

H-Diplo | ISSF

Roundtable, Volume I, No. 6 (2010)



A production of H-Diplo with the journals *Security Studies*, *International Security*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, and the International Studies Association's Security Studies Section (ISSS).

<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF> | <http://www.issforum.org>

Christopher Ball, H-Diplo/ISSF Managing and Commissioning Editor

Diane Labrosse, H-Diplo/ISSF Editor at Large

George Fujii, H-Diplo/ISSF Web and Production Editor

H-Diplo | ISSF Roundtable on **Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa. *America and the Cold War, 1941-1991: A Realist Interpretation.*** 2 vols. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010

Published by H-Diplo/ISSF on **10 December 2010**

Roundtable Editors: **Diane Labrosse and Thomas Maddux**

H-Diplo Web Production Editor: **John Vurpillat**

Commissioned for H-Diplo/ISSF by **Thomas Maddux**, California State University, Northridge

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-1-6.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Jerald Combs, San Francisco State University	2
Review by Andrew J. Bacevich, Boston University	11
Review by Tom Nichols, Naval War College and International Security Program, JFK School of Government, Harvard University	14
Review by Priscilla Roberts, University of Hong Kong	17
Review by Jaclyn Stanke, Campbell University.....	29
Author's Response by Richard Dean Burns and Joseph M. Siracusa.....	36

Copyright © 2010 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

Introduction by Jerald Combs, San Francisco State University

Norman Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, have written a two volume narrative history of the Cold War. All four reviewers praise it as a lively and factually accurate account that, while breaking no new ground, would make an excellent text in an undergraduate course on the Cold War. Andrew Bacevich speaks for all of them in calling it “an immensely admirable work, one that recounts the story of the Cold War with clarity, dispassion, and commendable insight.”

The four reviewers also all agree on the basic thesis of the book -- that American Cold War policy was excessively ideological and interventionist, that it exaggerated the Soviet and Communist threat, and that U.S. policy was especially egregious in the Third World, where American intervention was unnecessary because nationalist sentiments made Soviet expansion almost impossible. All four reviewers consider this thesis the essence of the realist view and all also agree that while this view is correct as far as it goes, it is too limited to adequately explain or account for American foreign policy during the Cold War. But while all agree that the realist view is inadequate, it is at this point that the reviewers begin to diverge and create the space for debate over both the realist view and the Cold War.

The reviewers diverge in part because there are at least two basic tensions or ambiguities in the realist view of the Cold War that are clearly reflected in the volumes by Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa. (Hereafter I will follow Bacevich in using GBS to stand for the three authors because it is a handy way to shorten the reference and also may be making some profound reference to the original GBS, George Bernard Shaw, although I must confess that I was not sufficiently clever to figure it out.) The first of these tensions is produced by the question of just how much U.S. intervention was enough.

Almost all realists agree with GBS that after 1950, when both sides had consolidated their respective spheres in Europe and were clearly unwilling to risk nuclear war to destabilize the position of the other, the United States was tragically wrong to try to globalize containment by intervening militarily in peripheral conflicts like Vietnam, Cuba, Grenada, and the like. Thus they all praise Nixon and Kissinger for pursuing détente and an opening to China while condemning them for their interventionist policies in non-critical areas like Angola and Pakistan. Moreover, almost all realists argue that restrained containment plus the advent of Gorbachev contributed more than Reagan’s arms buildup to ending the Cold War, although Reagan’s turn to accept negotiations was also significant. Such has been the unanimity of the realists in condemning the overreach of American Cold War policy after 1950 that in the popular mind, realism is synonymous with restraint in foreign affairs, including calls for avoiding more recent conflicts like the war in Iraq. Such a view also unites all four of the reviewers here.

But realists have not always been so united over the issue of how much intervention was enough. Neither are they so united even now over the issue of restraint in the early period of the Cold War. As Patricia Roberts points out in an excellent capsule history of the development of the realist school, realism began as a philosophy of intervention. Before World War I, nascent realists like Theodore Roosevelt, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and the young Walter Lippmann believed that American security depended on a balance of power in Europe and keeping a large portion of the continent in hands friendly to the United States. A balance of power was important because a united Europe in unfriendly hands was the one entity capable of invading or otherwise threatening the United States. Thus, Lippmann believed that the United States had to intervene in World War I on behalf of Great Britain. Subsequently, during and after World War II, he joined other academic realists like Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, and Reinhold Niebuhr in urging the United States not to repeat the mistake it made after World War I by retreating into isolationism. All of these realists urged the United States to remain involved in Western Europe and to help it rebuild so that it would not fall into the hands of Communists who might invite Soviet influence into the Western sphere. It was only later in the Cold War that these realists began to drop away from the consensus urging greater U.S. intervention to limit the Soviet sphere – Lippmann in his famous dissent from Kennan’s Mr. X article, Kennan from what he considered the misinterpretation of his containment doctrine, and Morgenthau even later. Meanwhile, other realists like Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze believed that they were following Walter Lippmann’s realist principle of balancing goals with the power available by expanding American and European military power to achieve the necessary goal of preventing Communist expansion into the rest of the world. For many years, then, the realist school was divided between “hard realists” like Acheson and Nitze, who advocated increasing Western military power to achieve their desired goals, and “soft” or “restrained” realists who advised the United States to reduce its goals to match its available power.

Norman Graebner became perhaps the most prominent soft realist historian in the United States. But Graebner was not always in the soft realist camp. Like Lippmann, Kennan, and Morgenthau, he originally interpreted realism as an interventionist doctrine and he did not drop away from his endorsement of most of the pre-1950 policies of containment until after 1961. In that year, he praised Dean Acheson as one of the architects of containment, a creative participant in the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, and the prime mover in “the even greater task of creating a viable military structure in the West to offset Soviet power.” He did criticize the excessive idealism that Kennan saw in the Truman Doctrine, disapproved of the harsh conditions for negotiations that Acheson set for talks with the Soviets, and denounced Acheson’s refusal to recognize Mao’s China. But he seemed to approve of the Korean War so long as it was kept limited

and concluded that, given the times and circumstances, Acheson's policies were excellent.¹

Graebner certainly changed his views after 1961 and became more critical of the policies of containment in Europe prior to 1950. But some ambiguity about those policies remained, and it continues even in this latest joint-authored book. That ambiguity over how much intervention was enough is in part the product of a second ambiguity that permeates the view of many realists and especially that of GBS: Whether realism is descriptive or prescriptive.

Descriptive realists, more often International Relations theorists than historians, regard rhetoric and even ideology as mere window dressing for the way nations truly act. Descriptive realists believe that national leaders pursue selfish interests and power whatever their rhetoric may claim about their motives. Most realist historians, however, are more prescriptive in their analyses, arguing that nations should act according to national interest while balancing their goals with the power available, but that some, like the United States, do not.

Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa partake strongly of both descriptive and prescriptive realism. They are prescriptive in that they spend most of the pages of their volumes denouncing the many times American leaders overreacted to Soviet policy, exaggerated the threat of communist expansion, and intervened needlessly at the cost of much blood and treasure. Yet they conclude that U.S actions were both realistic and successful because they were so constrained by the realities of power and interest that the United States was unable to act on the "boundless rhetorical fears, demands, and aspirations" of its anti-Communist ideology. Moreover, the Soviets were limited by the same constraints. While they might have aspired to expansion throughout the world, they had neither the military nor economic power to fulfill that goal. Their only real means of expansion was through ideology, and for GBS that was not real power because "Nationalism and the pursuit of self-determination comprised a universal defense against Soviet ideological expansionism."

Constrained by such limitations, Washington never pursued a genuine anti-Communist program. It never made a serious attempt to free Eastern Europe, China, the Soviet Union, or any other region of the globe, from Communist control. Indeed, what perpetuated the decades of laudable superpower coexistence was the decision of successive administrations to abjure the dictates of ideology and pursue the limited goals of containment, with their

¹ Norman A. Graebner, "Dean Acheson," in Graebner, ed., *An Uncertain Tradition: American Secretaries of State in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1961), 268-270, 279-286, 275. Jerald A. Combs, "Norman Graebner and the Realist View of American Diplomatic History," *Diplomatic History* 11:3 (July 1987), 255.

acceptance and defense of the *status quo*, where it mattered, as well as their studied avoidance of direct and unnecessary conflict with the Soviet Union. (1:5)

Such a conclusion seems at least somewhat dissonant following 700 pages of denunciations of American rhetoric and decisions as tragic overreactions, especially when the authors clearly regard American military interventions in places like Vietnam as more than rhetorical. And the dissonance in this combination of prescriptive and descriptive realism is exacerbated when combined with the ambiguity of how much intervention was enough in the conclusions of GBS about the early Cold War. While the authors seem to disapprove of the military as opposed to the political and economic measures of containment, such as the tripling of the military budget recommended by NSC 68, they conclude:

This document, like its predecessors, described the danger of Soviet expansion in global, limitless terms...Still neither NSC 68 nor any of its predecessors offered a response commensurate with its rhetoric of fear...However grave the dangers portrayed by this most terrifying of documents, their elimination required neither risk nor war. (1:8-9)

While these ambiguities may seem dissonant to the reader, they are also very stimulating. They open both this book and the realist view to an extremely profitable debate.

Jaclyn Stanke generally agrees with the way the authors resolve the ambiguity between descriptive and prescriptive realism. Stanke states: "In the end America's Cold War was nothing more than a rhetorical exercise. From the beginning of the Truman years, they find that in order to uphold the principle of self-determination and contain communism, the United States set open-ended goals without clearly defined objectives, resulting in a set of global interests designed to contain communist expansion but without the adequate means to do so." She seems to approve generally the authors' contention that "America's Cold War policy was more realistic than it might have seemed" while at the same time agreeing with the authors' dismay at "how misguided America's Cold War policy was." Her primary criticism is that the authors did not spend enough time describing "motivation and what influenced the thinking that went into the development of America's Cold War consensus. Policy is not made in a vacuum, and oftentimes the past experiences and cultural milieu in which policymakers operate have an impact on how they respond to certain events."

Tom Nichols is not quite so satisfied with the way the authors resolve the tension between intent and structure. Nichols says that realists like GBS, by avoiding much discussion of individual motives and concentrating on "the web of international actions and constraints that govern much of the environment in which

decisionmaking can take place,” downplay the role of “human agency and contingency” and thereby drain “the story both of drama and any sense of alternatives.” Nichols points to several instances in which attention to motive would enhance their explanations, including Ronald Reagan’s reversal of policy because of the war scare produced by the war exercise Able Archer. Nichols also criticizes GBS for taking too positive a view of the international stability produced by the Cold War structure of power. Thus, Nichols implies that a closer look at motivation would have resulted in the authors’ being even less complimentary of the amount of restraint shown by America’s leaders.

