peasantry to risk their lives to support the GVN. Yet development assistance is a core element of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, largely because it is assumed that the provision of material benefits will inspire active support for the Kabul government.

As might be expected from a history drawing on a vast amount of previously unavailable primary sources, Vietnam Declassified is a dense work that demands the reader’s full attention. Ahern’s text describes the constantly shifting constellation of South Vietnamese and U.S. personalities and programs as clearly as possible, but it also drives home how complex and confusing the U.S. counterinsurgency campaign was. One cannot help but think that that complexity was also a cause of America’s failure. U.S. policymakers and CIA officers became so focused on Communist ideology and tactical minutiae that they missed the larger strategic picture. Their answer to the challenge was a proliferation of highly specialized programs with muddled lines of communication and accountability to U.S. and Vietnamese leaders. Theirs was counterinsurgency conducted by throwing a bowl of spaghetti against a wall to see what would stick. More than 40 years later, it is unclear whether the United States is capable of doing much better.