
Reviewed by Robert Jervis, Columbia University

Considering its central importance, the topic of when, why, and how states perceive others as threats is remarkably understudied. Taking the period 1970 to 1982 as his set of cases, Carmel Davis looks at how well U.S. perceptions of the extent of the danger posed by the Soviet Union can be explained by one version of balance of power theory, balance of threat, and what he calls the balance of military capabilities. This is an important period of the Cold War, and the summary of the relevant facts, figures, and intelligence judgments is useful. The exposition of the theories, although done without much nuance, raises interesting and important issues. In just 114 pages, the book covers quite a bit of ground very concisely. However, enough issues and questions are missed so that in the end the contribution is limited.

Like many authors before him, Davis argues that balance of power as measured by the size of a country’s economy and armed forces is simply too blunt an instrument to reveal much to scholars or contemporary decision-makers. Not surprisingly, Davis argues that this view does not fit the changing U.S. perceptions of the USSR. For one thing, a state may view another as very powerful and yet friendly, as was largely the case for NATO members’ views of one another. For this reason, Stephen Walt argued that the key factor was whether a state perceived other countries as posing a threat. In this respect, how the others behave is of primary importance, although factors such as their domestic political systems can also play a role. Less convincingly, Davis discards this hypothesis as well, arguing (correctly) that in the late 1970s the Soviet Union did not behave as aggressively as it might have (pp. 64–65) and that under both Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter the U.S. government’s interpretations of Soviet behavior varied. But Davis’s treatment of what the USSR was doing and how this was perceived is too sketchy to bear out his conclusions. He ignores Soviet “adventures” in Africa and the USSR’s generally increased assertiveness during these years, which many contemporary political leaders and subsequent scholars attributed in part to the Soviet military build-up, the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, and U.S. domestic preoccupations.

Davis’s preferred explanation is what he calls the balance of military capabilities. Although it is built on the same variables as balance of power, he believes it is more precise in its measurement of the likely outcome of possible wars by taking into account a more fine-grained treatment of adversary strength and, most importantly, by
doing a “net assessment” of the capabilities of both sides. He claims that the extent of U.S. perceptions of the Soviet threat track closely on such net assessments.

This is an argument worth considering, but the treatment is much too brief and superficial to be convincing. Net assessment is a very tricky business and it is hard to trace changes in these judgments over time. Furthermore, Davis does not discuss how politicized the judgments are. When the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) started making net assessments, the Department of Defense strongly objected on the grounds that CIA had no business looking at U.S. capabilities and that the relevant expertise was in the Pentagon. Readers of this journal will not be surprised to learn that the Defense Department estimates were pessimistic about the prevailing situation but implied that, with proper efforts and increased spending, the situation could be rectified. It is also unfortunate that even in a brief treatment Davis ignores the raging debate over Soviet nuclear doctrine particularly the question of whether Soviet leaders believed that nuclear or even large-scale conventional wars could be kept limited. Even if I did not have a personal interest in the subject, I would be aware that this was one of the main battlegrounds between the competing schools of thought in Washington.

More broadly, Davis’s treatment is apolitical in two related senses. First, he neglects the possibility that political preferences drove perceptions of threat rather than the other way around. In fact, without going so far as to say that intelligence was only a political weather vane, the political atmosphere in Washington did have an effect, and the battering the CIA took from Team B (a panel of hardliners appointed during the Ford administration to provide an alternative assessment of Soviet intentions) surely was more important in subsequent estimates than some of the detailed changes in net assessment that Davis recounts. A related weakness of his analysis is that it implies that policymakers were seriously influenced by these estimates. Richard Nixon, for one, mistrusted the intelligence community and paid no attention to anything other than the broadest outlines of military estimates. Carter, being much more compulsive and having less set views, paid more attention, but even for him the thing that had the greatest impact were his general and changing views about the Soviet Union. Although Carter at the end of his term was much more alarmed about the USSR than he had been at the start, he remained less worried than his successor, which reminds us that Davis’s approach cannot explain why leaders differ on this score.

Factors other than those discussed by Davis also explain the differences among intelligence agencies. He notes the familiar split: The Pentagon took the most alarmist views about Soviet capabilities and intentions, the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research took the most optimistic view, and the CIA was in between. But Davis does not mention that none of the theories he discusses can explain this. The bureaucratic interests and perspectives that are at work are no mystery, but they remind us that there is more to assessing state capabilities and intentions than the factors Davis uses. Much more information is available, some of it summarized in David Walsh, *The Military Balance in the Cold War: U.S. Perceptions and Policy, 1976–85* (New York: Routledge, 2008), which unfortunately is not cited. Of course much re-
mains classified, but more is available in archives and presidential libraries than Davis implies. Fortunately, a more subtle treatment of the theories and a much deeper mining of the historical record will be presented in a forthcoming book by Keren Yarhi-Milo. Until then, *Power, Threat, or Military Capabilities* has value as a place to start.


Reviewed by Colin S. Gray, University of Reading (UK)

*Perilous Glory* is a work of immense erudition that strives in 393 pages of text to be a global military history from earliest times until today. By and large John France succeeds in his ambitious task. His primary purpose is to explain “how we fight” (p. 4) rather than *why* we fight. He concedes that “[w]ar may exercise the intellect, as Sun Tzu asserted, but the material conditions of society imposed remarkably similar methods of fighting upon peoples, no matter how diverse their cultures” (p. 4). The theme of anti-culturalism runs through the book, reappearing periodically as sharp comments. As a social scientist with strong historical leanings and sympathies, I have some reservations about the book. Despite France’s excellent explanation of how the human race has fought over millennia, he commits the familiar error of taking sensible skepticism of culturalist arguments too far. Given the strength and steadiness of France’s negative assessment of the influence of culture on behavior, the book is weakened considerably by his failure to explain just what he means by culture and how it might be made manifest. Potent swipes at the thesis of a “Western Way of War” versus “an Eastern Way of War” are all very well, and are well taken, but they barely scratch the surface of the important subject of cultural influence on war. My point is not that France is wrong but rather that he shows scant evidence of understanding the extensive argument that has swirled about the contested concept of culture in respect to strategy, inter alia.

France corrals and marshals his historical narrative impressively and boldly. The text is dense though not forbiddingly so. If one slackens concentration over a paragraph here and there, one might well miss a reign or two, certainly a campaign and vital detail. I hasten to add that I am, and I believe any reasonable social scientist (if that is not an oxymoron) will also be, almost awestruck by the scale and quality of France’s achievement in *Perilous Glory*. He has succeeded in telling the coherent strategic story of literally millennia of human history. His particular success is in combining tactical detail about material conditions with the larger story that is the narrative drive of history in the great stream of time. France clearly conveys his not uncontentious view that, although much changes over time, the essential continuities in historical experience are vastly more impressive than the discontinuities. This profoundly conservative view, which this reviewer shares, reveals itself in commentary about recent strategic
challenges in the final chapter (“A New Age of War”), which is almost heroically politically incorrect. I enjoyed particularly his contention that “[t]he appeal to international law to regulate conflict is a noble ideal, but it is dangerously unrealistic” (p. 390). France believes that “[i]t is sometimes suggested that the risks are not really great, that small groups of hostile forces have nothing like the power that western nations enjoy. But this is merely an excuse for inaction. It is essential to have the will to fight, and if it is lacking and if there is no drive to develop skills in arms, and if soldiers are not loosed from the bonds of ideas which have nothing to do with war, the mere hardware will serve no purpose” (p. 392). This is strong stuff; it expresses beliefs about the permanence of war (“It is patent that war will not go away,” p. 398) and the need for a public and popular culture permissive of effectiveness in war. In his first-rate treatment of the two world wars, especially the second, France is almost brutally honest in the respect he displays for the fighting quality of German soldiers. They were not confused by liberal desiderata antithetical to winning in combat.

Given the strength of France’s case for recognition of the continuities in human awfulness across the centuries, and the undoubted extraordinary range and reach of his historical knowledge and understanding, it is a pity that he was unable to answer “the strategist’s question”—“so what?”. Perilous Glory is a magnificent book with an almost extravagant ambition to explain our strategic story, but France makes little effort to bring the whole story together for understanding. Instead of being offered explanation of the great continuities and some discontinuities, we are told in quite fierce language that our Western societies are not really fit for survival in the warlike world we inhabit. Perilous Glory is a superb strategic and tactical history that offers both big picture and small, from hoplites, through steppe warriors, to disciplined professionals with gunpowder weapons, through the revolution challenging close-order battle, to today. But the ‘so what?’ question that needs posing as enquiry into the meaning of it all, is unduly absent.

It may be worth noting a few particular points of concern. Although this is a book of strategic history that is admirably specific in many tactical details (e.g. fodder for horses, and logistics generally), it is noticeably very light in its treatment of strategic ideas. Also, probably the boldest sentence in the book is the flat claim that “[t]he late nineteenth century witnessed the first Military Revolution in human history” (p. 263). This reference to the ‘tactical crisis’ brought on by the firepower of infantry and eventually artillery also which should have foreclosed on close-order battle is interesting but is eminently contestable in the light of theory and scholarship over the past twenty years on revolutions in military affairs.

France plainly errs when he states that “[t]he Luftwaffe came very close to establishing air supremacy over southern Britain” in summer 1940 (p. 335). They did not. The best of recent scholarship is unequivocal on this point. The Royal Air Force was fearful that the loss of pilots in combat would be critical and become fatal, but this dire result did not even come close to happening. France also strays from the path of historically grounded analogical judgment when he lends apparent support to emerging and unwarranted cyber-alarmism (p. 380). Had he allowed himself to think strate-
gically in historical context about cyber warfare, he should have been able to avoid the implausible view that he appears to endorse. This can be the problem where one forsakes the scholarship that is dominant throughout a long book and moves into the shaky realm of contemporary opinion.

As military history, *Perilous Glory* is a triumph. My problems with it are those found by someone with a different disciplinary background. Putting my social scientist’s prejudices aside, I find it a marvelously rich and coherent source of knowledge and understanding—one that makes unmistakably clear that our history is a great stream of time and should be regarded as a unity of past, present, and future. Perhaps, alas, the Whig view of history is, and always was, a liberal fantasy.

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*Reviewed by James Jay Carafano, Heritage Foundation*

According to Jonathan House, a professor of military history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the outbreak of the Cold War turned out to be pretty much a case of military malpractice. House opens *A Military History of the Cold War* with vignettes about Warsaw’s tragic fate, the civil war in Greece, and the post-conflict chaos in Indochina. All three confrontations, House contends, “involved fundamental misunderstandings and miscalculations” (p. 24), an assessment that captures his interpretation of all the history leading up to the Cuban missile crisis. Opting for ill-thought-out military solutions to resolve political troubles fostered a cycle of escalation that ended with a hard break between East and West.

The debate over the origins of wars is a staple of military and diplomatic historians. Conrad Russell, a prominent historian of the English Civil War, famously broke the cycle of blaming Cavaliers and Roundheads by declaring the outbreak of the conflict was “like a road accident.” Russell’s writing has relevance to how House looks at history. Russell revolutionized the debate over the warfare that erupted in 1642 by shifting the focus away from just cataloging the long-term issues of constitutional conflict. Instead, he focused on the missteps and miscalculations made in the immediate run-up to war. Russell’s thesis was fresh in 1973. Historians of the period still keep the dispute lively. House hopes to open a second front for the “road accident metaphor as an explanation for the outbreak of the Cold War.

In retrospect, it makes sense that House’s revisionism would parrot the Russell thesis. Russell gored the long-established tradition of “Whig” history that envisioned the rise of modernism as the inevitable victory of liberal beliefs over reactionary antidemocratic forces. The Whig view of the world and America’s self-perception after the Second World War have much in common. In many ways, as the first half of the Cold War evolved, it slipped comfortably into the Whig paradigm of good seeking to tri-
umph over evil. Thus, it was inevitable that at some point the idea of the U.S.-Soviet confrontation emerging as an inevitable conflict, like the wisdom of Whig history, would come under challenge.