Patricia Roberts addresses the issue of how much intervention was enough a little more directly than Stanke or Nichols, especially in her brief history of the rise of the realist school. She clearly disagrees with “assorted post-Cold War historians and policymakers, John Lewis Gaddis and various Reagan administration officials, for example, [who] have displayed some degree of retrospective triumphalism, rather hubristically proclaiming the outcome a triumph for farsighted American policies and those leaders who directed them.” On the other hand, she thinks the authors tend to “absolve the Soviet Union of any responsibility for the excesses of rhetoric and policy alike that came to characterize the Cold War. Whatever the shortcomings of American policymakers, by no means all the faults in the Cold War were on one side; there was more than enough blame to go around.” Overall, however, she seems to agree with the position of GBS on both the nature and success of American policy.

Whatever their rhetoric, by 1950, in practice each [side] had accepted the other’s position in Europe, and neither Cold War principal was prepared to risk nuclear war in an effort to destabilize the new European balance of power. From then onwards, according to Graebner and his colleagues, “the actual policies of both the United States and the U.S.S.R., whatever the rhetoric both countries employed, were designed primarily to stabilize a Europe already divided.” (284) Indeed, the authors argue: “The United States and the West coexisted with the Kremlin and its satellite empire for more than four decades with remarkable success. . . . The Cold War reflected the stark fact that the world could, indeed, exist half slave and half free.” (517-518) In practical terms, American policies in the early Cold War period could, despite the alarmist language employed by many American policymakers, be considered remarkably successful. This was particularly the case since the United States was able to construct an empire that ultimately rested on the consent of other nations within its orbit, a stark contrast to Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, that depended upon military coercion of resentful and disaffected satellites.

Like Stanke and Nichols, Roberts’ notes that the authors generally eschew questions of motivation and the economic, social, and cultural factors that have

concerned many recent interpretations of the Cold War. But her criticism of GBS is a special variant of those concerns. She argues that the national security interests of the United States were not as obvious as the realists assumed and that the idea of national interest was a matter of definition. It may have been obvious that American intervention abroad would benefit Western Europe and even the international system as a whole, but “The tangible advantages to the United States in assuming this hegemonic role were perhaps less so.” She concludes that this ambiguity constituted a structural defect in the realist interpretation and “may well have been a flaw that reflected a fundamental irrationality underlying much if not all of the Cold War strategy of the United States.”

Andrew Bacevich blows through all of these ambiguities like a blitzing linebacker. While praising GBS and the realist argument against excessive interventionism in U.S. foreign policy, he pays no attention to the qualifications, instances of American success, or structural limits that GBS and the other reviewers accept. For Bacevich, there was no distinction between rhetoric and action in American policy. “As GBS make abundantly clear, an *absence* of realism pervaded U.S. policymaking circles,” he says. “Hyperbole supplanted reasoned analysis. Worst case assumptions substituted for facts. Fear ran rampant.” Instead of recognizing that the Soviet Union was a paper tiger, the United States went about “dispatching U. S. military forces hither and yon, brandishing a nuclear arsenal eventually consisting of many thousands of weapons, and unleashing the CIA throughout the Third World in a vain and exceedingly costly effort to drive home the point” that history was on America’s side. Now, he says, the United States is repeating this mad policy in the Middle East.

As an explanation for American foreign policy, Bacevich argues, “realism won’t get you very far.” The real reasons for U.S. policy are “the interplay between partisan politics (especially in the silly season preceding any election), bureaucratic interests (the institutions comprising the national security state in the vanguard), the imperatives of economic expansion (satisfying corporate interests while sustaining the material abundance that underwrites our existing way of life); and ideology (premised on a belief in American singularity and chosenness). The common good? Doing the right thing? Those figure at best as afterthoughts.”

All of the reviewers, then, agree with the emphasis of GBS and almost all present-day realists on the need for restraint in American foreign policy. Most historians who dissent from the realist view, including these reviewers, do so not because they disagree with the emphasis on restraint but because they believe that even soft realists, who try to incorporate factors like ideology and culture into their definition of “soft power,” do not adequately use those factors to explain what they consider to be the irrationality of most U.S. foreign policy. The number of revisionists, who argue that American policy was actually realistic in using power to achieve its perfectly rational if also selfish national interest in economic expansion, seems to be dwindling. So also are the number of historians who agree with the hard realists and neo-conservative nationalists that

America's victory in the Cold War demonstrates the virtues of American interventionism, although the number of non-historians who subscribe to that view seems to remain rather large. And so the debate goes on.

Participants:

Norman A. Graebner, Randolph P. Compton Professor of History and Public Affairs, Emeritus, the University of Virginia and recipient of the University's highest honor, the Thomas Jefferson Award, was an internationally acknowledged authority on U.S. international affairs. He was a leading exponent of the realist school in the study of American diplomacy. Widely acclaimed as an outstanding speaker, Dr. Graebner received many high awards, including honorary degrees from more than a half-dozen other universities. He also was a Harold Vyvyan Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford University and a Thomas Jefferson Visiting Scholar at Downing College, Cambridge. Professor Graebner was the author, coauthor, or editor of more than thirty books and some 130 articles, essays, and book chapters. Included among his most influential works are: *Empire on the Pacific: A Study in American Continental Expansion* (1955, 1983); *Ideas and diplomacy: Readings in the Intellectual Tradition of American Foreign Policy*, with commentary (1964); *Foundations of American Foreign Policy: A Realist Appraisal from Franklin to McKinley* (1985); and *America as a World Power: A Realist Appraisal from Wilson to Reagan* (1984). He published his memoirs in 2002 titled *A Twentieth-Century Odyssey: Memoir of a Life in Academe*.

Richard Dean Burns is professor emeritus of history at California State University, Los Angeles where he taught for over 30 years and was chair of the department. He gained his PhD under the tutelage of Norman Graebner at the University of Illinois in 1960 after nearly a decade in the U.S. Air Force. Burns' publications as author/editor include *A Guide to American Foreign Relations Since 1700*; *Encyclopedia of Arms Control and Disarmament*, 3 vols.; *The Evolution of Arms Control: From Antiquity to the Nuclear Age*; and *The Missile Defense Systems of George W. Bush*. He has been a co-author or co-editor, *American Foreign Policy*, 3 vols., 2nd ed; *Chronological History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, 3 vols.; *Chronology of the Cold War, 1917-1992*; *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*.

Joseph Siracusa, PhD University of Colorado (Boulder) is Professor of Human Security and International Diplomacy and Associate Dean of International & Justice Studies, at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia. Among his numerous books are *The American Diplomatic Revolution: A Documentary History of the Cold War, 1941-1947*; *Into the Dark House: American Diplomacy and the Ideological Origins of the Cold War*; *A History of United States Foreign Policy* (with Julius W. Pratt and Vincent De Santis); *Depression to Cold War: A History of America from Herbert Hoover to Ronald Reagan* (with David G. Coleman); *Presidential Profiles: The Kennedy Years*; *Real-World Nuclear Deterrence: The Making of International Strategy* (with David G. Coleman); *Nuclear Weapons: A Very Short Introduction*; *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End*

of the Cold War (with Norman A. Graebner and Richard Dean Burns); and *Globalization & Human Security* (with Paul Battersby).

Andrew J. Bacevich is professor of international relations and history at Boston University, retired from the U.S. Army with the rank of colonel. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, he received his Ph.D. in American Diplomatic History from Princeton University. Professor Bacevich's previous books include *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (2002); *The Imperial Tense: Problems and Prospects of American Empire* (2003); *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (2005); and *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008) which was featured in an H-Diplo roundtable at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-IX-24.pdf>. His new book is *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (2010).

Jerald A. Combs (PhD UCLA 1964) is Professor of History Emeritus at San Francisco State. He is the author of *The Jay Treaty: Political Battleground of the Founding Fathers* (University of Calif. Press, 1970); *American Diplomatic History: Two Centuries of Changing Interpretations* (University of California Press, 1983); and *The History of American Foreign Policy* (3d ed., M.E. Sharpe, 2008). His latest publication is "A Missed Chance for Peace? Opportunities for Détente in Europe," in *The Cold War after Stalin's Death: A Missed Opportunity for Peace?* edited by Klaus Larres and Kenneth Osgood (Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

Tom Nichols is Professor of National Security Affairs at the U.S. Naval War College, and a Fellow of the International Security Program and the Project on Managing the Atom at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. His most recent book is *Eve of Destruction: The Coming Age of Preventive War* (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2008), the subject of an H-Diplo roundtable. His next project, *No Use: Nuclear Weapons and the Reform of American Security Strategy*, will be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2011. He holds a PhD from Georgetown University.

Priscilla Roberts received her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from King's College, Cambridge. She is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Hong Kong where she is also Honorary Director of the Centre of American Studies. She has edited the Chinese diaries of David Bruce, first head of the US Liaison Office in Beijing in 1973-1974, and the book *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World Beyond Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). Her research interests focus upon the development and influence of the US foreign policy elite. She is currently finishing a biography of the banker Frank Altschul, and a study of the influence of Anglo-American think tanks on China policy.

Jaclyn Stanke is Associate Professor of History at Campbell University, where she has taught since 1999. She received her Ph.D. in History from Emory University in 2001. A specialist in U.S. foreign relations, her research interests lie in the Cold War. She has

written and published articles on Anglo-American relations following Stalin's death in 1953, the Cold War and the American South, and American popular perspectives of the Solidarity movement in Poland. She is currently working on a larger project documenting American popular culture and perspectives of the 1980s as the Cold War went from a deep freeze to a sudden end.

This is an immensely admirable work, one that recounts the story of the Cold War with clarity, dispassion, and commendable insight. Yet in fashioning their realist interpretation, what Norman Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa (hereinafter GBS) demonstrate above all is this: as an explanation for why the United States does what it does on the world stage, realism won't get you very far.

Franklin Roosevelt was a realist and statesman of considerable cunning. Yet he was also in crucial ways a dishonest politician, withholding from the American people the implications of the U. S. wartime partnership with the Soviet Union. Roosevelt's dissembling created popular expectations of "world peace" that were simply not in the cards given the Red Army's role in defeating the Wehrmacht. Yet once FDR departed the scene so too in short order did any remaining exponents of authentic realism.

