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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David Painter. *The Cold War: An International History.* London: Routledge, 2000. 130 pp. $60.00 (cloth) ISBN 0-415-19446-6; $14.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-15316-4.

Reviewed by Tom Nichols (Department of Strategy, U.S. Naval War College)
Published on H-Diplo (June, 2000)

David Painter's concise volume serves nicely to fill the growing need for a short, readable textbook on the major events of the Cold War. It is not exhaustive, but it does not strive to be; and while it is generally balanced, the few lapses in interpretation are not particularly serious ones. It is obviously aimed at an audience of non-specialists, and is written with the clarity one would hope to find in a text that will find its best use as an introductory assignment at the undergraduate level.

The book is valuable in itself as a short history, and it is puzzling that Painter makes a needless claim that the book is something more. It is a chronological retelling of the Cold War, nothing more and nothing less, and this will in any case make it a valuable addition to an undergraduate classroom. For some reason, however, Painter claims specifically that it is an attempt to use a "fresh perspective" that "focuses on the interaction of international systemic factors and national politics and policies and looks at events all over the world." Moreover, he adds, "the Cold War encompassed much more than US-Soviet relations." Well, yes – but this is not a "fresh perspective," but rather common sense. Indeed, the strength of the book is that it is a direct and sparely written narrative of the Cold War, free of intrusive analytical baggage.

The book strikes a generally balanced tone, although there are a few places where Painter, by his own admission, presents his own judgments without opposing views, a matter more of space than of bias. (At 130 small-sized pages, it is an achievement that Painter covers as much material in as few words as he does.) Still, the alert instructor will want to be just a bit cautious in assigning a text that relies on outdated works such as Michael MccGwire's *Military Objectives in Soviet Foreign Policy* (which is used to suggest that the Soviets were defensively oriented in the late 1960s, hardly a unanimous view even now) or outright works of advocacy like Richard Lebow and Janice Stein's *We All Lost the Cold War* (which Painter cites as support for the claim that the Soviets had no intention of intervening in the Yom Kippur War, which in my view remains an open question).

Overall, however, as an introduction to the most significant players and events of the Cold War, Painter's volume will be a helpful asset to instructors at the undergraduate level, particularly if used in tandem with other materials that correct or answer some of the more disputable assertions.

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Citation: Tom Nichols. Review of Painter, David, *The Cold War: An International History.* H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. June, 2000.
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