When Russell was at the height of his powers in the second half of the twentieth century, challenging the established thinking on the ideological origins of conflict was all the rage. This “progression” in historical writing had as much to do with the politics of the time as it did with discovering new sources and methods. Western ideology was going out of fashion.

Even as Russell was rewriting the story of the English Civil War, a wave of leftwing revisionism regarding the Cold War was moving through the United States, much of it stemming from the negative reaction of Western academics to the Vietnam War. The popularity of William Appleman Williams offers a case in point. Williams began arguing that the ritual practice of empire-building was the root cause of a destructive U.S. foreign policy. Though he began his career at the end of the Eisenhower era, his popularity did not really take off until the Vietnam War. Looking for the origins of Cold War conflict in the American idea has been a staple of the most prominent strain of revisionist writings ever since.

*A Military History of the Cold War* offers a different kind of critique—one that parallels Russell’s anti-ideological thesis. In diminishing the power of ideas, however, House’s thesis raises similar concerns. Russell’s writings were popular not just because he offered a fresh interpretation of history but because he diminished the stature of the Western democratic project—a practice at the height of popularity in the post-Woodstock, draft-card-burning age. Russell was a politician and activist as well as a historian arguing that the British political system was hardly the model of perfection proclaimed by Whig history. He might not have a political agenda in writing his history, but the politics of the time made his writing more popular.

House’s book may be falling into the same trap. At a time when America’s steps in the world may look shaky, it is easy to embrace the idea that maybe Washington was just never good at this global business. But, like the Russell thesis, that sweeping judgment wrongly brushes aside too much. The notion that the Cold War was pretty much a road accident seriously undermines the point that the United States and the Soviet Union were managing highly antagonistic global systems. Iosif Stalin and the Soviet system were truly evil. To make a convincing argument that these global titans were not going to get along would take a lot more explaining than *A Military History of the Cold War* has to offer. Ideology matters more than a little.

House would have difficulty making his case even if he had produced a much bigger book. *A Military History of the Cold War* is an “operational” history. In military parlance, in which House is well versed, the operational level of war concerns the conduct of campaigns and prolonged activities, such as managing counterinsurgency warfare. This is the middle ground between “strategy” (the overall application of national ends, ways, and means to achieve objectives) and “tactics” (the conduct of specific activities, such as a particular skirmish). In the book’s preface, House writes that his history focuses on this “vast, often neglected middle ground in which politicians and
military officers designed, organized, and equipped military organizations and then committed those units to operations” (p. xi). The problem with “operational” history as an overarching perspective for viewing the broad sweep of any conflict is that, in the end, these are disparate operations, shaped by the commanders and conditions on the ground. Putting them together does not necessarily add up to a coherent whole. Misperceptions, missteps, and misjudgments occurred on both sides, but since when does the “fog of war” not cloud the decisions of competitors?

Nevertheless, House is right that the outbreak of the Cold War has all the feel of B. H. Liddell Hart’s two boxers slugging it out in the dark. *A Military History of the Cold War* does a superb job chronicling all the hits and misses. House’s treatment of the occupation of Austria offers a case in point. The United States had extremely poor intelligence about what Moscow was up to in Vienna. What secrets the West could ferret out suggested that the Soviet Union was winding down, not building up its presence—yet, as the Cold War heated up, the military on the ground issued increasingly dire warnings.

What is most welcome in *A Military History of the Cold War* is House’s effort to update the story of confrontations from Greece to Formosa with the latest scholarship looking at the actions of the many countries involved—not just the United States. If there is a disappointment, it is that the book seems primarily dependent on English-language sources. A fresh account of military conflict during the Cold War needs to be an international history that draws on a wide range of contemporary scholarship encompassing more than just what is available in English.

Nonetheless, this a broad and refreshing look back at the Cold War from an important perspective, retrieving many forgotten but important episodes and actors that deserve attention and study. Through its broad coverage, *A Military History of the Cold War* reminds us that there is a great deal of military history in the period to be studied beyond what happened during the Korean War, the Berlin airlift, and the Cuban missile crisis. One important omission, however, is the U.S. occupations of Trieste, for example, which did not even make it into the index.

*A Military History of the Cold War* provides a useful and important survey of the different kinds of Cold War confrontations, from armed combat to combating insurgencies, that both sides used as one of their first weapons of choice as they settled into the uncertain, dangerous years of the early Cold War. Cold War history without military history is a story less than half written. House is right to push the role of the armed forces back to the front of the story of how the United States and the Soviet Union responded to each other.

**Reviewed by Thomas A. Dine, Search for Common Ground**

Harold Brown, who served as U.S. secretary of defense under Jimmy Carter and holds a Ph.D. in physics from Columbia University, proclaims in his new book that he is a technological geek. Now that he is no longer on the fast track after more than six decades of accumulated experience in securing America’s military might, he most probably rejoices in reading the Science section every Tuesday and the Thursday Internet section of *The New York Times*. (The weekly science section of *The Washington Post* is filled with health tips and reflections, not with physics or other sciences that appeal to geeks like Brown.)

A learned Cold War–era scientist, Brown successfully operated through and around the unforgiving bureaucratic shoals of universities, scientific laboratories, the Defense Department, the military services, industry contractors, and Capitol Hill. His high-intensity focus has been on highly detailed, highly esoteric, and highly competitive fields of weapons systems, particularly thermonuclear weapons, sea- and land-based ballistic and cruise missiles, space technology, stealth aircraft, advanced satellite surveillance, and integrated communications and intelligence systems. He sought to hammer together civilian-uniform cooperation and military end-strengths agreements and to obtain sufficient funds to plan and procure these and other programs.

Some of these sophisticated tools became available only during Desert Storm (the 1991 Gulf War), others even later. As Brown acutely and fairly summarizes, “The Carter administration initiated and developed these programs, the Reagan administration paid for their acquisition in many cases, the George H. W. Bush administration employed them.”

Besides having an orderly scientific mind, Brown has displayed patience, coolness, and clarity of thought, an understanding of budgetary tradeoffs, and anticipation of what U.S. national defense will need over 5- to 15-year periods when assembling in the U.S. arsenal the most powerful machines of war the world has ever experienced. Brown has had a remarkable and rich career.

In contrast to the heated Senate debate in 2013 that delayed confirmation of the Obama administration’s latest secretary of defense, Chuck Hagel, Brown was swiftly confirmed when Carter appointed him in 1977. In retrospect, his four years as the cabinet officer reporting to the president on military matters and overseeing 2.1 million uniformed and 1 million civilian personnel appears relatively smooth. Brown’s many years in the defense policy field, however, in particular his four years as defense secretary, were extraordinarily eventful and required the utmost experience, intelligence, and ability to maintain focus on the present and obtain federal funds in anticipation of the future. Or, as he repeats throughout the book, he sought “wisdom.”

This objectivity is only one side of the whole person, however. Where is the subjective man? Where is the passion? Reflecting on his lengthy and illustrious career,
Brown keeps his narrative at arm’s length from the reader. Only fleetingly does he admit he is an “introvert,” (p. 38). Several pages later he acknowledges his “social reticence” and says he wishes he “were more at ease in personal relationships” (p. 67). He goes on to tell us that his real avocations are reading books and listening to classical composers, the latter not only at home but in the office. “I love to listen to Bach,” especially the Brandenburg concertos, and to Mozart. Brown notes that when Donald Rumsfeld served as secretary of defense under Gerald Ford (and again under George W. Bush) he played country-and-western music in that same Pentagon office.

Missing from this volume are rambunctious interactions among civilians and those in uniform, the two forces in the military policymaking world that occupy the middle ground on key decisions. One does not feel or smell the sweat of tensions surrounding events such as acquiring or not the overpriced B-1 and B-2 bombers, the whys and wherefores of the Iranian hostage crisis desert debacle in 1980, and nuclear arms control deliberations within the bureaucracy and then between Soviet and U.S. negotiators. Readers will search in vain for in-depth details concerning policy alternatives. Lacking, too, are the swings of intellectual arguments that those of us outside the Pentagon knew were taking place. In this book, the human dimension of national security processes is kept at a distance, perhaps never to be recovered by historians.

As Harold Brown’s successful career in defense demonstrates and this book reconfirms, his real passion was ensuring that the United States maintained its nuclear deterrent capability. This may explain why he has not joined with his good friend William Perry, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, and President Barack Obama in calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Brown’s good mind and wisdom are needed in this arena during the second decade of the 21st century.


Reviewed by James J. Wirtz, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School

Although military communications constitute some of the most closely guarded secrets maintained by national governments, tactical radio transmissions are often made in the clear or employ only rudimentary encryption. These types of transmissions are vulnerable to eavesdropping, especially if analysts possess the language skills and experience necessary to understand and record the everyday traffic generated by units in the field. To be effective, however, such activities have to be undertaken on a huge scale. Hundreds of trainees need to acquire the requisite language skills, scores of instructors need to be recruited, and an appropriate selection process and training pipeline needs to be established to supply a stream of analysts, usually junior enlisted per-
sonnel, to various listening posts. Requirements can also be difficult to anticipate because international events can shift national priorities when it comes to monitoring potential opponents’ communications. The fact that the entire enterprise is shrouded in a veil of secrecy only adds cost and complexity to an already daunting enterprise.

In this volume on the development of a cadre of Russian linguists for the Royal Navy during the first decades of the Cold War, Tony Cash and Mike Gerrard describe the experiences of conscripts who were selected for training and service as “coders” and the manner in which they were trained and assigned to monitor Soviet military communications. Forgoing émigrés who had the requisite language skills because of security concerns, the British government created its own training pipelines to obtain trusted analysts—a practice that is common in contemporary militaries. Using the recollections of many participants in the program, Cash and Gerrard provide extraordinarily detailed descriptions of the most mundane aspects of the coders’ existence, not only providing insights into the experience of serving in this clandestine service but also offering a view of everyday life in postwar Great Britain and the British military.

Beyond the engaging tales of personal adventures, Cash and Gerrard highlight several issues that are encountered when large militaries develop a cadre of linguists. Linguists are often set apart from the rank and file by their superior intelligence, education, and language skills. Failure to complete language training was rewarded by banishment to normal sea duty. The fact that language training is an inherently “joint” (common to all services) enterprise is highlighted by the commingling of language recruits from different services in similar training pipelines, which raises the question of how best to indoctrinate linguists in the practices and procedures of their home service. The fact that training is inherently linked to universities or relies on native speakers as instructors creates an additional set of problems when drawing on national resources that are generally beyond the control of military establishments. The education and training of a cadre of linguists ultimately is a national enterprise that requires years of costly and highly specialized training.

*The Coder Special Archive* is more a bundle of personal recollections, rather than a sustained inquiry into the practice, methodology, or institutional history of the coders who served in the Royal Navy during the early Cold War. Readers who expect to gain information about these matters might be somewhat disappointed by the volume. Nevertheless, Cash and Gerrard do offer many interesting and even entertaining insights into what was an important aspect of Cold War history that might have forever been lost in the mists of time. Their volume also describes the issues that continue to confront today’s militaries as they seek to train linguists to monitor opponents’ battlefield communications.

Reviewed by Vladimir Pechatnov, Moscow State Institute of International Relations

Allied intelligence cooperation during World War II has been studied from different perspectives, including its Soviet angle, but this new book by Donal O’Sullivan sheds new light on Anglo-Soviet cooperation by making use of recently declassified files from The National Archives in the United Kingdom. O’Sullivan is also well versed in German historiography on Nazi counterintelligence operations and the growing Russian scholarship on the subject, which makes his research balanced and comprehensive. The most novel and interesting part of the book deals with “Pickaxe,” a joint operation by Soviet foreign intelligence (under the NKVD organs) and British Special Operations Executive (SOE) to introduce Soviet secret agents into Nazi-occupied Western Europe. This operation remained top secret for sixty years and is a good illustration of Anglo-Soviet wartime intelligence cooperation.