In the wake of World War II, GBS make abundantly clear, an *absence* of realism pervaded U.S. policymaking circles. With American power at its apex, Washington succumbed to raw panic, convincing itself that great dangers lurked around every corner. Hyperbole supplanted reasoned analysis. Worst case assumptions substituted for facts. Fear ran rampant. Or perhaps more accurately, with an eye toward shaping and mobilizing public opinion, senior U.S. officials and influential commentators collaborated "to kindle the nation's insecurities." (vol. I, p. 9 and again on p. 184).

No doubt relations between the United States and the Soviet Union after the demise of Nazi Germany were destined to be problematic. Washington's hothouse fantasies – its aversion to sober calculations based on considerations of power and interests – made things incalculably worse.

In taking the measure of would-be adversaries, GBS remind us, actually existing capabilities carried less weight in Washington than did expressed aspirations. Members of the American governing class never ceased to proclaim their faith in the unquestioned superiority of Freedom. Yet they nonetheless attributed to Marxism-Leninism a uniquely seductive and insidious allure. The abstract nature of the communist threat made it all the more ominous. Viewing Soviet Union through the lens of ideology, Americans saw unity where there were fault-lines and strength where there was weakness. They interpreted Russian insecurity as aggressiveness.

Some Kremlin blusterer declaring that "Whether you like it or not, history is on our side" ought to have evoked from Washington dismissive laughter or outright contempt. Instead when Nikita Khrushchev vowed that "We will bury you," senior U. S. officials acted as if someone had launched a direct assault on American manhood. That the Soviet Union was manifestly struggling to feed its own people and to keep its empire from coming apart at the seams counted for less than Moscow's rhetorical posturing.

“History’s on *our* side,” Washington shouted back, dispatching U. S. military forces hither and yon, brandishing a nuclear arsenal eventually consisting of many thousands of weapons, and unleashing the CIA throughout the Third World in a vain and exceedingly costly effort to drive home the point.

By the early 1950s, Marxism-Leninism had become like polio: everyone everywhere was ostensibly susceptible to this silent, omnipresent, incurable disease. The Dr. Salks of the political world spent less time looking for an antidote than in trying to outdo one another in shouting “It’s even worse than you think!” Unlike the real Dr. Salk, U. S. officials consciously overstated the danger and oversimplified the source of the problem. In Washington, the key to selling policy, as Dean Acheson explained, was to proffer arguments “clearer than truth” in order to “bludgeon the mass mind” into conformity. (vol. I, p. 185). Acheson was referring to NSC68, a preposterous document unlikely today to earn a passing grade in any respectable undergraduate international relations course, yet greeted back in 1950 as a masterpiece of strategic analysis.

The business of policy formulation ought to be empirical and pragmatic. Facts should count. So should logic. As GBS make clear – NSC68 provides them with one example among many – Cold War-era Washington tended to take another view. For policy entrepreneurs, the big thing was to start something – to declare a doctrine, make a commitment, create an agency, or field a new weapon. For insiders, this defined the meaning of legacy: so George Kennan (whether he liked it or not) became the father of containment, Curtis LeMay the father of overkill, and Allen Dulles the eminence who transformed the CIA into an instrument of dirty tricks.

Policy ought to be pliable, adjusting to circumstance. This does not describe U. S. policy during the Cold War. GBS show that once laid down, lines of action quickly hardened into fixed positions. Once created, institutions engaged mostly in self-aggrandizement. Once uttered, phrases became sacrosanct principles. Precedents piled up. Trailing close behind came self-imposed constraints. Accept certain premises – a) communism is monolithic; b) the Kremlin is hell-bent on world revolution; and c) the toppling of any one domino jeopardizes the rest – and plausible policy options become pretty narrow.

Hardliners insisted that such premises possessed lasting validity. At the first hint of backsliding, they deployed the lessons of history, Munich being their favorite, with Pearl Harbor and Yalta trailing not far behind. When it came to imposing discipline, nothing worked better than introducing words like appeasement and isolationism into the conversation.

The competition for power inside Washington encouraged the use of such words. It also encouraged the ambitious to discover some hitherto unsuspected vulnerability – a “bomber gap” or a “missile gap” -- that they could transform into electoral advantage at home or bureaucratic advantage on Capitol Hill. Cold War obsessions perverted

American democracy; as actually practiced during the Cold War, democracy helped to underwrite and sustain those obsessions. This forms a core theme of Dwight D. Eisenhower's Farewell Address, which GBS rightly commend to our attention.

"Washington's basic problem," the authors write, "was to make sense of the U.S.S.R." (I. p, 14) Perhaps. Yet the basic problem facing Americans differs: the imperative they face is to understand Washington and by extension themselves. True during the Cold War, this statement remains true today, when policymakers still obsess about ideology (Islamism standing in for communism) while engaging in relentless fear-mongering.

Osama bin Laden aspires to unite the Islamic world under his control. Although bin Laden commands at most a few thousand scattered foot-soldiers, people in Washington profess to take his aspirations seriously. They insist that everyone else share this assessment. Remember Donald Rumsfeld urging his staff after 9/11 to "keep elevating the threat." The secretary of defense demanded "bumper sticker statements" to gin up public enthusiasm for the global war on terror. The key, he wrote, was to "Make the American people realize they are surrounded in the world by violent extremists."¹

A people convinced that they are surrounded by violent extremists will be docile and pliant. They will ask few questions. They will defer. They will accept open-ended war as the new normalcy. They will do so without even asking who is going to pay the bill.

In doing so, they will tacitly endorse a specific allocation of privileges and responsibilities. The chief beneficiaries of that allocation include the military-industrial-legislative complex and leading members of the power elite more broadly – people like Donald Rumsfeld. This distribution of privileges no longer benefits the American people, if it ever did. Anyone with doubts on this score should consider the condition of the American economy and assess the burdens imposed on the troops we profess to revere.

So what *does* explain why the United States acts as it does? The answer lies here: in the interplay between partisan politics (especially in the silly season preceding any election), bureaucratic interests (the institutions comprising the national security state in the vanguard), the imperatives of economic expansion (satisfying corporate interests while sustaining the material abundance that underwrites our existing way of life); and ideology (premised on a belief in American singularity and chosenness). The common good? Doing the right thing? Those figure at best as afterthoughts.

Simply put, the forces driving U. S. policy are "here" not "there." They are internal rather than external. Only a realism based on an accurate understanding of what it is that really makes America tick can provide a fully satisfactory explanation of U. S. policy abroad.

¹ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/31/AR2007103103095.html>

Review by Tom Nichols, Naval War College and International Security Program, JFK School of Government, Harvard University

This book presents itself as a sweeping view of the Cold War, and clocking in at nearly 700 pages in two volumes, it is. However, these are not hundreds of pages of drab prose or arid theorizing; rather, they are a lively recounting, in important but not overly tiresome detail, of U.S. foreign policy during the entire Cold War. (In tone and approach, the book is similar to Adam Ulam's 1970s classic of Soviet foreign policy, *Expansion and Coexistence*, although in far less detail than Ulam's magisterial work.) While specialists of the Cold War will not find new revelations in *America and the Cold War*, it does not purport to be a new history. Instead it is aimed at a general readership, and would actually make a good overall text for a course on the subject (assuming students can overcome its considerable size and what some might consider a prohibitive price tag).

The authors refer to their work as a "realist interpretation," in that they do not spend a great deal of time dwelling on in the inner motives of U.S. policymakers, "which can be exceedingly elusive," but rather on the web of international actions and constraints that govern much of the environment in which decisionmaking can take place. (vii) Accordingly, the account that follows is very much a straightforward reporting of events.

This is both a strength and a weakness of the book. Many accounts of the Cold War are necessarily elliptical (including my own); they are not meant to be a full inventory of the Cold War, but instead are trying to illustrate some particular corner, aspect, or surprising knowledge about the conflict. Those accounts that have striven for completeness have too often been densely forested with so much detail (in some cases right down to the specifics of weapons systems) that they are not of much use except as reference volumes. In this regard, interested readers and instructors who want a solid, factual introduction to the overall U.S. history of the Cold War will do well with *America and the Cold War*.

Of course, there is also weakness in this approach and its outcome. A realist approach suffers from what realist approaches tend to suffer from: a lack of human agency and contingency that drains the story both of drama and any sense of alternatives. In volume 2, for example, the transition from Carter to Reagan happens almost seamlessly, with Carter correctly portrayed as more bellicose than history might wish to remember him, and Reagan less willing to confront the Soviets than his admirers might recall. But in the broad realist brush, all Presidents end up looking very much alike, because they are all essentially prisoners of the same international system.

This leads to the outcome in which the book becomes a fact-upon-fact retelling of the Cold War, which is less an "interpretation" than it is the result of choosing to leave aside the inner workings of human beings. (To take two examples, the Reagan diaries, which were published three years ago, do not even merit mention in the bibliography, and the

Korean War is discussed almost solely in terms of diplomatic history rather than its particular subjective origins and effects.) In another way, however, this is a strength, because general readers or students new to the subject would probably find that level of detail and analysis distracting or even confusing, and the authors cannot be faulted for choosing their particular approach. It does, however, limit the book in terms of new or interesting insights into the motives and thoughts of the major participants in the struggle.

Likewise, the realist approach leads the authors to dispense quickly with the arms control-era canard that weapons cause conflicts. (Nuclear arms don't kill people; people kill people.) It is easy to be sympathetic to this point, but they discard it perhaps a little hastily, noting that "nuclear weapons rather quickly lost their military utility" and that "Moscow also found no utility in the use of this weaponry." (520) Given the data that has emerged since the end of the Cold War, this is an overstated claim, and other analysts, such as Keith Payne, might point out that the fact that a nuclear war did not break out may well have been more a matter of luck than design. Even the terrifying near-miss of Able Archer in 1983 (recounted later by participants like Robert Gates as far scarier than Graebner and his authors allow here) is mentioned in only a few paragraphs, despite the fact that we know that it had a deep effect on Ronald Reagan and was one of the seminal events in what Beth Fischer long ago termed "the Reagan reversal." It "may have moderated" Reagan's rhetoric, the authors write (467). But there was no "may" about it: the war scare of 1983 clearly and demonstrably had an impact on one very important player in the game, and here, the realist paradigm is too limiting.