The intimate nature of the NKVD-SOE relationship during the war (as compared to the NKVD’s less amicable ties with the U.S. Office of Strategic Services) has been shown before, but “Pickaxe” reveals for the first time how close and daring that cooperation really was. Nearly two-dozen Soviet agents were brought to England, trained there, and then dropped by British aircraft into the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Austria, and Germany from September 1941 to May 1944. O’Sullivan writes that “Soviet intelligence ‘sub-contracted’ with the British to transport spies to Western Europe” (p. 1) and gives a convincing explanation of the different incentives behind this unprecedented joint enterprise: Soviet officials’ desperate need to revitalize their much debilitated intelligence network in Western Europe for provision of military information; and British interest in sabotage and subversion.

Through skillful use of declassified personnel files, O’Sullivan shows the human side of “Pickaxe,” telling stories of brave and often amateurish individuals, most of whom lost their lives during the operation. One particularly tragic story is that of Willy Kruyt and Nicodemus Kruyt, the only father-and-son team dropped into Western Europe. An idealistic theologian from the Netherlands, Willy Kruyt became active in Dutch radical politics, emigrated with his family to the Soviet Union in 1935, became disillusioned with Stalinist Russia, and was recruited by the NKVD for this mission when he requested to return to his native country. Parachuted into Belgium at the age of 64, he was soon betrayed by neighbors and died in a German concentration camp. His son escaped the Gestapo in the Netherlands and survived the war, only to be hunted down by the Soviet secret police as a suspected double agent. In 1954 he committed suicide under mysterious circumstances. Aside from poor SOE-NKVD preparation, the Gestapo’s effectiveness in arresting Soviet agents is what doomed “Pickaxe.” O’Sullivan’s firm grasp of German sources serves him well in documenting this gruesome reality.

The “Pickaxe” story is well integrated into the book’s broader picture of NKVD-
SOE cooperation from its inception in 1941 to the end of the war. That cooperation included running double agents, exchanging gadgets and information, and providing logistical support to each other. The story is full of colorful personalities on both sides, some of them already familiar (like the SOE’s chief in Moscow, George Hill, and his counterpart in London, Ivan Chichaev) and others less well known.

O’Sullivan examines several other SOE operations, including the previously overlooked “Mamba,” a scheme to recruit Soviet prisoners of war stationed in the United Kingdom for subversive activity in Germany and Nazi-occupied France. Faced with NKVD opposition, the SOE ultimately abandoned this plan and handed over the Soviet participants to the Soviet authorities, with quite predictable consequences. But at the last moment the SOE set up the “escape” of these personnel from the Kempton Park prisoners-of-war camp, to the great displeasure of Colonel Chichaev. Their subsequent fate is unknown.

On the basis of this rich empirical material, O’Sullivan provides a balanced estimate of the intelligence cooperation’s successes and failures. Among the former he cites Anglo-Soviet counterintelligence cooperation in neutralizing Nazi subversive activity in Iran that became an important factor in securing the trans-Iranian corridor for lend-lease supplies to the Soviet Union. Another success story, vividly described in the book, is that of Anglo-Soviet secret cooperation in India, which contributed to scaling down German intelligence penetration of that country. An important ingredient of this success was Moscow’s order to Indian Communists to support British authority instead of fomenting anti-colonial revolution: “Evidently, the survival of the USSR proved to be more important than contributing to the end of colonialism in the continent” (p. 290).

Despite these achievements, the effectiveness of Anglo-Soviet intelligence cooperation, as O’Sullivan rightly concludes, was severely restricted by many factors, including mutual suspicions, structural asymmetries between the two services, poor coordination, and Gestapo efficiency. Soviet suspicions were enhanced by information from well-placed agents inside British intelligence indicating, among other things, that “London regarded the Eastern Front as a side show and pursued its own agenda, planning to sabotage Soviet infrastructure to deny their use to the Nazis” (p. 280). O’Sullivan should have emphasized this asymmetry of strategic interests between Moscow and London much more strongly, insofar as it was the single most important impediment to successful intelligence cooperation. This point is linked with another criticism that can be made of O’Sullivan’s valuable book: Like many other studies of intelligence, it is hindered by professional parochialism and a lack of integration into a broader military and diplomatic history.

In a concluding chapter, O’Sullivan deals with the implications of Anglo-Soviet intelligence cooperation for the beginning of the Cold War. One such linkage was the frustrating wartime experience of British intelligence officers, turning them into early advocates of tough anti-Soviet policies. Another had to do with the familiar practice of both secret services in recruiting former Nazi intelligence personnel for waging the Cold War against former allies. The Cold War legacy may have affected O’Sullivan’s
own sense of proportion in choosing a title for his book: the devil in question turns out to be the Soviet devil and not the Nazi one that Soviet and British forces fought against together.


Reviewed by Laura A. Belmonte, Oklahoma State University

Susan Brewer’s meticulously researched and engagingly written book is a strong addition to the burgeoning literature on U.S. propaganda. Tracing the U.S. government’s official presentation of its war aims in the Philippines War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Iraq War, *Why We Fight* masterfully distills a huge body of work into a narrative that is approachable and thought-provoking. In addition to providing a persuasive analysis of U.S. propaganda, it is a marvelous introduction to key events in the history of U.S. foreign relations.

Brewer highlights how U.S. policymakers have defended U.S. interests and ideals through the manipulation of facts and the promotion of easily understood messages. Focusing on propaganda targeting domestic audiences, Brewer explores the tensions between idealized rationales for wars and the realities of the people and country who wage them. Time and time again, U.S. officials have “blended facts with inspiring and reassuring cultural beliefs, blurring what was true with what people wanted to believe was true” (p. 89).

The chapters on specific conflicts are compelling if familiar. The U.S. campaign to present the Philippines War as a quest to bring Christianity, civilization, capitalism, and democracy to an uncivilized, racially backward people was complicated by a long, brutal struggle and patently undemocratic actions. Woodrow Wilson’s efforts to define World War I as a crusade to make the world safe for democracy collided with dehumanized portrayals of Germans and infringements of civil liberties on the home front. In World War II, U.S. propagandists reworked the barbarism-versus-civilization theme into a “strategy of truth,” defining the conflict as a battle between democracy and dictatorship. High civilian casualties, atrocities, and difficult relationships among U.S. allies obfuscated efforts to present the war in such Manichaean terms.

While U.S. officials “selling” these conflicts adhered to a core narrative asking Americans to make sacrifices in order to attain victory, their successors revised this theme. Confronted with the prolonged mobilization required to wage consecutive global wars on Communism and terrorism, U.S. propagandists abandoned calls for sacrifice in favor of soliciting uncritical public acceptance of professed U.S. war aims. Officials “decided to lead by manipulation, first spreading fear and then projecting strength, justifying exaggeration of foreign threats as being in the public’s best interests” (p. 177).

These efforts have not been terribly successful. When war erupted in Korea, the
Truman administration recast existing anti-Asian stereotypes to demonize North Koreans and Communist Chinese and win popular support for the Cold War. Despite these appeals, the limited and inconclusive war did not generate public enthusiasm.

In a particularly strong chapter on the Vietnam War, Brewer shows how and why similar tactics failed spectacularly when applied to the ambiguities of the conflicts in Southeast Asia. Exposure of the dishonest and misleading justifications for the war sparked intense domestic controversies and shattered the Cold War consensus. Brewer closes with a cogent analysis of the flawed propaganda strategies used by George W. Bush’s administration during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Neither “perception management” nor stinging attacks on the war’s critics resulted in sustained public support for the protracted, expensive conflict. Official justifications for the war, including Saddam Hussein’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction and professed U.S. desires to create a model democracy in the Arab world, did not survive media scrutiny and public skepticism.

Throughout the book, Brewer skillfully interweaves political and diplomatic history. She addresses the formulation and implementation of U.S. propaganda strategy within the federal bureaucracy and examines how journalists, filmmakers, and advertising executives collaborated on these initiatives. She demonstrates the impact of government censorship on popular opinions about war and those attempting to challenge official narratives about conflict.

Brewer’s treatment of the notorious 1918 lynching of Robert Prager, a Socialist critic of World War I, contains a very minor error. The episode occurred in Collinsville, Illinois, not St. Louis (p. 69). This quibble aside, Brewer has done a remarkable job of explicating six distinct conflicts while repeatedly demonstrating how U.S. officials have misled Americans in wartime.

Brewer’s wonderful writing style and impressive research are the book’s major strengths. She draws on manuscript collections, pamphlets, advertisements, cartoons, radio transcripts, and memoirs with originality and zest. The book is beautifully laid out and illustrated. Although scholars such as David Kennedy, Allen Winkler, George Roeder, and Steven Casey have examined pieces of the story Brewer tells, no single volume better synthesizes the history of U.S. propaganda efforts. Why America Fights is a great fit for undergraduate courses in the history of U.S. foreign relations and deserves a wide audience among academics and lay readers alike.


Reviewed by John Soares, University of Notre Dame

Nicholas Evan Sarantakes has written a well-researched, engaging, and forcefully argued book about a fascinating episode in Cold War sports diplomacy. The subject is President Jimmy Carter’s attempt to organize a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olym-
pics in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but the book also deals with the efforts of Denver and Los Angeles to host Olympics, the awarding of the 1980 Games to Moscow, and Olympic competition at Lake Placid and Moscow in 1980 and Los Angeles in 1984. Sarantakes argues that the collision between Carter and International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Lord Killanin should have been a mismatch in Carter’s favor because Washington had so much more power at its disposal. But as the book demonstrates, political, diplomatic, and military strength was sometimes trumped by soft power. IOC members and National Olympic Committees (NOCs) were required to be independent of their governments, and U.S. allies could not simply dictate what “their” NOCs and IOC members did; sports officials in several countries allied with the United States sent Olympic teams to Moscow despite Carter’s efforts.

Sarantakes might have made more of the fact that in Communist countries IOC members and NOCs were not independent, a point demonstrated when all Warsaw Pact members except Romania joined the Soviet-led boycott of Los Angeles—without any provocation comparable to the invasion of Afghanistan. IOC officials endlessly proclaimed their desire to ensure “that sport or sportsmen are not used for political purposes” (p. 31), but Communist regimes routinely did just that—except on occasions when it served their purposes to mouth platitudes about keeping sport and politics separate. IOC officials knew that East-bloc NOCs and IOC members were not and could not be independent of their governments. Once accepted into the Olympic movement on their own terms, the Communist states had no reason to alter their practices, and they did not. Instead the IOC accepted wholesale departures from its rules rather than risk appearing to take sides in the Cold War. As part of their politicization of sport, Communist regimes touted Olympic victories as proof of their superiority. Although Sarantakes downplays the political importance the Soviet regime attached to the Moscow games, Soviet authorities stressed the political dimension: “By awarding the organisation of the Games to Moscow the world sports leaders basically approved the peace-loving foreign political course of the Soviet government” (statement of USSR Committee for Physical Culture and Sport, quoted in Evelyn Mertin, “The Soviet Union and the Olympic Games of 1980 and 1984: Explaining the Boycotts to Their Own People,” in Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, eds., East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War London: Routledge, 2007, p. 238).

Given the realities of international sport, organizing a crippling Olympic boycott would have been difficult. Sarantakes argues that the idea of a boycott was misguided. For political impact on sport, he is impressed by Jesse Owens’s multiple gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Owens made a mockery of Nazi racial ideology, but his heroics also demonstrated the limits of soft power. His achievements did not trigger a rethinking of Nazi racial policy, nor did they stiffen European resistance to Adolf Hitler. Even a West German diplomat in 1980 “remarked that a boycott of the Berlin Games in 1936 might have altered history” (p. 80).

Still, a more competent diplomat in the White House might have done a better job of using the Olympics to make his point. Sarantakes is justifiably scathing in his assessment of Carter in this case, with reference to Carter’s foreign policy more
generally. Sarantakes shows Carter immersed in detail but missing the bigger strategic picture. He treated allies with contempt. He cost himself diplomatic flexibility by imposing an early deadline for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. He targeted his diplomacy toward governments rather than the sports officials actually making decisions about Olympic participation. He tried to organize an alternate sports festival even though international sports federations, whose support was essential, would never agree, to say nothing of the logistical impossibility of organizing in a matter of weeks what Olympic host cities needed five or six years to do. Sarantakes argues that Carter’s boycott efforts even “mutated into an attempt to destroy the Olympic movement” (p. 11), although his own research shows the administration did not take steps, such as anti-trust action against the IOC, that would have been pursued by those committed to the movement’s destruction.

This book is an important case study of soft power’s role in international relations; it should be required reading for anyone interested in Carter’s foreign policy, Olympics and politics, soft power in the Cold War, non-governmental organizations in international relations, or the intersection of sports and politics. Despite the book’s many strengths, it occasionally goes off on digressions unrelated to its main argument, especially about Olympic hockey at Lake Placid and operational details of the early stages of the Soviet invasion. The section about Lake Placid hockey introduces several minor problems.

The book also needed better editing. Liechtenstein, the tiny Alpine principality whose skiers performed remarkably well at the Lake Placid Olympics, deserved to have its name spelled correctly (p. 203). The country exemplified the dilemmas facing sportsmen and politicians in democratic societies in 1980. In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Liechtenstein legislature voted to boycott the Moscow Games. Sovereign Prince Franz Josef had the authority to overrule that vote, and he was an IOC member. But he would not veto the will of his people, so he took the honorable course and resigned from the IOC.

Principled men, like Carter, Killanin, and Franz Josef, had to make difficult decisions concerning peace and sportsmanship in 1980. The traditional willingness of Communist regimes to engage in blatant politicization of sports complicated their efforts. Sarantakes has impressively described an epic battle over sports and politics and illuminated the diplomatic shortcomings of Jimmy Carter. This contribution to the emerging literature of sports and the Cold War deserves a wide readership.


Reviewed by Nicholas J. Cull, University of Southern California

Cultural diplomacy has emerged in recent years as a significant field of both international practice and scholarship. The drivers of this have included an international cri-
sis allegedly underpinned by a “clash” of cultural differences and leaps of technology that make it possible for members of distinct cultural blocs around the world to experience direct contact as never before. After the reelection of George W. Bush in 2004 the United States rediscovered cultural diplomacy and is presently instituting an innovative array of cultural initiatives, including the SmART power program using artists and the Rhythm Road music program organized in conjunction with Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. The editors of this volume are themselves pioneers in the reemergence of the field in Europe. Jessica Gienow-Hecht has written widely on the history of cultural diplomacy, including the recent *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in German-American Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), and Mark Donfried has sought to promote and refine the practice of cultural diplomacy from his position at the helm of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin. The present volume is an anthology of papers presented at a conference on cultural diplomacy and international history that the editors organized in Frankfurt in December 2005.

Although cultural diplomacy has achieved a certain prominence in Cold War historical discourse, this anthology is not a rehash of the familiar discussion of the cultural Cold War of the 1950s. The editors make no secret of their wish to rescue cultural diplomacy from the clutches of scholars of the United States and especially its approach to Europe during the Cold War. Only one contribution treads familiar territory: James Vaughan’s excellent essay on the limits of U.S. cultural diplomacy in the Middle East in the 1950s. Most of the remaining essays illuminate lesser-known aspects of Cold War cultural diplomacy scholarship, beginning with Jean-François Fayet’s treatment of the Soviet cultural propaganda bureau VOKS and Rosa Magnúsdóttir’s account of Soviet attempts to promote socialist values in the United States in the later 1950s. Anikó Macher’s chapter on the absence of Hungarian cultural diplomacy in the years following the 1956 Soviet invasion is a fascinating snapshot of practice within the Warsaw Pact. Annika Frieberg’s treatment of the cultural diplomacy outreach toward the Eastern bloc undertaken by West German Catholics in the middle years of the Cold War is a valuable case study of civil society diplomacy. Besides the excellent introductory survey by Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, only three chapters strike out into non–Cold War territory: Jennifer Dueck on French cultural diplomacy toward Syria and Lebanon under the mandate; Yuzo Ota on prewar Japan; and a theoretical piece by Maki Aoki-Okabe, Yoko Kawamura, and Toichi Makita comparing Japanese and German approaches to cultural diplomacy within their respective regions.

Taken together, the essays serve to remind readers of the value of considering cultural diplomacy and especially of pushing the definition to include not merely the countries seeking to conduct foreign policy by engaging a foreign public through culture but also those non-governmental organizations, regions, cities, and actors of any kind pursuing similar ends. The editors make an argument for best practice in cultural diplomacy, asserting that it is most effective when it is distant from political control and part of a two way process. The present reviewer shares this view, though most of the cases tend to support this thesis by showing the limits of an opposite approach that is too close to government and one-way only.
The volume, despite its virtues, has a few problems. Some of the essays have grown stale since the original conference in 2005, and though revisions have incorporated a couple of references to material published up to 2008, five years of scholarship have happened since then, causing some of the chapters to seem like a time capsule. More than this, a volume that claims to be searching for cultural diplomacy cannot but be hurt by limiting itself to the topics that were proposed at the original conference rather than seeking out and commissioning essays on the countries or other actors with the most interesting and distinctive approaches to cultural diplomacy. The volume includes nothing on Chinese or Indian cultural diplomacy; nothing on the extraordinary cultural diplomacy practiced by Mexico or Brazil; nothing on British or Italian cultural diplomacy; and nothing on the use of cultural diplomacy by the countries of southern Africa and the Caribbean. Most glaring of all is the fact that, despite the inclusion of some examples of non-state cultural diplomacy, the volume contains nothing about the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, an international organization whose function is to work in the cultural realm. I mention this lacuna not to criticize Gienow-Hecht and Donfried (if anyone is going to create a platform for scholarship on those stories, it is they) but simply to underscore their point that the field of cultural diplomacy is still in its infancy. One hopes that this volume will inspire others to seek out the cultural angle in their own geographic area and that the field will continue to grow toward the ends of collective enlightenment and—as the best cultural diplomats would have it—“mutual understanding.”


Reviewed by Douglas Woodwell, University of Indianapolis

For many people during the Cold War, racial and ethnic cues provided a more accessible frame for group loyalties than did abstract bipolar ideological confrontation. The edited volume *Racial and Ethnic Politics during the Cold War* offers readers a window on the roles that race and ethnicity played in eleven different contexts— influencing everything from the grand ideological narratives of the superpowers to conditions facing minority Afro-Caribbean laborers in Panama.

In two interesting and readily contrastable chapters, authors Michael Krenn and Maxim Matusevich explore the interplay between international politics and domestic racism in the United States and the Soviet Union respectively. Krenn offers a sweeping view of the role of race in U.S. foreign policy and shows how the problem of racism at home left U.S. officials vulnerable to harges of hypocrisy when they sought to portray an enlightened image abroad. Krenn attempts to discuss the whole history of U.S. foreign policy, but the topic is too sweeping to be covered in a single chapter, and by the time he reduces the U.S. role in Vietnam to a race-based war against a perceived “me-
dieval society desperately in need of American know-how and resolve” (p. 22), his interpretation feels like it has become overly tethered to his narrative.

Matusevich’s topic, on the other hand, is more manageable. He focuses on the often difficult lives of African students within the Soviet Union with an eye toward the larger question of why racism is so endemic in modern Russian society, which emerged from a Soviet state that boasted of having progressive domestic and international racial views. Matusevich’s contribution works particularly well when describing relatable and human stories while juxtaposing youthful socialist idealism with the everyday realities of life in the Soviet Union.

Many of the chapters in Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War explore how the lives of racial minorities, like the African students who came to the Soviet Union, became intertwined with political symbolism during the Cold War. Henley Adams offers an incisive investigation of the symbolic “common ancestry”-themed discourse of Fidel Castro’s government as it sought to curry favor among African governments in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the prominent role played by Afro-Cubans in military and diplomatic efforts surrounding Cuba’s Angolan intervention. Similarly, David Webster’s chapter on the unrequited Papuan nationalist movement shows how Papuan leaders sought support for their cause through appeals to racial solidarity with Africa, only to find themselves shunted aside by an Organization of African States determined to preserve the postcolonial territorial status quo.

Kitrina Hagen’s noteworthy chapter looks at race through the German Cold War context and the contrasting rhetorical debates between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic during the crises in the Congo in the early 1960s. German history at the time amplified the salience of racial discourse, and the East German government, in particular, wasted few opportunities to portray West Germany as the “neo-imperialist successor state of imperial and Nazi Germany” (p. 174). Again, like the most successful parts of the volume, Hagen is effective when she weaves the larger international context together with a smaller-scale exploration of media, culture, and popular perception.

Even though the final three chapters (out of eleven) of Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War focus on ethnic identities and political mobilization, the main focus of the book is on issues surrounding racial identity. In his introductory chapter, Nico Slate suggests that the volume “probes the relative strength of race-based versus more narrowly ethnic-based forms of transnational solidarity” (p. xii). The book does little of the sort, and although the final few chapters are interesting pieces of scholarship, they feel slightly out of place thematically.

Overall, however, this is an effective and engrossing collection of impressive scholarship on a relatively understudied topic. The volume succeeds in achieving the editor’s goal of “broadening the study of race, ethnicity, and the Cold War away from America’s shores and toward the rest of the world” (p. vii). The country experts are well chosen, and each chapter is richly researched. Taken as a whole, the volume paints a convincing picture of how the Cold War influenced and was in turn influenced by racial and ethnic identity politics in ways both large and small.
Ofªcials and citizens of the United States and Western Europe can take satisfaction in the course of the Cold War, with the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe. A sense of triumph, however, is not the way most people in the Western Hemisphere perceive Cold War history. Central and South American countries suffered a dreadful fate from 1954 through 1991. The overthrow of the popularly elected government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán of Guatemala in 1954 initiated a cycle of political violence that left more than 200,000 Guatemalans dead. Most died at the hands of right-wing fanatics. Anti-Communist militias and “death squads” also exacted an appalling toll in small Central American countries such as El Salvador. In the Southern Cone—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay—tens of thousands of citizens “disappeared” in the 1960s and 1970s. The ferocious Argentine military killed 30,000 civilians during la guerra sucia (“the dirty war”). General Augusto Pinochet’s minions tortured more than 200,000 Chileans, including the future distinguished president Michelle Bachelet (2006–2010). These atrocities followed U.S. covert interventions in Latin America and were perpetrated by anti-Communist regimes that received stout support from U.S. presidential administrations.

The small South American country of British Guyana (Guyana) also became “collateral damage” during the Cold War. The impoverished British colony, which produces sugar cane and bauxite, has a racially mixed population, with people of African and Indian heritage. They are the descendants of black slaves from Africa and indentured servants from India who suffered centuries of injustice and discrimination at the hands of the European imperial powers. In the 1950s and 1960s, the United Kingdom under Prime Minister Winston Churchill and then the United States under Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson sought to deny the Guyanese their independence under the direction of Indo-Guyanese leader Cheddi Jagan. British and U.S. interventions in the colony facilitated the rise of the Afro-Guyanese politician Forbes Burnham, a racist demagogue who professed to be anti-Communist. Burnham led Guyana to independence in 1966, and his party, the People’s National Congress, held power until 1992, bankrupting the country and imposing profound discrimination against the Indo-Guyanese majority. In the 1960s, the United States unabashedly helped Burnham rig elections. Only after the Cold War did the United States take an affirmative step on behalf of Guyana. Former President Jimmy Carter oversaw Guyana’s first fair counting of ballots and the election of Jagan as president. Guyana has maintained an open electoral system since 1992. But nowadays Guyana remains a racially polarized country and is second only to Haiti as the poorest country in the hemisphere.