One other, more minor criticism is that the authors on occasion dismiss what "Western Sovietology" thought about matters in the USSR, as though Sovietologists were a monolithic group. In their discussion of the emergence of the famous "Team B" that was meant to challenge previous intelligence community assumptions about the Soviet Union, the authors write that "Western Sovietology presented the USSR from Khrushchev to Brezhnev as a success story...[that] flowed from a relaxed Soviet power structure -- more democratic, innovative, and promising." (420) But that is a straw man; there is no denying that Soviet society by the 1970s had achieved a great deal of social mobility, education, technological advancement, and so on. But there *was* an actual debate among Sovietologists about whether Russia would have done even better without Communism, and whether there was really any meaningful democratization even within the policy elite -- indeed, had this debate not existed, Team B could never have been formed. *America and the Cold War*, by its very title, is not about the Soviet Union, but these kinds of generalizations obscure some of the American debate that was fundamental to the policy struggles in Washington in the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, there is one section in the book's conclusion where the realist paradigm comes to the fore, and it produces what, in my view, is something of an idiosyncratic, even nostalgic recollection of the Cold War.

What ultimately defined the limited role of the American-Soviet conflict in world politics was its perennial failure to dominate the behavior and outlook of international society. Common interests in trade, investment, and other forms of global activity governed international life far more than did the fears of Soviet aggression and war. The flourishing of world commerce after mid-century was totally without precedent. By most standards of human progress, the Cold War comprised the move pervading, most prosperous golden age in history. (521)

Actually, according to Graebner and his co-authors, it's even better than that. The Cold War was, apparently, in its own way a good thing: "Peoples and governments assumed that the varied forces underwriting international stability were dominant enough, whatever the official state of U.S.-Soviet relations, to sustain the material gains of the age...Every modern nation built with the confidence that its civilization was secure, and none more so than the United States itself." (521) As for the Soviet Union, its decline was "predictable," and -- in a curious step away from the realist interpretation -- its end came primarily through "the determination of Mikhail Gorbachev." (523)

The Cold War might have been a productive (if not Golden) age, but only because Americans and Westerners learned to live with it and went about the business of their lives. For the people of the developing world, where the Soviets and Americans played out the Cold War through proxies, to the imprisoned nations of Eastern Europe, surely the Cold War cannot be viewed with such equanimity. Graebner and his authors leave aside realism at this point and engage instead in a completely Western-centered view of the conflict. How can the Cold War really have been so threatening if we built skyscrapers, created massive amounts of wealth, and put a man on the moon right in the middle of it? Even if we leave aside the reality that the system of cooperation and progress represented by globalization has created wealth and well-being at levels that could not have been imagined during the Cold War -- the conflict devoured enormous resources that might have been better spent elsewhere in the absence of the Soviet threat -- the idea that the period from 1941 to 1991 was a Golden Age of some sort is something that might seem logical to an American of a certain generation, but people in other places might remember the violence, poverty, and havoc in their regions somewhat differently.

In the end, however, *America and the Cold War* is an achievement. Its value to specialists might be primarily as a reference, but for students and general readers, it is a solid and comprehensive overview of U.S. policy during the 50-year struggle. While not all readers will agree with the realist approach and might discount the peculiar last chapter, the book retells the story of the Cold War in sufficient detail and at a readable clip, even for a book of this size. For readers searching for an overarching account of the major events of the Cold War without undue theoretical or arcane baggage attached to it, at least as told from the American side, Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa have filled that need.

The late Norman A. Graebner, venerable doyen of the Realist historical tradition in the United States, remained highly productive until and even beyond his recent death at the age of ninety-four. His penultimate work (a co-authored study of the breakdown of the Versailles settlement will appear in 2011) is a two-volume survey of the entire Cold War from a Realist perspective, produced in collaboration with two other respected senior historians, Richard Dean Burns and Joseph M. Siracusa, former students with whom Graebner has already written an important study of the ending of the Cold War.¹ These latest books were only the culmination of several significant volumes by Graebner, produced over his long and prolific career, advancing a Realist interpretation of virtually the entire span of United States foreign policy.² A legendary and much admired teacher, he lectured to many thousands of undergraduates, and supervised the dissertations of dozens of graduate students. His influence in the historical profession was fittingly recognized when the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) established the Norman and Laura Graebner Lifetime Award, honoring a prominent diplomatic historian for a career of distinguished achievement.³ The appearance of these two latest volumes, setting out the views of one of the key American Realists after more than a half-century of reflection, is therefore a fruitful opportunity to stand back and assess the Realist school of historiography as it emerged in the twentieth-century United States.

In some respects, this is a traditional historical study of diplomacy, focusing upon top policymakers within the official bureaucratic apparatus. Graebner and his co-authors state forthrightly in their preface that they are primarily concerned with “the relationship [of American policies] to national interests and the limits of the nation’s power.” Largely eschewing questions of motivation, which could be “elusive,” and breaking with more recent interpretations that tend to highlight economic, social, and cultural factors, they seek instead to emphasize once more “the element of power.” (vii) Their analysis, they

¹ Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

² Norman A. Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy: American Foreign Policy, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962); Graebner, *The Age of Global Power: The United States Since 1939* (New York: John Wiley, 1979); Graebner, *America as a World Power: A Realist Appraisal from Wilson to Reagan* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1984); Graebner, *Foundations of American Foreign Policy: A Realist Appraisal from Franklin to McKinley* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1985).

³ On Graebner, see James I. Matray, “In Memoriam: Norman Graebner,” *Passport: The Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations* 41:2 (September 2010), 52-53; Jerald A. Combs, “Norman Graebner and the Realist View of American Diplomatic History,” *Diplomatic History* 11:3 (July 1987), 251-264; and Graebner’s own autobiography, *A Twentieth-Century Odyssey: Memoir of a Life in Academe* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 2002).

contend, confirms the arguments of some critics at the time, the “journalists, analysts, and other writers—critical-thinking Americans and West Europeans—who fully appreciated that contemporary polic[i]es often greatly exceeded Washington’s ability to achieve them and who fully recognized that the policies would not resolve the very problems they were meant to address.” (viii) While assorted post-Cold War historians and policymakers, John Lewis Gaddis and various Reagan administration officials, for example, have displayed some degree of retrospective triumphalism, rather hubristically proclaiming the outcome a triumph for farsighted American policies and those leaders who directed them, this work takes a far more skeptical approach to the fifty-year struggle, at every stage discerning numerous flaws in the proclaimed position and objectives of the United States.⁴ In many senses, indeed, it repeats the criticisms made in Graebner’s earlier studies of American Cold War policies, as well as those of more recent historians, such as the newly published one-volume Cold War history by Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall.⁵

The three authors conduct the reader steadily through the major events of the Cold War. At all junctures, they stress the absence of genuine Soviet security threats to the United States; the inability of Soviet military power to pose any real danger to American interests, save that of self-defeating and self-destructive mutual nuclear annihilation; and the constant disconnect between American rhetoric, which emphasized the gravity and immediacy of the Soviet menace, and the pragmatic truth—which should have been and usually was apparent to officials in Washington—that the Soviets did not intend to attack the United States or even its West European allies. They also deplore the activism and interventionism that too frequently characterized American foreign policy throughout the entire span of the Cold War, and the application of Cold War norms and templates to areas of the world where they had little validity. Following Walter Lippmann’s well-publicized criticisms of developing American Cold War policy in the late 1940s, they highlight the mismatch between American objectives and commitments, which seemed to include changing the very nature of the Soviet communist system and ending Russian domination of the East European satellite states, and the inability in practice of American officials to accomplish these sweeping goals, given the resources at their command. American rhetoric, they charge, habitually greatly exaggerated the Soviet threat, massively overstating the capability of the great international opponent of the United States to endanger American interests, and also viewing Soviet intentions as being far more hostile than was often the case. One wishes, however, that Graebner and his co-authors had gone further, seeking not simply to critique American Cold War policies, but to explain why these flaws should have existed in the first place.

⁴ See, e.g., John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵ Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Graebner often stated, notably at SHAFR's twenty-fifth anniversary conference in the early 1990s, that for his most seminal moment came when, in the early years of the Cold War, he read Hans J. Morgenthau's work, *In Defense of the National Interest*. The encounter had a lifelong impact upon Graebner. The émigré scholar's stress on the power of the nation-state, his prescription that countries must defend their national interests, if necessary forcibly and through war but preferably, where possible, by promoting international balances of power favorable to themselves, clearly resonated with the rising young American historian. So, too, did the moderation of Morgenthau's outlook, his belief that the use and, still worse, the glorification of force for force's sake were inherently counter-productive and undesirable. The maverick diplomat George F. Kennan, the initial architect of the American strategy of containment of the Soviet Union who subsequently spent many decades explaining how that policy as implemented departed from his original formulation, was another important influence on Graebner, who even dedicated one of his early books to Kennan. For the rest of his active and busy life, Graebner would be a skeptical voice, for more than half a century frequently questioning both the need and value of American military and diplomatic over-commitments overseas and the overblown public statements of American officials during and then after the Cold War. One student of the historiography of American foreign policy termed him a "soft" Realist. While some self-styled American Realists tended to glorify the use of force and sought every opportunity to flex their country's muscles on the international stage, never, as Jerald Combs pointed out in 1987, was this true of Graebner.⁶

And herein, perhaps, lay one of the inherent difficulties for American Realism, as exemplified in Graebner's work. In the nineteenth century Lord Palmerston, then British foreign secretary, famously stated that countries have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests, a maxim that neatly encapsulated the fundamental Realist position. He and other European statesmen, Count Otto von Bismarck of Prussia, for example, perceived the fundamental task of their diplomacy as the manipulation of other countries so as to maximize their own nation's advantages. Encouraging and maintaining an international balance of power favorable to their own country's interests, but pursuing these through military force and war when necessary, were both important facets of the conduct of diplomacy. In many circles in the United States, however, the balance of power acquired a rather bad name, and was closely identified with what many Americans viewed as a corrupt and sinful old world, whose ways the United States had from its very foundation rejected and broken with. Even at the time, many Americans blamed the

⁶ Combs, "Norman Graebner."

outbreak of World War I upon the shortcomings of the balance-of-power system, an outlook that only intensified between the wars, as the European situation deteriorated.⁷

Countering this outlook were those Americans who, from the early twentieth century onward, argued that in practice the security of the United States and, more broadly, their country's dominance of the Western hemisphere had since at least the 1820s effectively depended upon the protection afforded by the British fleet, which debarred other European nations from seeking to establish themselves there. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, the American naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan forcefully argued this case in a variety of well-received books and articles. His apostles, who included President Theodore Roosevelt and his friends Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations, and John Hay, were fiercely wedded to this viewpoint, which implied that any threat to the dominance of the British fleet and, by extension, to Britain's international position automatically had serious implications for the security of the United States.⁸ This perspective also appealed to the young Walter Lippmann, who in a well-known February 1917 editorial in the liberal journal *The New Republic*, "The Defense of the Atlantic World," invoked it to justify American intervention in World War I, as did Roosevelt, Lodge, and other likeminded Americans from the East Coast elite.⁹ At the end of World War I, such Atlanticists generally hoped for the creation of a League of Nations that would in practice function as an Anglo-American condominium to ensure international order.¹⁰ As World War II began in Europe, those Americans who favored their country's entry into the new or at least renewed conflict, in some cases the same individuals who had supported intervention in World War I, once more appealed to considerations of national security, the need to preserve the British defensive shield and prevent unfriendly powers dominating the European continent, to justify American assistance to the Allied nations and the adoption of policies liable to involve the United

⁷ For a recent study that deals with this outlook, see Ross A. Kennedy, *The Will to Believe: Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and America's Strategy for Peace and Security* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2009).