Colin Palmer has written the first scholarly political biography of Cheddi Jagan,
whom he dubs “the classic tragic hero” (p. 312). Palmer is a distinguished senior scholar who has written impressive books over the past four decades on slavery in Mexico, the international slave trade, and Eric Williams, the leader of Trinidad and Tobago’s independence movement. He conducted research at the British National Archives, the U.S. National Archives, and the Jagan Research Center in Georgetown, Guyana. It would have enriched Palmer’s analysis if he had also visited the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson presidential libraries, used the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, and consulted the records of the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which are located near the National Archives. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) worked with the labor union to funnel money and agents into British Guiana in the 1960s. Palmer focuses on the period from 1953 to 1964, when Jagan and his People’s Progressive Party led the struggle for independence.

Palmer takes on directly the controversial issues that surround Jagan’s political career—political ideology and racial politics. Palmer finds that Jagan was a gifted, charismatic politician who inspired unswerving loyalty from the majority of the population. Jagan never wavered from a vow made in 1948 that “I would dedicate my entire life to the cause of the struggle of the Guyanese people against bondage and exploitation” (p. 246). Palmer shows that Jagan was not an international Communist beholden to the Soviet Union or Cuba. Jagan used the grammar of Marxism to legitimize his anti-colonial views, but his domestic agenda was reformist, and he governed pragmatically from 1957 to 1964. Colonial authorities gradually recognized the eclectic nature of Jagan’s political thought, but U.S. officials such as President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk proved incapable of the subtle analysis needed to separate Jagan’s grammar from his actions. Palmer is not uncritical on this issue, noting that British Guiana needed from Jagan less devotion to ideological posturing and more time spent on state-building.

Palmer is also not uncritical on the subject of Jagan and race. He emphasizes that the enduring legacy of slavery and indentured servitude corroded Guyanese society. Outside actors intensified racial tensions. Colonial authorities employed the rhetoric of racism, disparaging the black and brown people of Guyana as unsophisticated and irresponsible. The fomenting of anti-Jagan strikes and riots in 1962 and 1963 by the CIA and the AFL-CIO led to attacks by Burnham’s supporters on Indo-Guyanese merchants. Palmer argues that Jagan could have taken steps to conciliate Afro-Guyanese instead of relying on the political support of the Indo-Guyanese majority, but Palmer ought to be forthright in pointing out that the main culprit in Guyana’s sad history of racial violence is Forbes Burnham. Contemporary observers and subsequent scholars have judged Burnham a duplicitous agitator on the order of Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe. Like any historical figure, Cheddi Jagan had his shortcomings, but Burnham wrecked his country and persecuted many of its citizens.

This political biography of Jagan from 1953 to 1964 is an outstanding piece of scholarship. Perhaps Palmer will continue Jagan’s story, examining his evolution during his years in the political wilderness from 1964 to 1992 and his record until his death in office in 1997. An enterprising graduate student or established scholar should
also write a book-length study of the life and political career of the formidable Janet Jagan, Cheddi Jagan’s wife and political ally, who also served as Guyana’s president (1997–1999).

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Reviewed by Garret J. Martin, European Institute, Washington, DC

In Diplomatie et grands contrats: L’état français et les marchés extérieurs au XXe siècle, French scholar Laurence Badel pays close attention to the significant diplomatic support that France provided to its businesses throughout the twentieth century in order to facilitate expansion in foreign markets. Focusing in particular on the period from 1918 to 1978, Badel highlights how the French state organized its commercial representation abroad and how the various actors involved—the relevant ministries, quasistate organizations, and private actors—shared responsibilities. In so doing, she sheds light on “the public structures of France’s commercial diplomacy, which has not really been studied to date” (p. 9). Well-written and engaging, this book will prove particularly helpful for scholars interested in France and the intersection of politics and trade, but it also offers some illuminating insights on how France’s commercial diplomacy served its larger Cold War ambitions, especially by helping to foster ties with the Communist bloc in the 1960s and 1970s.

The impetus for a new commercial diplomacy and for an increased state involvement emerged in the late nineteenth century, at a time when France faced a period of relative commercial decline vis-à-vis Germany, Great Britain, and the United States and appeared unprepared for the growing international economic competition. For the most part, French businesses could not obtain reliable and useful information about foreign markets, nor were they well served by French consuls. The latter were often too busy, or unwilling, to provide support to French businesses. Moreover, French banks could not guarantee long-term commercial transactions, which hindered the ability of businesses to develop their operations abroad. In that context the French state, as well as many of its neighbors, began to take a more active role in the commercial realm in the early part of the twentieth century. This often led to the emergence of new administrations—such as the Board of Trade in Britain, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in France—because the normal diplomatic corps balked at the idea of focusing on economic matters.

In the early part of her book, Badel explains in detail the incremental creation of the public structures of France’s commercial diplomacy and the important debates regarding the relationship between diplomacy and economic matters that defined the new administrative organization. Despite pleas from the Quai d’Orsay (French For-
eign Ministry) to maintain full control over foreign policy, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry successfully extended its authority over the nascent network of commercial attachés in late 1918.

After World War Two the new administrative structure and division of labor truly took shape. The Direction des Relations Économiques Extérieures (DREE), created in 1944 and first under the purview of the State Secretariat for economic affairs, became the main interlocutor for businesses trying to expand in foreign markets. The Quai D’Orsay’s Direction des Affaires économiques et financières (DAEF) exercised control over representation and negotiation in international organizations. The postes d’expansion économique (economic missions abroad) were in charge of collecting economic information about the regions in which they were based and sending it back to both the DREE and the DAEF. Although the heads of the economic missions were nominally dependent on the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, the head of each mission also had to submit to the authority of the ambassador who represented France in the country.

Badel’s book shows how, after 1945, France’s expansion into foreign markets came to rely on a number of key factors, including “the direct or indirect control of the economic information that the state gathered and redistributed, the creation of a system to finance external commerce that the state guaranteed, and a close collaboration between the two key operational centers in this domain (DREE and the DAEF)” (p. 11).

Moreover, Badel focuses at length on how France’s commercial diplomacy came to serve and support the larger goals of its foreign policy of grandeur during the Cold War. Besides helping to foster economic growth, it offered an opportunity to develop cooperation with former colonies and other developing states, to encourage cultural and technical exchanges, and to target newly rich states after the 1973 oil shock. French commercial diplomacy also played an important role in underpinning the rapprochement that France attempted with the Communist world in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, before France officially recognized the People’s Republic of China in January 1964, its businesses paved the way by developing economic ties with the Chinese embassy in Switzerland. Equally important, providing long-term credits and gaining contracts gave further substance to the policy of détente with the Soviet bloc.

Finally, Badel addresses the decline of the active role of the state in commercial diplomacy. The late 1970s marked a turning point in several respects: First, the onset of stagflation highlighted the lack of efficiency of the public structures and their inability to help smaller French businesses. Second, France maintained a persistent commercial deficit with its major industrial allies. Third, the debt crisis in the early 1980s in the Soviet bloc and in major developing countries precluded any significant growth of exports to them. Within two decades, the main protagonists of French commercial diplomacy, the DAEF and DREE, had disappeared, either replaced by a new body or merged with other organizations.

Badel’s book does have a few mistakes and typographical mistakes—it dates the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to 1978 as opposed to 1979 (p. 370)—and at times the
The book is too detailed, making it hard for the reader to follow without constantly referring to the annexes. But these small flaws should not detract from the quality of the research and the important contribution it makes to the field of French diplomacy.


Reviewed by Lloyd Gardner, Rutgers University

The Vietnamese specialists quoted on the back cover of *Hanoi's War* rightly praise the book for offering a new perspective on the Vietnam War missing from the vast literature on what was once America’s “Longest War.” It was also a long war for the Vietnamese, but not the country’s longest by any means. After World War II, Vietnam was engaged in a nearly perpetual struggle for self-determination. On this point, Lien-Hang Nguyen makes an important argument that turns the usual narrative inside-out: instead of seeing Vietnam in the context of the Cold War, we should try looking at America’s war in the context of Vietnam’s historical quest for independence, a quest determined by choices made in Hanoi and Saigon.

From that perspective, it becomes clear that the rivals for power were not puppets or agents of their superpower allies. The strongest thread running through the book, moreover, is the story of how the “Comrades Le”—Le Duc Tho and Le Duan—became the actual leaders in Hanoi’s “War for Peace,” bypassing the most famous Vietnamese nationalist of modern times, Ho Chi Minh, and the leading military commander in the war against the French, Vo Nguyen Giap. When these two Ho and Giap raised serious questions about the general offensive–general uprising (GO-GU) strategy pursued by the Comrades Le, they found themselves outmaneuvered in the North Vietnamese Politburo, and many of their adherents were placed under arrest.

The GO-GU strategy was premised on the notion that a general offensive in the South would produce a general uprising that would topple the Saigon government. This strategy was tried in 1968 with the Tet Offensive and again in the spring offensive of 1972; it failed both times. Le Duan’s confidence in his theory of how the war would end was not shaken, however, until Richard Nixon and his chief foreign policy adviser, Henry Kissinger, manipulated superpower relations to create a serious problem for Hanoi in the form of pressure from Moscow and Beijing in 1972 to accept peace terms that did not include the immediate ousting of Nguyen Van Thieu from the presidential palace in Saigon.

How all this came about is recounted by Lien-Hang Nguyen, who offers a genuinely new perspective on the war. The book begins with the aftermath of the French defeat in 1954, when the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) attempted to shift from war to peace and failed to place the new government on a strong political footing. The DRV leaders were divided between those who argued that priority should go
to developing the postwar North and those who argued for carrying on the fight in the South until the country was united under Hanoi’s leadership. The “moderates,” who favored the first option, were operating somewhat under a handicap because of a widespread feeling that Ho had not provided correct leadership when he had allowed the Geneva Conference to cheat the revolution of its full victory as a result of the epic Battle of Dien Bien Phu.

When Le Duan came north after the French war ended, he became de facto leader of the South—first cadre, and eventually, with Le Duc Tho as his closest ally, the principal figure in the Politburo. Le Duan’s leadership meant a tightening of internal security to clamp down on dissenters and intellectuals, which went along with his unbounded faith in GO-GU. Meanwhile, in Saigon, Ngo Dinh Diem cooperated with Le Duan by turning the South into a repressive regime that heightened the intensity of a growing insurgency. Le Duan pressed for more active involvement beyond “politics” in the struggle and carried the day. Those in Washington who argued for dumping Diem in 1963 won that debate, but the U.S.-backed coup that toppled the regime only encouraged Le Duan to speed up his plans to escalate from guerrilla activity to “bigger war” (p. 63).

“The liberation war of South Vietnam has progressed by leaps and bounds,” Le Duan asserted in late 1964 (p. 74). The attack on Pleiku early the next year, which was supposed to convince the United States to give up the effort to save Saigon, had exactly the opposite effect. The escalation of the war on both sides came to a head in 1968 with the Tet Offensive, posing GO-GU’s biggest test. In effect, both sides lost. Le Duan’s hopes of overthrowing the Saigon regime collapsed, and Lyndon Johnson’s political alliance at home came apart. Nixon came into office believing that the war could still be won and that the United States had played its hand badly during the years of graduated escalation. Of course, Nixon also had options—some real, some imaginary—that his predecessor had lacked.

Nixon’s first option was to try to scare Hanoi into serious negotiations that would save South Vietnam just as it was, with President Thieu actually strengthened. That did not work. “Vietnamization” was his second option, and it turned out to be a more serious problem for Hanoi, especially when combined with Nixon’s third option, détente with the Soviet Union and reconciliation with the Peoples’ Republic of China—Vietnam’s closest allies, although they abhorred one another. Le Duan’s spring 1972 offensive was timed to interrupt Nixon’s progress in making a new start in the Communist capitals. Le Duan attempted to expose the perfidy of those who would betray the Marxist-Leninist world revolution for an advantage in the race to secure U.S. support in their rivalry. When that did not succeed, and South Vietnam actually regained lost territory, Le Duan turned to serious negotiations for the first time.