⁸ On this group, see Warren F. Zimmermann, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

⁹ On Lippmann and *The New Republic*, see Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980), esp. 67-73, 88-115; Kennedy, *The Will to Believe*, 5-6, 12-14, 27-35, 44-54, 60-64, 104-109, 122-124; David Seidemann, *The New Republic: A Voice of Modern Liberalism* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 1-59; Charles Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl, Lippmann and the Progressive Era, 1900-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), esp. ch. 7; David W. Levy, *Herbert Croly of The New Republic: The Life and Thought of an American Progressive* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), chs. 7-8; John A. Thompson, *Reformers and War: American progressive publicists and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), chs. 4-5.

¹⁰ See Priscilla Roberts, "The First World War and the Emergence of American Atlanticism, 1914-20." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 5:3 (November 1994), 569-619; and "The Anglo-American Theme: American Visions of an Atlantic Alliance, 1914-1933." *Diplomatic History* 21:3 (Summer 1997), 333-364.

States in war with the Axis states. Towards the end of World War II, Lippmann stated this case once again in the short book *U S War Aims* (1943), a brief volume that argued that when the war was over the United States must, in its own strategic interests, ensure that Western Europe was in friendly hands and no one power dominated that continent.¹¹

Intellectually, the American Realist tradition emerged during and just after the second world conflagration, the product of a cross-fertilization of ideas between American Atlanticists, adherents of the new discipline of geopolitics, refugee scholars from Europe, and the teachings of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. During the war the different ingredients that melded into this brew were brought together at the major East Coast universities, especially the Yale Institute of International Studies, which turned out books and working papers promoting closer Anglo-American relations. From early in the war some at least of this organization's sponsors also cherished real suspicions of Russia's postwar designs in Europe, anxieties that led to requests that the Institute undertake investigations of future Russian-American relations.¹² As Graebner suggests, from 1941 onward it was clear to virtually all British and American officials that the military strategy the Allies adopted, of leaving the Soviets to bear the brunt of the fighting against Germany, meant that when the conflict ended Soviet troops would occupy much of Eastern and Central Europe. Josef Stalin and his subordinates made it clear that they intended to maintain Soviet control of those areas, to ensure that in future those regions would follow policies friendly to the Soviets, and there would be no recurrence of past German invasions of Russia. These were security interests that Soviet officials considered non-negotiable. In practice, as US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill recognized, the British and Americans had little if any alternative but to accept this situation. The Cold War foreign policy elite to which Graebner and his co-authors refer, that congeries of international bankers, lawyers, and military men who largely ran the wartime bureaucracy, already favored a greatly expanded American postwar international role, involving American membership in political and economic organizations and enhanced military facilities around the world. Their prime fear was that, as had happened after World War I, the United States would cut back drastically on its military and reject further international commitments, something they were already determined to prevent.

In the immediate post-war years, American officials concentrated their efforts on seeking to insure West European states against potential destabilization by shoring them up both economically and with security guarantees. Yet, while concerns to safeguard American national security were, as Melvyn P. Leffler suggested in his massive study *A Preponderance of Power*, driving American policymakers at the end of World War II, this

¹¹ Walter Lippmann, *U. S. War Aims* (Boston: Little Brown, 1945).

¹² See the papers of the Yale Institute of International Studies in Yale University Archives; and the Institute files in the Organizations Series, Frank Altschul Papers, Columbia University Library, New York.

was only part of the story.¹³ Those officials who supported the early American Cold War commitments undoubtedly perceived the international scene in terms of the American interest in creating a relatively peaceful and stable world order, one that would, they hoped, preclude the eruption of future devastating wars resembling those that had twice convulsed the world in the first half of the twentieth century. They did not, however, approach their task from an entirely rational or unemotional perspective. Graebner argues that members of the Cold War elite were greatly affected by the Red Scare of 1919, which he suggests had a lasting impact on their international outlook. Following Ernest R. May's emphasis on the well-remembered "lessons of the past" that formed part of the mindset of American Cold War officials, Graebner also cites the impact of the Munich syndrome, the belief that making concessions to foreign dictators only encouraged further demands on their part, merely deferring ultimate confrontation.¹⁴

In terms of the mindset of American officialdom during the Cold War, however, other factors were probably at least as important, if not more so. Most Washington bureaucratic players in American foreign policy had been protagonists in and remembered only too well the battles of the pre-Pearl Harbor interventionist movement, when they had desperately sought to propel a reluctant United States into war against the Axis powers. Some were even veterans of similar campaigns in the years of American neutrality in World War I, when quite a number underwent military training at the Plattsburg camps and supported American intervention against Germany. In two world wars, both before and after US intervention American elites routinely employed Manichaeic rhetoric that portrayed each conflict as an all-embracing conflict between civilization and barbarism, in which nothing less than the fate of the world and all human values was at stake. Little sleight of mind was required to transfer such dramatic language and imagery to the contest with the Soviets. As Graebner and his colleagues recognize, such leading early Cold War policymakers as Dean Acheson, James V. Forrestal, and Will Clayton, together with State Department officials, "believed what they said and wrote" about the dangers facing Europe, and the need for swift and decisive American action to counter these. (119) In an early version of the domino theory, in 1947 Acheson warned that, if not stopped in Greece and Turkey, communism would ineluctably spread across Europe, the Middle East, and on to India and perhaps even beyond. Stalin and his minions were themselves adepts at employing equally sweeping and grandiloquent oratory, whose use was almost *de rigueur* in international communist circles. At times, American officials undoubtedly resorted to deliberate over-statement of the case to convert reluctant politicians and the American public, in Acheson's words consciously making the issues involved in support for the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and NSC-68, "clearer than the truth." But those who use propaganda often

¹³ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Ernest R. May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

find that they soon convince themselves, as well as others, of the validity of their stance. In his later years, the combative Acheson would indeed become somewhat notorious as a hard-line Cold Warrior, embarrassing even some of his contemporaries with the rigidity of his views.

At the heart of the Cold War lay, as Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa repeatedly stress, the determination of the two leading protagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union, to maintain predominance and control in their respective European spheres of influence. At the end of World War II a power vacuum existed in Europe, one that was rapidly filled by American and Soviet forces, bringing the interests of these two large states into direct contact with each other for the first time. Whatever their rhetoric, by 1950, in practice each had accepted the other's position in Europe, and neither Cold War principal was prepared to risk nuclear war in an effort to destabilize the new European balance of power. From then onwards, according to Graebner and his colleagues, "the actual policies of both the United States and the U.S.S.R., whatever the rhetoric both countries employed, were designed primarily to stabilize a Europe already divided." (284) Indeed, the authors argue: "The United States and the West coexisted with the Kremlin and its satellite empire for more than four decades with remarkable success. . . . The Cold War reflected the stark fact that the world could, indeed, exist half slave and half free." (517-518) In practical terms, American policies in the early Cold War period could, despite the alarmist language employed by many American policymakers, be considered remarkably successful. This was particularly the case since the United States was able to construct an empire that ultimately rested on the consent of other nations within its orbit, a stark contrast to Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, that depended upon military coercion of resentful and disaffected satellites.

Elsewhere in the world, the stakes may have been lower, but both powers quickly locked themselves into what soon became an almost reflexive contest for influence and allies in the developing nations. The Cold War soon developed its own logic and, even if the stated belief of each partner, that its opponent's social and political system would ultimately be overthrown, seemed unlikely to be fulfilled in the foreseeable future, both contestants chose to argue that history would eventually vindicate the superiority of their own systems. Neither side wished to risk all-out war with the other, but neither was averse to making what it hoped would be easy gains among the uncommitted nations, many of them just emerging from colonial domination. The Korean War erupted in part due to Stalin's misplaced belief that the United States would not be prepared to fight to maintain South Korea's independence from takeover by communist North Korea. What is perhaps sometimes forgotten is the degree to which many of those waging the Cold War, especially when it moved outside its original European theater, viewed it as a contest not just for particular security interests, but for international prestige and even loyalty. This ideological dimension coexisted with the strategic, and—especially after the outbreak of the Korean War made the Cold War into something approaching a global contest for the allegiance and even the soul of the world—could expose the two main combatants to pressures to intervene in areas where they had few, if any, genuine

interests at stake. In the global extension of the Cold War, the three authors see little to praise and much to deplore, considering it a development that was advantageous neither to the United States nor even to the Soviet Union.

Like so many works written by Americans on US foreign policy, these volumes foreground American officials, and come close to ignoring the input of other nations, including the leading opponent of the United States. By focusing almost exclusively on the United States, Graebner and his colleagues tend to absolve the Soviet Union of any responsibility for the excesses of rhetoric and policy alike that came to characterize the Cold War. Whatever the shortcomings of American policymakers, by no means all the faults in the Cold War were on one side; there was more than enough blame to go around. One may also query whether the effort to base American policy on purely realistic considerations of national interest and national security was ever, in practice, feasible. In a much cited book a few years ago, Walter Russell Mead suggested that the political and social dynamics of the United States have given rise to several foreign affairs traditions—Hamiltonian, Wilsonian, Jeffersonian, and Jacksonian—sometimes competing, sometimes complementary, and that the effective implementation of policy depends upon winning support from adherents of at least two and preferably more of these groupings.¹⁵ Most of the leading American Realist thinkers—Lippmann, Morgenthau, Niebuhr, and George F. Kennan, for example—found room in their thinking for a strong moral component, opposing massive nuclear build-ups and American involvement in Vietnam not just on the grounds that in strategic terms these were mistakes, but also for ethical reasons. Interestingly, though they find much to fault in Jimmy Carter’s foreign policies, not least his inability to deploy the means necessary to attain his stated objectives, the three authors give his pursuit of human rights credit for helping to restore the international reputation and credibility of the United States after the battering it had taken over Vietnam and Watergate. And they are critical of John F. Kennedy for reportedly choosing to continue American involvement in Vietnam until his second term, since he did not wish to incur the political costs that a withdrawal would have brought.

One of the more intriguing questions for the reviewer is the reaction of these three historians to Richard Nixon’s national security adviser and secretary of state Henry A. Kissinger, a German-born Harvard academic often ranked as a Realist theoretician, whose policies, though lauded at the time, subsequently attracted withering criticism from both right and left. Conservatives found Kissinger too ready to compromise with communists, while liberals deplored his readiness to destabilize governments he considered unacceptably radical, while accepting as valued allies a variety of authoritarian and dictatorial but non-leftist regimes. Kissinger admired the nineteenth century statesmen Prince Klement von Metternich of Austria and Otto von Bismarck of Prussia, individuals who sought to maximize the influence of their own states and maintain international

¹⁵ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

stability by adroit balancing and manipulation of the various European powers. As author of a major best-selling study of nuclear weaponry, Kissinger also recognized the essential unusability of such armaments, whose only real function was deterrent. Together, he and Nixon launched a program of detente, designed to reach at least limited understanding with both the Soviet Union and communist China, in an effort to restore the position of the United States in the aftermath of its expensive and damaging involvement in Vietnam. Implicitly reiterating standard Realist charges that most American policymakers had been far too legalistic in outlook, the authors note that Kissinger was the “first secretary of state in three generations to think and act in political, not judicial terms.” Moreover, “he did not search for rightness and wrongness in the policies of other countries.” Despite continuing difficulties in extricating their country from Vietnam, Nixon and Kissinger successfully initiated a major reorientation of the American strategic position, albeit one that still left the United States tied to a variety of unsavoury clients, held “hostage to weak governments that could not sustain themselves without American aid.” As national security adviser and then secretary of state, Kissinger came to be viewed as the one surviving bright spot in Nixon’s increasingly tarnished administration, even becoming something of a media superstar. The authors note, however, that while Americans lauded “Kissinger’s basically pragmatic, amoral approach,” they had been equally admiring of “the largely moralistic and legalistic policies of his predecessors.” (391) Under Gerald Ford, Kissinger’s once seemingly triumphant progress in foreign policy stalled, in part due to growing domestic opposition, as well as intractable circumstances abroad. Even so, they argue that Kissinger “still stood above the Washington crowd.” (392)

The final section of this survey deals with the final years of the Cold War under Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Mikhail Gorbachev. Building on their analysis two years ago in their earlier volume *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev*, the authors argue that the Reagan-era defense build-up had little impact on the ending of the Cold War, the Soviet empire in Europe, or the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet collapse was in large part, they contend, caused by long-term structural economic weaknesses within the Soviet Union, that resulted in part from its inefficient command economy and also from the excessive share of the budget devoted to military expenditures. By comparison with these deep-rooted shortcomings, the detrimental effect on the Soviet economy of Reagan’s defense build-up and even his Star Wars program was limited, in the authors’ view. They give Reagan credit, however, for being ready to jettison his own long-entrenched opposition to Soviet communism and accept the good faith of Gorbachev’s efforts to alleviate Soviet-American tensions, a stance that put him at odds with many of the dedicated hard-line Cold Warriors in his own administration. Whatever his intellectual laziness and shortcomings, this sunny-natured president from Hollywood apparently never lost his sanguine capacity to believe in happy endings, including the ability of enemies to change their spots. The authors are perhaps too generous in suggesting that Reagan succeeded in beating the so-called Vietnam syndrome, the reluctance of Americans from the time of that war onward to risk heavy military casualties in overseas operations. Like his predecessors and his two immediate successors, Reagan carefully kept American military engagements short and

easily winnable. Grenada was not, as the authors suggest, an exception to this pattern. On the one occasion during Reagan's presidency when American forces unexpectedly suffered heavy losses, after the 1984 bombing of American marines' barracks in Beirut, Reagan verbally pledged that the United States would not fail to stay the course, and then briskly redeployed the units in question, first offshore and then back to the United States. Otherwise, he relied on funding surrogate forces, effectively "mercenaries," to further American objectives in Central America, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the Middle East.

The authors suggest that, by the 1980s, most of the world had lost interest in the Cold War, and it was largely kept alive by the continued Soviet and American belief in its reality. Western Europe and much of Asia, in this account, were focused on economic prosperity rather than military competition, as indeed was the United States in most respects. Even further: "For most Soviet citizens, the domination of Eastern Europe never served any fundamental, even recognizable, Soviet interests." (426) The question then inevitably arises: Why did so many American and Soviet officials, and the European allies of the former, invest so much money, energy, and emotion in commitments and policies that the authors seem to be arguing were intrinsically irrational? Here, perhaps, the Realist school as exemplified in this survey falls short, since Graebner and his colleagues deliberately refrain from seeking to unravel the forces driving American policy and its makers during the Cold War. Yet this inquiry is one that surely underlies the entire Realist approach to United States foreign policy, which is predicated on the assumption that the United States possesses fundamental security interests, and that the ultimate purpose of American policy must be to defend and safeguard these. In addition, Graebner always insisted that the objectives of foreign policy should be clearly and carefully defined, and that a country should deploy the commensurate means required to accomplish its aims. His criticisms of American Cold War policies generally centered upon their proclaimed open-ended, sometimes global, and often infeasible goals, the likely achievement of which often far surpassed any capabilities of implementation the United States commanded or was likely to do.

Ultimately, the making of United States foreign policy during the Cold War, and indeed at other times, was never simply a matter of defending the country's national interests. What was also at stake was just what those interests were, and who defined them. As Acheson and others in the early Cold War soon discovered, invoking American national security and strategic interests to justify certain policies often proved highly effective as a means of implementing the measures he and likeminded officials favored and winning public and political support for them. Yet underlying the bitterness of debates over American foreign affairs, then and later, was the sense that the national security interests of the United States were not necessarily as self-evident as either the American foreign policy elite or Realist commentators chose to assume. The Realist school's antecedents lay partly in the Mahanist, Atlanticist foreign policy thinking of Theodore Roosevelt and his confrères of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and partly in European theories on the balance of power and the rise and fall of nation states, transplanted to the United States by such Jewish émigrés from Germany as Morgenthau, Kissinger, and

Arnold Wolfers. To this admixture were added the sometimes paradoxical teachings of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who stressed the need to use force and power when necessary in the defense of good, but reminded those who employed these tools of their inevitable dark side, which would not leave the user unscathed. Many though not all American Realist thinkers were born in Europe and came to the United States as refugees.¹⁶ They saw it as almost a moral imperative that the United States, the world's strongest power, should step in to redress and restore the balance of power in Europe, and prevent the domination of that continent by another brutally authoritarian power. In terms of stability and the opportunity for peaceful development, the gains to Western Europe and even to the international system as a whole were clear. The tangible advantages to the United States in assuming this hegemonic role were perhaps less so.

American Realist historians, of whom Graebner was among the foremost, demanded that American foreign policy be conducted at a level of rationality that may have been unattainable, given the doubts that many Americans harbored as to whether the United States did indeed possess the overseas strategic interests that many of their leaders insisted were so vital to the country's national security. In an earlier essay published almost fifty years ago, Graebner lavished high praise on Dean Acheson, perhaps the most influential of all Cold War policymakers.¹⁷ His portrait of Acheson in this later work is, by contrast, more nuanced and less flattering, reflecting both new insights gleaned from the archives and half a century of maturing contemplation of the issues involved. In these

¹⁶ On the Realists, see Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Michael C. Williams, ed., *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans Morgenthau in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Seán Molloy, *The Hidden History of Realism: A Genealogy of Power Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jack Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Daniel Bell, ed., *Political thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Joel H. Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Christoph Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Greg Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); William E. Scheuerman, *Hans Morgenthau: Realism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Colm McKeogh, *The Political Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr: A Pragmatic Approach to Just War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Richard Wightman Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Martin Halliwell, *The Constant Dialogue: Reinhold Niebuhr and American Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); Bruce Kuklick, *Blind Oracles: Intellectuals and War from Kennan to Kissinger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Vibeke Schou Tjalve, *Realist Strategies of Republican Peace: Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and the Politics of Patriotic Dissent* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁷ Graebner, "Dean G. Acheson (1949-1953)," in *An Uncertain Tradition: American Secretaries of State in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman A. Graebner (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 267-288.

two final volumes, we see Graebner and his disciples wrestling with the dilemma of attempting to reconcile two positions that may be inherently incompatible: the belief that the United States did possess significant overseas interests, whose defense during the Cold War was vital to the country's security, and the difficulty of defining what the United States had at stake in simple military and strategic terms. Squaring this particular circle proved difficult in practice. If this was a structural fault in the Realist interpretation of American foreign affairs, it may well have been a flaw that reflected a fundamental irrationality underlying much if not all of the Cold War strategy of the United States.

Review by Jaclyn Stanke, Campbell University

As someone who spends the majority of her time teaching undergraduates, I appreciate attempts to create a grand narrative. Such works help bring home to students that history is not just a bunch of unconnected facts and dates to be memorized for an exam and then forgotten. Rather history has meaning and narrative works, such as *America and the Cold War, 1941-1991: A Realist Interpretation* by Norman Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, allow students to understand not only what happened in the past, but also what was at stake, and possibly what we can learn from the past. In this case, it is the Cold War and what it can teach us about the formulation of foreign policy goals and the means to achieve them.

America and the Cold War is a two-volume chronological treatment of the Cold War from World War II to the collapse of the Soviet Union. It covers the major events and crises of the period, though the focus is often on America's Cold War policies in Europe and Asia, especially China and Vietnam. As the title suggests, it is an interpretative history and not a synthesis. Moreover, since it is written from the realist perspective, the authors center their discussion on policy debates and decisions in an attempt to evaluate America's foreign policy throughout the Cold War era. Thus, even though the narrative does not always place them front and center, the following play a large role in the construction of the story as well as the evaluation of America's Cold War policy: the concept of the national interest, the distinction between vital and secondary interests, clearly defined and specific policy objectives, the means to achieve policy objectives and/or the ability to recognize the limits of one's power, and finally the ability or willingness to seek accommodation or compromise to obtain one's objectives when and where necessary. Overall, the work does not cover any new ground and the tale will be familiar to those interested in U.S. foreign policy, especially the Cold War. I am sure many will take issue with the presentation of specific events and policies, however I will confine myself to the overall narrative and structure of the work in my review.