Hanoi was ready to compromise on what had been a chief objective of GO-GU, the demand that Thieu resign. The United States, on the other hand, was ready to sign a peace agreement that would leave DRV troops in place inside South Vietnam. When Thieu objected to these terms, Kissinger tried to assuage the South Vietnamese leader “by echoing General [Creighton] Abrams’ comment . . . that these weakened
northern forces would soon wither away after the cease-fire for lack of reinforcement” (p. 282). President Thieu was not convinced—nor should he have been. The U.S. chapter of the “war for peace” came to an end in 1973. The aftermath in Vietnamese history has yet to play out some four decades later. Meanwhile, Nguyen’s book is an indispensable guide to understanding what happened during those years.


Reviewed by June Teufel Dreyer, University of Miami

The essays in this volume were prepared for a conference held in 2010, sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Defense Department. Written by many of the leading names in the field, the collection first appeared as a special issue of the Journal of Strategic Studies. Although individual chapters explore different aspects of the Chinese defense technological base, the common theme, which is not universally accepted, is that although the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has made impressive progress over the last three decades, it continues to lag behind the United States in key areas.

Thomas Mahnken points to the need for careful reading of a country’s military and engineering journals to discern its intentions. China’s anti-access strategy, he believes, has the potential to become disruptive. Stating that Taiwan is the driver of the PRC’s military innovation, he does not mention the wider implications of China’s recent actions in disputed areas of the East China and South China Seas.

Editor Tai Ming Cheung’s contribution notes that China’s access to external sources of military and dual-use technologies appears to be improving, especially with the resumption of a more cooperative engagement with Russia and the deepening integration of the PRC’s civilian technology sectors with global innovation networks. Nonetheless, Cheung believes that the sort of radical innovation that could enable major technological breakthroughs is unlikely until well into the 2020s unless the country’s leadership considers regime survival to be at risk.

Dennis Blasko observes that, whereas doctrine drives technology in the United States, in China, technology determines tactics—but not strategy. Blasko’s examination of Chinese military literature finds many references to commanders and staff, especially at battalion level, who are inadequately prepared to plan for and control operations that incorporate new equipment and capabilities; equipment that arrives without operation or maintenance manuals; personnel who are not trained to operate and maintain the new equipment that has been assigned to their units; and lack of simulators and training areas for the new equipment. The total suggests systemic shortcomings at the level of the military’s four general departments and the General Armaments Department in particular. The People’s Liberation Army is focused on learning to maintain and operate its newly acquired arsenal.
Kevin Pollpeter’s analysis of the PRC’s space industry notes that the multiple large projects it has taken on run the risk of overreaching and losing focus. Although Beijing repeatedly states that it will not participate in a space race, its actions demonstrate that it regards space activities as an area of competition.

Richard Bitzinger provides an instructive assessment of India’s, Japan’s, and South Korea’s efforts to become self-sufficient in arms in terms of lessons China might learn in its efforts to become so as well. Bitzinger finds that the efforts of all three have fallen well short of their proponents’ hopes. Unmentioned in the case of Japan, however, is that many of its defense industry’s problems stem from the country’s self-imposed ban on exports of weapons or the component parts thereof. Freed from these constraints, the country’s formidable industrial production system might well be able to overcome the limitations imposed by small production runs that result in high per-unit costs.

Bitzinger, an internationally recognized authority on the PRC’s defense industry, judges its military hardware to be as good as most products of the three other countries. However, like them, the PRC faces a long-term challenge of making technonationalism work at the later stages of innovation. The ability to do so will be critical as China’s defense industry moves from primarily platform-centric to increasingly network-centric technological industrial processes.

A general conclusion from the essays might be that, if the current momentum of the PRC’s defense economy can be sustained, it will be able to narrow considerably the still wide gap with the world’s most advanced defense powers. Whether this momentum can be maintained, given the many internal and external challenges facing the PRC, is an important caveat that is outside the scope of the book and indeed beyond the ability of researchers to predict.


Reviewed by Lise Namikas, Louisiana State University

Frank Villafana writes about what he calls “one of the most bizarre conflicts in recent history: Cubans fighting Cubans in Congo” in 1965 (p. 129). Villafana himself left his native Cuba in 1960 in his early 20s and studied engineering at the University of Alabama. He later worked in the United States, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Villafana provides many important insights into the guerrilla warfare in the Congo by starting out with some very interesting questions. Why did Fidel Castro choose Africa, and why did the United States allow him to conduct his revolution there? Why did the Congo become “the key initial country to Castro’s apparent African strategy” and why on early did the Cuban leader send Che Guavara to lead the mercenaries?
Villafana suggests that the fall of Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria turned the Cubans south. General Enrique Líster-Forján helped Castro export the revolution, but his exact role as a top strategist must remain murky.

Where Villafana really stands out in his historiographic contribution is in gathering the memoirs and recollections of Cubans. He has interviewed many Cuban soldiers who served in Congo, and in some cases has also spoken with their family members. In addition he has sifted through many Spanish-language sources. Villafana’s oral histories and research are valuable to any historian interested in Cuba’s role in Congo. Chapter 4, for instance, outlines the background of the U.S.-trained Cuban exiles who became the Makasi pilots used by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Cuban exile navy to patrol Lake Tanganyika. Chapter 8 examines the ethnic background of Castro’s Cuban soldiers, all of whom were chosen because their ancestry linked them to the Congo. However, university students reading Villafana will crave more background about the politics that connected the mercenaries and revolutionaries to the Cold War. Castro’s actual goals are rather weakly defined as wanting to “take over” the Congo and create “many Vietnams” (p. 13) for the United States, by which he seems to mean that Castro wanted to engage the United States in as many places as possible to distract Washington from Cuba. Elsewhere Villafana suggests that Castro wanted to put his stamp on Africa. Greater use of U.S. archives in particular would have better illustrated Washington’s knowledge of the Cuban revolutionaries and would have better situated the Cuban exile force within the CIA operations and U.S. foreign policy in Africa.

In an important chapter, Villafana chronicles how Che Guevara trained a small group of about 200 Cubans to lead Congolese revolutionaries in what would become a dramatic failure along the Fizi-Baraka area of eastern Congo in June-October 1965. In a particularly good discussion, he describes the conditions and nature of fighting in Fizi-Baraka and the challenges of working in a totally new environment with a combined group of Congolese and Rwandan rebels. The Cubans had slowly built their successes on well-executed ambushes, which perhaps gave them a false sense of security. Villafana’s account shows how the only major offensive under Cuban command near Bendera helped bring the final disaster one step closer. A Cuban killed in the offensive had on his person a diary and passport, in clear violation of orders, giving Western intelligence all it needed to confirm the Cubans’ presence. Lawrence Devlin told Villafana that the CIA was unaware of the presence of Castro’s Cubans until a few weeks before Bendera did not connect Che with the operation.

By October 1965, Che’s relationship with Castro publicly soured. Piero Gleijeses, in *Confllicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa* (2002), suggested skepticism about the estrangement. Villafana followed up with some hard questions, and although perhaps his answers are not always definitive they paint a darker picture of Che’s relations with Castro. Villafana maintains that Castro sent Guevara to Africa to “silence” him (p. 125) and squelch what were becoming his embarrassing anti-Soviet statements. Castro’s confidence lay rather with Cuba’s ambassador to Tanzania, Pablo Rivalta, who was instructed “to coordinate the national liberation movements
in Africa” (p. 127) and report directly to Castro, sidestepping Guevara. Still, in a careful reading of Che’s diaries, Villafana concludes that Che remained optimistic long after signs that the operation was doomed.

Finally, by October 1965, the Cuban exiles were manning the Swift boats to patrol Lake Tanganyika. In a fascinating recounting of events, Eulogio Reyes (Papo) shows how the exile navy worked to make sure that Guevara and his Congolese and Rwandan rebels would be defeated. While Guevara’s efforts in the Congo fizzled out, at least 2,500 Cubans who were in Tanzania on the other side of the Lake declined to come help Guevara. In the context of this defeat, Castro read Guevara’s “final letter” which he secretly gave to Castro eight months earlier “just in case” to prove he was not associated with the Cuban government. Guevara wrote an angry response, which Villafana reproduced in full. Guevara blasted Castro that he did “not totally understand” the situation in the Congo and listed a number of problems. Castro’s stamp on the Congo was never sealed, and the Cubans prepared for their withdrawal to Tanzania and repatriation to Cuba. Meanwhile the exile Cubans in another bizarre conflict a year later, helped Congo’s new dictator, Joseph Mobutu, put down the “revolt of the mercenaries.” Villafana includes just enough on this topic to suggest that another book on the subject is in the works.

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Reviewed by Ulrich Merten, retired international banker and author of Forgotten Voices: The Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II

Shortly after the end of World War II, the Hungarian government deported some 239,000 ethnic Germans from their traditional settlement areas in the southern Transdanubia region of Hungary, between the Danube and Drau Rivers. After the Austro-Hungarian Empire defeated the Turks, resulting in the Peace of Passarowitz of 1718, Empress Maria Theresa and her son, Emperor Joseph II, called for emigrants to populate the almost empty war-ravaged lands. From 1722 through 1787, more than 150,000 German peasants and artisans, mostly from southwestern Germany, responded to this call to settle an area known as “Swabian Turkey.” The settlers came to be known as Danubian Swabians.

After World War II, the Germans slated for deportation were those who had declared themselves German or claimed German as their mother tongue in the last national census of 1941. Also subject to expulsion were Germans who had changed their surnames to Hungarian and then back again during the war, as well as members of the Volksbund or the Waffen SS. (The Volksbund was the cultural and political umbrella organization of ethnic Germans in Hungary. It was set up before the Nazi period, but once the Nazis came to power it rapidly came under their control and, in effect, be-
came the political representative of the ethnic Germans in Hungary. Only a minority of the Germans in Hungary joined the Volksbund, however. The majority still felt loyalty to Hungary.)

Certain categories of ethnic Germans were exempt from the expulsion, including those who were active members of democratic parties (e.g., the Communist Party of Hungary) and labor unions. Subsequently, industrial workers in critical industries, miners, and certain craftsmen were also exempt. The ethnic Germans who had opted for Hungarian nationality in the 1941 census and who had claimed Hungarian as their native language were generally able to avoid deportation.

The expulsion of the German Hungarians was promoted and led by the Hungarian Communist party, with the vigorous backing of the Soviet Union. The purpose was to gain power in the next election by promoting land reform and expropriating the land of ethnic Germans, who were mostly farmers, thus receiving the support of the poor peasants who would benefit. The Communists also pressed for the expulsion of the Germans in order to appear as the principal defender of the Hungarian nation. The Soviet Union gave strong support by insisting at the “Big Three” Potsdam Conference of August 1945, that all ethnic Germans be expelled from Hungary, together with those from Poland and Czechoslovakia. U.S. and British leaders endorsed this initiative.

On 5 December 1945 the Hungarian Communists urged the expulsion of the Germans, relying on Imre Kovacs, one of the leaders of the National Peasants Party (allied with the Communists), to declare: “The Swabs (Germans) who came to this country with one bundle on their back, should leave the same way. They cut themselves off from the fatherland as they demonstrated with their actions that they sympathized with Hitler’s Germany. Let them now share the fate of Germany.” The majority of the Swabian Germans, about 170,000, went to the U.S. zone of occupation in Germany. Approximately 54,000 ended up in the Soviet zone after the U.S. government refused to accept any more, and 15,000 went to Austria. Some returned illegally to Hungary, and they are the subject of Agnes Toth’s Rückkehr nach Ungarn (Return to Hungary). Their return was surprising because the majority of them were strongly anti-Communist and dismayed at being expelled from what they considered their home country.