The work opens with World War II, suggesting that the roots of the Cold War were located in the wartime relationship of and decisions made by the members of the Grand Alliance. The authors' focus is upon the Atlantic Charter. In particular, they note that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was keen to reestablish the post-Versailles status quo, meaning self-determination for the European states now under Nazi and Soviet rule. However, no specific program as to how that would be accomplished existed nor would one be successfully devised during the war. Roosevelt could not press Joseph Stalin on the matter as he needed Soviet help in defeating the Nazis. Moreover, Stalin had made it clear throughout the war that he expected to ensure the Soviet Union's postwar security through a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Given that, Roosevelt continually delayed decisions concerning postwar Europe. As the war was coming to a close in Europe, the authors suggest, Roosevelt was aware that self-determination for Eastern Europe was illusory, though he did not acknowledge this to the American public or to

those in his administration. Despite this, he hoped to maintain a cooperative relationship with Stalin in order to find some kind of accommodation on the matter after the war. The inability to come to a resolution on a postwar European settlement, the authors assert, became the key issue around which the Cold War eventually crystallized.

In the next section concerning the early Truman years, the authors drive the point home more fully. As they take the readers from Potsdam through the various postwar conferences, they note that the relationship between the United States and Soviet Union broke down as American policy continued to insist on a restoration of the post-Versailles status quo and self-determination for Eastern Europe while the Soviet Union consistently sought recognition of its hegemony there. The latter's reluctance to give up its influence in Eastern Europe made an impact on the development of American policy. In many respects, nothing had changed since the war, but American policymakers began to perceive Soviet actions in a different light. Thus, during the period of 1945-46, the Cold War consensus regarding American policy towards Soviet communism was established.

Since the authors argue that this anti-communist consensus governed U.S. policy throughout much of the Cold War—though Vietnam shattered it, they point out that remnants of it persisted through the Reagan-Bush years—it is important to identify what it entailed (of note, the authors recognize the tenets of the consensus were flawed and point that out). First was the Munich syndrome. Because Europeans foolishly appeased Adolf Hitler rather than stopping him in his tracks, Germany was able to swallow up most of Europe. The lesson derived from this experience was threats could not necessarily be negotiated but must be met immediately before any damage could be done. A corollary was the domino theory, which held that if communism was able to take hold in one place and not confronted, it would spill over into areas of interest to the United States. However, while American policy became obsessed with a fear of communist expansionism, American policymakers noted that it would not occur so much by military means, but by way of ideological expansion (a point that was reflected in official policy documents). In that regard, then, Soviet communism was even more dangerous in that there were few limits to Soviet ambitions. Also, especially during the early Cold War, American policymakers viewed communism as monolithic and completely directed by Moscow. All told, the anti-communist consensus conceptualized Soviet communism as hostile to American interests, considered its existence illegitimate, and left little room for coexistence. Thus, there was little need or desire to negotiate; rather it was something to be confronted. This consensus supported the developing doctrine of containment, which resulted in the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the eventual division of Germany and Europe by 1949.

Despite the tensions of the immediate postwar period, the authors suggest that both Europe and the Cold War were beginning to stabilize by 1949. They even propose that the Cold War was possibly diminishing. However, two events in 1949 changed that: the Chinese Revolution and the Soviet atomic bomb. The communist takeover in China served to remind that the threat of communist expansionism was limitless (and that it

would occur not through military aggression but through ideological conquest). The Soviet bomb naturally led to an acceleration of the nuclear arms race. Taken together these two events resulted in the evolution of the containment doctrine to meet the communist threat via some sense of a balance of power in Europe into the United States' need to develop a preponderance of power. Although already somewhat present in the tenets of the Cold War consensus, these two events further pushed U.S. policy in the direction of global containment with nearly unlimited American interests. As for China, though, what this meant was non-recognition—which in effect, was still containment.

The authors then move forward into the Dwight Eisenhower years, noting that despite the rhetoric of rollback and liberation, as well as the development of the New Look policy, the president ultimately pursued containment. Moreover, they note that by the end of Eisenhower's presidency, the Cold War in Asia (meaning China and Korea) had grown static. However, developments in Vietnam would eventually shatter this equilibrium. At this juncture, the authors move rather quickly through the Kennedy years, including a brief foray into the Cuban Missile Crisis, in what seems like a concerted effort to discuss Vietnam. Indeed, the authors rightly call Vietnam the watershed event in the evolution of America's Cold War policy. As they note, the dynamism of nationalism, especially Arab and Third World, confounded American policy since it was difficult to fit into the communist threat box. Vietnamese nationalism most directly challenged American policy in that the conflict's resolution required either war or some kind of accommodation. Despite numerous attempts to avoid both, the United States became directly involved. The United States saw Soviet communism as undermining self-determination in South Vietnam, the principle which the nation had vowed to uphold and upon which the Cold War had rested since the end of World War II. Victory proved impossible, and despite the rhetoric the North Vietnamese understood that Vietnam was not a vital interest to U.S. security. Eventually the Americans would leave. They were right.

The authors are spot-on in highlighting the Vietnam years as an important juncture in the further development of America's Cold War policy. The experience of Vietnam shattered the Cold War consensus that had governed U.S. policy since the Truman years. Now many inside and outside of government took up the arguments identified by realist critics throughout the years, among them that: communism was not monolithic, oftentimes nationalism trumped communism in places where nationalist liberation movements existed, nationalism was moving the world from a bipolar to a multipolar world, the United States needed to recognize what areas of the world were within its vital interests and what were not, and what then were appropriate policies to secure those interests given the limits of American power.

Perhaps one of the most interesting points of the work comes in the next section when the authors suggest that the Cold War was receding by the 1970s. They recognize that Lyndon Johnson was interested in some sort of détente with the Soviets, particularly in the area of arms agreements. However, Vietnam as well as the crushing of the Prague Spring sidetracked any real moves toward that, thus leaving it for Richard Nixon and

Henry Kissinger to pursue (and for Jimmy Carter to continue). Though the authors are critical of Nixon, Kissinger, and Carter, they are rather positive as well, especially because aspects of policies pursued in this period were based upon principles of realism. Naturally, they discuss the advancement in U.S.-Soviet relations, especially the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks and the resulting treaties. However, what seems to be of even more importance is the major retrenchment in America ideals to uphold the principle of self-determination. By the end of the decade, the United States reversed course and finally recognized the People's Republic of China after nearly thirty years of non-recognition. Perhaps even more astounding, at Helsinki in 1975, the United States signed accords finally recognizing the postwar boundaries established in Europe as a result of World War II. In many respects, it looked like the Cold War might be coming to an end. However, one of the things that doomed that prospect was the failure of Nixon and Kissinger to build a consensus in support of détente. In other words, remnants of the Cold War consensus lingered on. Also, the incoherence and perceived weakness and failures of Carter's policies only fueled a resurgence of that consensus, electing Ronald Reagan to the presidential office in 1980.

The concluding sections on the Reagan-Bush years are perhaps the most interesting as this is where the various strands of the narrative and overall argument of the work come full circle. As is well known, the early Reagan years initiated a renewal of the Cold War, though the authors identify it as the second Cold War. The old anti-communist consensus remained strong in support of Reagan's policies that ratcheted up international tensions--the largest defense buildup in American history, including the Strategic Defense Initiative or Star Wars, which sought to regain America's military superiority and a position of strength vis-à-vis the Soviet Union from which to negotiate, as well as the introduction of the Reagan Doctrine, which sought not just to support peoples opposing communist aggression but to overturn existing communist governments, especially in the Third World. In many respects, the authors consider this second Cold War to have been even more dangerous than the first. However, the sudden reversal in the course of the Cold War came with the appearance of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union in 1985. The authors give Reagan credit for his willingness to meet with Gorbachev, however, they do not fully explore how or why Reagan came to this point (indeed, one of the weaknesses throughout the book is the authors' reluctance to probe deeply the motivations of American policymakers).¹ Nevertheless, Reagan and Gorbachev established a working relationship that eventually resulted in the 1987 I.N.F. Treaty which removed an entire class of nuclear weapons from the superpowers' arsenals, thus paving the way for more serious arms negotiations under Reagan's successor, George Herbert Walker Bush.

¹ A good place to start on Reagan here is Beth Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

The authors note that even late into the Cold War, the consensus that had undergirded it remained strong. Reagan was criticized for working with the Soviets and even Bush was slow to recognize the sea change taking place in Europe. However, by 1989 it had become clear that the Soviet Union would no longer use force to impose its will on Eastern Europe, in effect letting go its post-World War II demands for hegemony in the region. Bush realized Gorbachev was serious and as a result, Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) continued as did talks to finally end the division of Germany and hence Europe. While the authors do not provide a specific end date for the Cold War, they identify its conclusion as the moment when the two superpowers both relinquished the principles each held since World War II concerning the boundaries and fate of Europe. They also point out that the end of the Cold War came about not through confrontation or nuclear war, but by accommodation and negotiation, something they suggest could have occurred 45 years earlier. In other words, at long last the two nations adhered to realist principles and recognized the need to coexist.

Given all this, the authors argue that in the end America's Cold War was nothing more than a rhetorical exercise. From the beginning of the Truman years, they find that in order to uphold the principle of self-determination and contain communism, the United States set open-ended goals without clearly defined objectives, resulting in a set of global interests designed to contain communist expansion but without the adequate means to do so. And despite the ideological tinge and demands of the Cold War consensus that defined global containment, in effect the United States found itself never actively pursuing its anti-communist objectives. As the authors make clear, at no point in time did the United States ever seriously attempt to free Eastern Europe, China, or other areas from communism. Rather, the United States ended up pursuing limited goals to contain communism, but in the end having to accept the status quo in order to avoid any direct conflict with the Soviet Union outside of Europe. To some extent, then, this suggests that at various key points in the Cold War, the authors believe America's Cold War policy was more realistic than it might have seemed (and if it was, it was due largely to the criticism of realists who made an impact on U.S. policy choices). On the other hand, they are quite dismayed by how misguided America's Cold War policy was. After all, at no point during the Cold War did the Soviet Union reveal any ambition or area of the world sufficiently important to meet the United States in a military showdown. Moreover, the Soviets found the power of nationalism as equally confusing to control as the United States did. Had U.S. policy been based on those realities, the authors imply, the Cold War might never have been or have been what it was. In fact, the authors even question how vital it was for the United States to deny recognition of a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe following World War II. After all, they suggest, the resulting outcome led to sustained Cold War tensions and an ever-spiraling arms race.