Toth estimates that 8,000 to 10,000 German Hungarians returned illegally from 1946 to 1948, when the expulsions officially ceased. This amounted to roughly 4 percent of the number expelled, though Toth considers the figure to be in the 5–6 percent range. Many were caught by the border police and expelled to Austria. Others repeated the attempt until they were finally able to find a secure place in Hungary. This is especially noteworthy because the ability of these returned expellees to survive in Hungary was made extremely difficult by the expropriation of their land and houses. They attempted to find refuge with family members who had not been expelled, but the relatives were often not welcoming, fearing that if they assisted the expellees they risked arrest by the secret police. Others who returned attempted to find anonymity by going to remote agricultural areas and working as day laborers or in mines or large industry. They always feared arrest, however, because they no longer had Hungarian
legal papers, and the police in this period conducted frequent raids looking for “enemies of the people.”.

The bulk of the book consists of interviews with the returnees to determine why they came back and the conditions of their existence in Hungary. Eyewitness reports are always interesting because they give immediacy to history that retelling cannot achieve. In these reports, however, too much narrative is taken up by irrelevant comments that detract from their interest. Thorough editing of the interviews would have been useful.

The expellees had two basic reasons for returning to Hungary. The first was disillusionment with the conditions found in Germany after the war. The country was destroyed, there was no proper shelter available for the Hungarian refugees (or any refugees, for that matter), and food was scarce (although the refugees received assistance from the authorities). Many considered postwar conditions in Hungary much superior. In addition, the refugees were often not welcomed by the local Germans (some called them Hungarian gypsies), which is not surprising considering that many of them had lost their own homes, were short of food, and struggled to find work.

Another reason for returning was the inability of the refugees to adjust to German ways and society. Many genuinely felt their Hungarian roots. It is worth remembering that in the latter part of the nineteenth century, after the Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 designating Hungary as an autonomous member of the Dual Monarchy, a great drive was mounted for the “Magyarization” of minorities. Once assimilated—with Hungarian as their main language and even newly adopted Hungarian surnames—they were fully accepted into society. They were not second-class citizens even though they were of German origin. Of all ethnic Germans living in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the German Hungarians were perhaps the most integrated into the local culture.

In October 1949 the Hungarian government announced a general amnesty for all ethnic Germans, which meant that the illegal returnees could officially document their existence in Hungary and lead a more normal life. Unfortunately, the Communist government still regarded the German Swabians as kulaks, class enemies, even though they were now generally poor.

The book presents an interesting story of what can be considered a footnote to the history of the expulsions of the Germans from Hungary. What is lacking, however, is an overall context of developments in Hungary: the Communist seizure of power, as part of the expansion of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe after the war. The expulsion of the Germans did not occur in a vacuum but was an integral part of the Communist takeover of Hungary.

*Reviewed by Antony Polonsky, Brandeis University*

This well-documented, highly readable book—the English translation of a monograph published in Poland in 2007—gives a comprehensive account of relations between Poland and the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine and its successor, the state of Israel, from the end of World War II until the breach of Polish-Israeli relations in June 1967 and the subsequent “anti-Zionist” campaign in Poland. Based on extensive use of the now opened Polish archives and some Israeli documents made available to the author by the editors of a project that gathered documents on Polish-Israeli relations as well as on the extensive secondary literature, the book gives a clear picture of how the two countries’ relations developed in the quarter of a century from the closing year of World War II through 1968. The book fleshes out our understanding of the relations between Israel and the socialist camp in a significant manner.

Szaynok distinguishes four periods in the evolution of Polish-Israeli relations. The first runs from the end of the war until the second half of 1948. This was a time of bitter political conflict—indeed, near civil war—in Poland and culminated in the imposition on the country, with significant Soviet assistance, of an unpopular and unrepresentative Communist regime in which the key political role was played by the security apparatus. These conflicts were not reflected in attitudes toward the emerging Israeli state. Both the Communists and the non-Communists in what was until early 1947 a coalition government were strongly in favor of the partition of Palestine and the emergence of a Jewish state. In the case of the leadership of the Polish Communists, this reflected Soviet policy, which was dictated primarily by the desire to weaken the influence of Britain and its Arab allies in the Middle East and by the belief that Communist influence would be strong in the emerging Jewish state.

Recent arguments that Soviet leaders were also affected by the pro-Nazi position held during the war by Haj Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem from 1921 to 1948 and a key figure in the Arab Higher Committee, receive only slight confirmation in the Polish documents. Commenting on Andrei Gromyko’s speech of 14 May 1947—in which Gromyko said, “the aspirations of a substantial segment of the Jewish nation are linked with Palestine and its future structure”—Juliusz Katz-Suchy, the secretary of the Polish mission at the United Nations (UN) told Mordechai Oren, a left-wing Zionist activist, that Soviet policy was dictated by two factors: (1) awareness of the need to assist the Jewish nation in its tragic situation (the camps), and (2) reluctance to rely on the Arabs alone because of the suspicion that they might constitute an unstable factor and that their leaders were susceptible to imperialism (p. 81).

Even stronger support for Zionist aspirations was offered by the non-Communists who supported the postwar Polish government that was given Western recognition after its enlargement in accordance with the decision of the Yalta conference. This was the case with Olgierd Górka, a prominent prewar expert on minority
affairs who was appointed head of the short-lived Bureau of Jewish Affairs established in the Polish Foreign Ministry in February 1946. In March 1947, Górka became consul-general in Jerusalem. Even more pro-Zionist was Ksawery Pruszyński, a prominent prewar journalist who had thrown in his lot with the new government and who, as a member of the Polish delegation to the UN headed one of the subcommittees of the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question. His speeches were strongly criticized by Arab spokesmen as having a “pro-Zionist bias.” In one, describing the geography of Palestine, Pruszyński observed that “the Jews settled only where the land was worst. They came to those barren sandy hills stretching along the sea coast, where there was nothing but sand, and now there is nothing but a great orchard” (p. 101). In another, he claimed, “Poland admits to having a historical interest in the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. . . . [A] nation for centuries deprived of its homeland has to return to that homeland and find its Home. In our belief the Jewish nation is the most tragic nation in the world. But it is also perhaps the nation to which humanity owes the most” (p. 105).

The Poles also took practical steps to support the emerging Israeli state. Like the Czechoslovak government, the Polish authorities allowed unrestricted Jewish emigration to Palestine, furnished a limited amount of arms, and allowed the training of roughly 2,500 Jewish soldiers in a camp in Bolków in Lower Silesia.

The pro-Israeli position of the Polish authorities was abandoned during the second half of 1948 as the government became more monolithically Communist and hewed closely to the Soviet line of sharply criticizing the Israeli state. Unlike the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, Poland did not experience an “anti-Zionist” purge of Communists of Jewish origin, probably because Soviet leaders at the time were more worried about the “national Communist” deviation that they attributed to Władysław Gomułka. At the same time, action against “Zionist espionage” was stepped up, and in December 1952 Arie Kubovy, the Israeli minister in Prague and Warsaw, was declared persona non grata and accused of “espionage contacts” with Rudolf Slánský and his associates. Jewish emigration was halted, and Jewish life in Poland was subordinated to the Communist-controlled Jewish Social and Cultural Organization (Towarzystwo Spółeczne i Kultury Żydów, or TSKŻ), which adopted a resolutely anti-Zionist line.

The death of Iosif Stalin in March 1953 initiated a slow thaw in Polish-Israeli relations, particularly after Gomułka’s return to power in October 1956. The principal initiative came from the Israelis, who hoped to facilitate the resumption of Jewish immigration from Poland and to use the Poles as an intermediary with the Soviet Union. Gomułka allowed the former but was more hesitant about the latter. He was suspicious of the growing links between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany and may have been unwilling to anger Moscow by establishing closer relations with Israel. Poland’s links with the Arab world had also become more important. The Polish and Israeli missions were upgraded to ambassadorial level, but relations were increasingly undermined from the early 1960s by the growing power of the more nationalist “Partisan” group of Mieczysław Moczar in the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs. A purge of people of Jewish origin in the intelligence services began, and the Partisans stressed
their “Polish” credentials, attacking their opponents for their “cosmopolitan” character and calling for a “struggle against Zionism.” Polish-Israeli relations were thus already in a critical state even before the Six-Day Mideast War of June 1967.

The rapid victory of the Israelis in the war was followed by a major political crisis in Poland that was marked both by a bid for power by Moczar and his associates and by large-scale student protests seeking to reproduce in Poland the “socialism with a human face” that Alexander Dubček had introduced in Czechoslovakia. Along with the other members of the Warsaw Pact apart from Romania, Poland broke off relations with Israel. The course of the 1968 crisis is well known. One factor that emerges from Szaynok’s analysis is the key role Gomułka played in the initiation of the “anti-Zionist” campaign. He seems to have been genuinely shocked at the degree of support for Israel both among Polish Jews and in the society at large and felt the need to counteract this strongly. When Gomułka was congratulated in February 1968 in Warsaw by Khaled Baghdash, secretary general of the Syrian Communist Party, on his speech of 19 June 1967 (in which he talked about a Jewish “fifth column” in Poland), he replied, “That speech was, first and foremost, for our nation to hear” (p. 415). Only after March did Gomułka become aware of how the “anti-Zionist” campaign was also aimed at him.

This is a very well-argued and fascinating account of a topic that has broad ramifications, both for the politics of the Middle East and for East-West relations in a crucial period of the Cold War. Szaynok’s book deserves the widest possible readership.


Reviewed by Peter Kenez, University of California, Santa Cruz

The crucial event in the second half of the twentieth century was the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western world in the Cold War. Understandably, the origin of that conflict came to be a major issue in British and U.S. historiography. Although scholars often disagreed about the character of U.S. foreign policy, they at least had the material readily available to make their evaluations. The situation was different for analyses of the other side. Iosif Stalin, the undoubted architect of Soviet foreign policy, was famously inscrutable. How did he see the future at the end of World War II? Did he have long-range plans for the Sovietization of the East-European states? Did he expect the establishment of Communist states within a few years or within a few decades? What was the chance of a different and, from the standpoint of the local populations, better outcome?

Mária Palasik makes a valuable contribution to the debate. She is a conscientious scholar, extremely well acquainted with the Hungarian archival materials, and has read
the available secondary sources. On the basis of her work we can make informed judgments concerning the establishment of Communist rule in Hungary and, by extension, the development of Soviet foreign policy in the immediate postwar years.

Palasik sides with historians who view Soviet foreign policy as having been in a state of flux in the period 1944–1947. Stalin knew no better than anyone else in 1944 what Europe would look like five years later. He was improvising and responding to moves made by other leaders whom he increasingly perceived as hostile. At the outset he counseled his Hungarian acolytes to be patient and warned them that the immediate establishment of a Communist regime in Hungary was not in accordance with Soviet plans. Palasik correctly points out that the Soviet leader, at least in 1945, was not only willing to accept “bourgeois” politicians in the Hungarian government but even military officers who had accumulated a dubious record during the years under Miklós Horthy. She appropriately attributes great significance to U.S. policy that in mid-1947 persuaded the French and Italian governments to get rid of Communist ministers. Stalin regarded that move as one of the reasons to end the pretense of maintaining a democratic government in Hungary.

Palasik largely limits herself to a detailed discussion of the Hungarian experience. She rightly regards the politicians of the Smallholder Party as decent democrats, though unfortunately she accepts the Communist parlance and without the use of quotation marks refers to them as “bourgeois.” These men did everything in their power to get along with the Communists and not to provoke Soviet policymakers. Hence, it is unfair to blame them for the ultimate outcome. What they could have done to save Hungarian democracy is hard to see. They believed that after the signing of a peace treaty with the Soviet Union the Soviet Army would withdraw and that normal political life could resume. This was an optimistic but not altogether unrealistic expectation. Indeed, the Hungarian Communists feared just that sort of outcome.

Palasik examines with particular care the Béla Kovács affair, which was the turning point in the process of Sovietization. (She earlier published a book about Kovács.) On the basis of completely false charges the Soviet authorities arrested one of the leading figures of the Smallholders and used him to force the resignation of Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy. The situation was absurd: the leaders of the party that was supported by the great majority of Hungarians and therefore dominated the government were accused of attempting to overthrow that very same government. The Communist leader, Mátyás Rákosi, was the one who forced the matter. He claimed to have received direct authorization from Stalin himself to act. Whether he did receive such a signal from the Soviet leader is, questionable, however.

Palasik writes political history. She is interested in the mechanics of the Communist takeover. Aside from a few pages at the very end of the book where she reports on some court cases in which people were arrested for making incautious statements, the reader gets very little impression of how the Hungarian people saw the crucial events that were taking place around them. Palasik stays close to her documents and rarely attempts to see the larger picture concerning what was going on in Hungary at the time.
If the metaphor of a chess game is intended as a description of how Hungarian politicians struggled for power, then it is misleading. One of the players, Rákosi, was able to batter the others with a club, and that was why he won.


Reviewed by Helene Carlbäck, Södertörn University (Stockholm)

This study of Soviet society in the middle of the twentieth century discusses how young people in the USSR wanted to spend their lives and how the authorities wished to control them. In Juliane Fürst’s monograph we meet youth groups who shared love for the same fashion, films, and dances, forming their identity as they engaged in their own particular brand of oppositional behavior, apart from the rest of their surroundings. The book has a universal touch, describing youth culture similar to that elsewhere in the world. However, the setting here is the late Stalinist Soviet Union, with its harsh oppression and far-reaching state control of private sentiments and endeavors. The full-blown Cold War was expressed through a propaganda battle fought between the East and the West on a cultural front. Both sides sought to prove the superiority of their own lifestyle while scorning the values of their opponent. Soviet authorities launched shrill public campaigns against “decadence” and “cosmopolitanism.”

The book is a rich analysis of a generation that has undergone little previous study. In a well-argued introductory chapter Fürst introduces the key concepts of age and generation. She acknowledges that these Soviet young people did not identify themselves as a generation and therefore lacked a generational consciousness, but she still insists that the young cohort of late Stalinism is a generation. The key argument lies in the values they all shared in their common experience of growing up during the war and the bleak society of the postwar period.

A central theme of the book is the relation between the state and youth. The most frequent representative of the state presented here is the Communist Party’s youth organization, the Komsomol, which was responsible for socializing and educating young people, a task that was extremely difficult amid the poverty of the postwar years. Komsomol organizations suffered from a vast turnover of cadres and a low level of education among local activists. Most young people preferred to be with their own social groups to dress up, drink, and dance rather than to sit through dreary lectures on politics. Still, this was not the whole truth, Fürst emphasizes, because the collective, state-controlled activities did give a sense of empowerment and socialized people to “feel Soviet” (p. 135). What scholars conventionally have regarded as empty rituals, such as elections of Komsomol representatives, practices of criticism and self-criticism, and people’s letter-writing to authorities and organizations, in fact had integrative power and offered frameworks for individuals to find identity and meaning. As a way
of controlling the morality of youth, some Komsomol districts formed vigilante patrols that sometimes acted like youth gangs, becoming involved in violent street brawls and attracting attention from local police forces. This example superbly illustrates how the spheres of the state and youth would sometimes overlap.

Another important theme of the book is how the various ideological campaigns of the postwar era were incomprehensible to most people, a dilemma for the authorities that the author brilliantly captures in the title of her second chapter: “Explaining the Inexplicable.” In the long run the effect was to disillusion and confuse a young generation faced with the glaring contrasts between the promises of a better life after the victory over fascism and the bleak reality of the postwar years. Young people chose to devote their efforts to consumption and sought to avoid taking part in official activities. A third theme of the book is the argument that late Stalinism was a much more dynamic period than previously believed. Recent studies (including some in which Fürst herself played an important role) have demonstrated that the late Stalin years foreshadowed many later developments.

The final part of the book deals with fashion, style, friendship, and love, offering extremely interesting insight into the private spheres of youth subcultures and how the authorities vainly tried to control expression of intimate feelings and sexual behavior. Here we get to know the stilyagi (from the Russian word for “style”), a phenomenon loaded with parallels in the West. Stilyagi dressed in a style partly inspired by Western fashion and employed English-influenced slang. They engaged in “wild dancing” and produced illegal pirate records on X-ray plates. They conveyed a “message of style and indifferent cool” (p. 226), and Fürst considers them to be the true successors of the universal youth movements of the early twentieth century. Stilyagi have sometimes been described as the first Soviet dissidents, but Fürst stresses that they were not anti-Soviet. In fact, they were studiously ignored by the authorities under Stalin.

Stalin’s Last Generation is a very well-written monograph drawing on a variety of sources. The foremost of these are documentary and media sources from central and regional archives, but Fürst also uses diaries, memoirs, and some interviews. The book makes a considerable contribution to existing research on cultural aspects of the Cold War era and to the current debate on what chronological framework can best serve our understanding of the character of postwar Soviet society. Fürst argues strongly for a reconsideration of the conventional view of 1953 as the turning point for change in Soviet history. She points instead to the Second World War as the true watershed in a historical process of change—from a society permeated by revolutionary ideals to a society in which radicalism stagnated and the people, especially the younger generation, grew disillusioned. This is the period in which Mikhail Gorbachev came of age—a member of a generation that was not oppositional toward the official ideology but that silently had begun to question certain aspects of it.

Reviewed by Julie Hessler, University of Oregon

A question I have occasionally posed to students regarding Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is whether the novella’s Gulag camp should be taken as a microcosm of Soviet life under Iosif Stalin. Was Solzhenitsyn’s depiction of dehumanizing camp conditions—the filthy, overcrowded barracks, the hunger, the cold, the regimentation, the official disdain for individual personality and welfare, the class hierarchy, the outrageous operation of the medical dispensary, with its daily maximum allowable number of sick cases and its untrained “doctor”—intended to underscore the uniquely awful characteristics of the Gulag, or was it intended as a broader critique of Soviet life? Whereas my students have always opted for the broader interpretation, I have tended to emphasize particularity and to see Solzhenitsyn’s great contribution as bringing to light a hidden, nightmarish world outside normal Soviet life. Donald Filtzer’s powerful new book has made me rethink my position. Filtzer shows that many of the degrading conditions we associate with the Gulag were also common in Soviet urban areas, with the partial exception of Moscow, throughout the late Stalin era. The “Little” and “Big” zones were all too similar in key material respects.

Let’s start with excrement, the topic with which Filtzer, somewhat disconcertingly, opens his investigation. The slop bucket, which figures so prominently in Solzhenitsyn’s and others’ accounts of the Gulag, had its counterpart in residential buildings throughout the country. Soviet cities had woefully undeveloped sewage systems at the end of World War II, typically covering just the city center and dating to prerevolutionary years. Outside Moscow, the vast majority of urban residents entered the postwar period with no access to sewage. Outhouses and cesspools in the courtyards of urban dwellings, often poorly constructed and oozing, gave residential quarters a permanent stench. Particularly in winter, when outhouses froze, people relieved themselves almost as frequently outside the outhouse as within it. Garbage and excrement overwhelmed the meager collection efforts of municipalities, which had at their disposal a fraction of the number of horses and vehicles for waste removal as had British cities some seventy years earlier. This picture changed very little during the remainder of the Stalin era. Only through the forced mobilization of urban residents to participate in twice-yearly cleanup campaigns were cities able to cart away most of the garbage and sewage that had accumulated in streets and courtyards. Investment in sanitary infrastructure was not a priority.

Sewerage is closely connected to Filtzer’s second topic, urban water supplies. Here, too, his findings are bleak. Access was one aspect of the problem. Everywhere but Moscow, most urban residents lacked indoor running water and had to haul it by buckets from street pumps. Remarkably, a substantial percentage of new urban housing, including multistory units, in the postwar period lacked plumbing. The perilous passage across icy streets to the water pump that we see in documentary footage of the
Leningrad blockade was not an anomaly; it was a routine feature of Soviet urban life. In this, no less than sewerage, Soviet cities were thirty to eighty years behind Western European cities, Filtzer tells us.

The quality of the available water was dreadful. “Ecocide,” a term coined by Murray Feshbach and Alfred Friendly to describe the wholesale destruction of the environment in the later decades of the USSR, was further advanced by the late Stalin era than we may have realized. Most cities and even factories had no water treatment facilities at all. Raw sewage, including contaminated hospital waste, was released directly into waterways, along with toxic emissions from the Stalin-era industrial behemoths. Although Filtzer comes at this subject more from the perspective of public health and living standards than from an environmental history angle, the two are closely intertwined. To take just one of many horrific examples, the Nizhnii Tagil coke-oven factory spewed phenols, cyanide, ammonia, and rhodium compounds just upstream from where the city of Tagil took its water. These discharges were enough to kill off fish and marine life for nearly 300 kilometers downstream, yet the city continued to rely on the Tagil and an equally contaminated reservoir for its water until expensive new chlorination facilities could be built (p. 98).

Here as elsewhere, Filtzer provides striking examples, but the intellectual scaffolding of the book is quantitative and analytical. Filtzer develops his portrait of urban life through a systematic comparison of several regions and cities, and he also investigates the differences between large and small cities within each region. This represents a tremendous research effort, and the results, summarized in numerous tables and graphs, are compelling and frequently unexpected. For example, in a chapter on nutrition, Filtzer demonstrates that in the Russian Republic, at least, the urban population suffered more from the famine of 1946–1947 than did the peasantry in terms of both caloric intake and mortality—a striking deviation from the pattern of 1921–1922 and 1931–1933.

Filtzer’s last substantive chapters highlight an intriguing paradox. Sanitary conditions were atrocious, and yet the Soviet Union achieved sharp reductions in both infant mortality and infectious disease in precisely this period. How? Filtzer sees the regime’s approach to bathhouses as illustrative. Public baths and workplace showers, not to mention indoor plumbing, remained in very short supply in the postwar period, but a system of special bathhouses used for mandatory disinfection and delousing helped keep infections under control. Widely disseminated hygienic propaganda helped raise public awareness of best practices. Rudimentary vaccines began to limit infections, and new medications, particularly sulfa drugs, greatly improved treatment. Quarantines were rigorously applied. Enlightenment plus coercion, a classic Stalin-era formula, thus achieved some successes, but Filtzer stresses that these remained limited by the problems of contaminated water, lack of sewage and indoor plumbing, shortages of soap, and poor diet—problems that stemmed from the political priorities of the Soviet leadership.

Readers familiar with Filtzer’s previous scholarship will not be surprised to learn that he approaches questions of urban living conditions from a Marxist perspective. In the conclusion to The Hazards of Urban Life in Late Stalinist Russia, he embeds his em-
pirical findings in the political economy of Communism more explicitly than ever before. Clearly some of what he describes in the book reflects conjunctural factors—the destruction caused by the war, Stalin's disdain for the well-being of ordinary people—but Filtzer wants to draw attention to deeper, systemic roots of the regime's under-investment in sanitation and other elements of consumption. Central to his understanding of Soviet Communism is the concept of self-negating growth, “the process by which the consumption of means of production and labor power failed to translate itself into the production of a commensurate quantity of use values” (p. 347). Extreme waste and inefficiency, Filtzer suggests, became the motor of extensive growth, even as it also limited the regime's long-term prospects. After all, the production of substandard steel meant that construction sites and factories required more of it, which in turn meant that more steel mills, with all their attendant equipment, were needed for the same output. Waste begat waste. One is reminded again of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, in which the only productive task of the prison camp is to build more camp.

This is a rich and thought-provoking study, though its dense argumentation and quantitative approach may be off-putting to some historians.