Overall, I appreciated this interpretative history of the Cold War and think it is not a bad place to start for understanding the general course and contours of this phenomenon, especially for students and non-specialists. I think it is especially helpful in defining what the Cold War was, or at least one definition of it (naturally other interpretations of it

would have to be presented if using this book in a course). I also think it is particularly strong in getting at what was perhaps the heart of the conflict. Even if one may disagree with the overarching interpretation, it does get at the point that the Cold War began out of unresolved differences regarding the postwar settlement in Europe and therefore its conclusion also meant a resolution to those issues, albeit 45 years later. I also think the work does a nice job in helping to explain the duration of the Cold War from the American perspective. That said, I do have a few criticisms.

First, I realize that the work is an interpretation and not a synthesis. However, there are a few things missing that I believe would only strengthen the interpretation presented. If one of the main points is to criticize the Cold War policy pursued by the United States, then it is important to emphasize more the consequences of that policy. What comes to mind here is some discussion of the domestic consequences of the Cold War beyond the mention of McCarthyism as well as the consequences to countries and peoples who perhaps stood outside the main thrust of the Cold War but were nonetheless affected by it.² This is especially important regarding the realist school of thought as its critique is frequently prescriptive in nature—in other words, identifying mistakes from the past in order to draw lessons from them so they are not repeated when formulating future policy decisions.

My second criticism is a bit more fundamental in nature. While there is a lot in the work with which I agree, I do wish the authors had spent a bit more time on motivation and what influenced the thinking that went into the development of America's Cold War consensus. Policy is not made in a vacuum, and oftentimes the past experiences and cultural milieu in which policymakers operate have an impact on how they respond to certain events (it does not necessarily make the decisions taken right or wrong, but it at least helps to understand what drove them to make the decisions they did). While asking the authors to consider a cultural examination of the early Cold War would completely change the nature of the book, not to mention the argument then, one view that I do find more persuasive on this point is that established by Melvin Leffler.³ In particular, Leffler emphasizes that the experience of the Great Depression greatly influenced American policymakers during and immediately after World War II. In order not to repeat the experience which resulted in threats to America's national interests, both economic and security, they sought to create a new economic and political world order which would

² What comes to mind is incorporating some of the more recent scholarship on such matters, perhaps in the introduction or the conclusion. One piece that strikes me as particularly relevant is Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³ In particular, see his *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), although I think he does a particularly fine job in distilling the essence of his argument in *The Specter of Communism: the United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1947-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

prevent another such Depression from occurring. This then was the lens through which American policymakers viewed Soviet reluctance to cooperate with Western plans for Europe and set the stage for the eventual development of America's containment doctrine.

Finally, as noted in my first criticism, the realist critique of U.S. foreign policy is often prescriptive in nature. And indeed, the blurb on the back of each volume states that the "concluding chapter draws lessons from the Cold War decades, showing how they apply to dealing with nation-states and terrorist groups today." Indeed, there is much that the lessons of the Cold War can teach as the United States confronts the very real, but also very unclear threat of terrorism. However, the concluding chapter does not live up to that blurb. And it is quite a shame since there are many elements within the realist critique of U.S. Cold War policy that could be emphasized at this point. In particular, one of the strengths of this work is its ability to point out how throughout much of the Cold War the United States identified broad, often open-ended goals to confront the ill-defined threat of communist expansion, but without clearly defined objectives or the means to meet these goals adequately. In other words, the nation followed Alice down the rabbit hole and at times got lost. It is possible it is doing the same as it considers how to deal with terrorist groups, but this is not taken up in the concluding chapter.

Author's Response by Richard Dean Burns, Emeritus, California State University, Los Angeles and Joseph M. Siracusa, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

As usual, we are grateful for, and indebted to the reviewers for their time and thoughtful comments. We are happy to have both. Norman A. Graebner, who passed away in May 2010, at the age of 94, would have been pleased that all four reviewers place our book in the Realist tradition, a tradition generally accepted by most diplomatic historians as well as the successful statesmen in the nation's history.¹ As Professor Graebner reminded us many times in his long, productive career, Realist philosophy, grounded in historical experience, takes into account the forthright calculations of the necessities, possibilities and boundaries of a foreign policy action related to peace and war since the cost of miscalculation could become exorbitant. It also demands that we ask questions *before* deciding on a war of choice: Are objectives clearly defined, and do they include precise, generally recognized national interests or dangers? Do the ambitions and abilities of the enemy of the moment endanger vital national economic or security interests? Would victory enhance the equilibrium of the region? Is victory assured at a cost commensurate with the interests at stake and, finally, will costs be sustained by necessary public and government support? An "exit strategy" is not a substitute for thinking about these things.

Professor Graebner would also have been pleased to have these volumes likened, according to Tom Nichols, "in tone and approach" to Adam Ulam's classic of Soviet foreign policy, *Expansion and Coexistence*; this is high praise, indeed. He would also have found the reviewers' comments to be incisive and thoughtful if not self-explanatory, with which readers may, of course, agree or disagree.

He would also have enjoyed the ensuing conversation.

Professor Graebner always believed that the academy had room for historians of all schools, from which we would all benefit as we see more clearly what has happened and why. Each school of thought, he observed in the late 1960s, "produced evidence and ideas that cannot be refuted and thus make their contribution."² And this was at a time when half the profession was hammering the New Left. Although he asked the same question as the New Left – "Why the everlasting overcommitment?" – Graebner concluded that explanations of American foreign policy must, in the final analysis, be attributed to intellectual and political, not economic causes. This is not to say that Graebner

¹ Also see, Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*, *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews*, IX, No. 22 (2008).

² Quoted in Joseph M. Siracusa, *New Left Diplomatic Histories and Historians: The American Revisionists*, 2nd ed. (Regina Books: Claremont, CA, 1993), 113.

underplayed economic issues; it is just that he preferred to follow what he called the “big tracks.” He had enormous respect for New Left scholars, which was reciprocated in kind. It is not by chance that his friend Walter LaFeber endorsed the publication of these volumes both as “a comprehensive narrative and a challenging realist interpretation of the Cold War.” (Like the other endorsements, this should have been on the back cover of the volumes; instead, they ended up on the product page. Our apologies.)

Having said that, we believe the reviews, on the whole, were very fair. There has much been written on the Cold War, offering a wide range of views on everything. We came through it on a well conceived track, and with a specific point of view. Thus we could not expect universal agreement. That being true, we were pleased to note the high degree of acceptance we received. The disagreements were largely on matters of omission, not commission. But, as has always been the case, a book cannot be all things to all people, and we would be the first to acknowledge this view. That said, we should like to comment on some points raised in the reviews.

Tom Nichols, in his otherwise fine review, notes that at our hands, all presidents end up looking very much alike, the outcome of which is that “the book becomes a fact-by-fact retelling of the Cold War, which is less an “interpretation’ than it is a result of choosing to leave aside the inner workings of human beings,” or what Jaclyn Stanke calls, in her thorough summary, our “reluctance to probe deeply the motivations of American policymakers.” We hardly know what to say to this except to re-direct readers to our chapter on Vietnam (Chapter 11 “The Watershed: The War, in Vietnam”) which reads like a Greek tragedy. There is presidential anguish aplenty, soul-searching and yet the wrong decision is made. Moreover, our focus on the inhabitants of the Oval Office was one of choice: they are -and remain - “the ultimate sources of action,” in John K. Kennedy’s felicitous express.³ Then as now, most resulting policies were made in the upper reaches of government then sold to Congress and public. Our study, which presupposes the nature of the Cold War was basically ideological and political, emphasizes Washington’s excessive anti-Communism, the resulting major policies (where there were coherent policies), the public rationalization in support of the policies, and the most notable events of the Cold War.

In another sense - and none of the reviewers actually picked this up - *America and the Cold War* is also an historical tribute to the brave journalists, analysts and other writers – Americans and West Europeans who were critical thinkers – who fully appreciated that contemporary policies often greatly exceeded Washington’s ability to achieve them and who recognized that the policies would not resolve the very problems they were meant to address. Policy critics were correct more often than not, which comes out in later literature. So, if we are short on “the inner workings of human beings,” we are long on

³ Cassette K, Presidential Recordings Collection, President’s Office Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

ideas or the intellectual milieu in which a foreign policy is conducted and the foreign policy itself.

Apropos the omission of the Reagan diaries, all we could do is agree with James Mann's conclusion, in his study of Ronald Reagan, that "we will never know whether Reagan thought in Machiavellian terms without ever acknowledging he did so, or whether his actions were the result of instincts."⁴ As well, the diaries did not appear in the bibliography, which was a Selected Bibliography. The reason here is simple enough: we had to make a trade-off between the Notes, which run nearly 100 pages, and the bibliography, which we promised would be as economical as possible. In short, we did think about these things but were constrained in the end.

One last point. Professor Nichols characterizes our conclusion as "something of an idiosyncratic, even nostalgic recollection of the Cold War." What he is talking about is this sentence: "By most standards of human progress, the Cold War years comprised the most pervading, most prosperous golden age in history." The "golden age" we had in mind was the material gains of the age. Aside from memories of the changing skyline of every major city in the Western World, there wasn't much to be nostalgic about. Nor were they ever "Happy Days." The Cold War was, by any account, a time of inordinate fear and profligate waste. In Madeline Albright's words to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in 2000, "It was an era of relentless and institutionalized tragedy; of proxy wars that destroyed lives in every continent; of barbed wire stretched across Europe's heart; of gulags and forced confessions; and of countless thousands killed while trying to escape. Above all, it was a time of fear – of showdowns in Korea, Berlin, and Cuba....Each night we knew that within minutes, perhaps through a misunderstanding, our world would come to an end and morning never come."⁵ What the Secretary left out was that much of America's Cold War policy was highly fraudulent, with its emphasis on the exaggerations of danger, chasing ghosts. The point of *America and the Cold War* was to demonstrate as never before the falsehood of those policies. Professor Bacevich's trenchant review, underlining Washington's persistent inability to see the world as it is, taps into this theme without missing a beat.

The waste amounted to a policy of national profligacy. Let's take just one category. From 1940 to 1996, the U.S. spent almost \$5.5 trillion (in constant 1996 dollars) on nuclear weapons and weapons-related programs. This was 29% of all military spending from 1940 through 1996 (\$18.7 trillion). Put another way, this figure exceeded all other categories of government spending except non-nuclear national defense (\$13.2 trillion) and social

⁴ James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War*, *H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews*, XI, No. 5 (2009), 21.

⁵ Secretary of State Madeline Albright on Russia at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., September 16, 2000.

security (\$7.9 trillion).⁶ This figure reminds one of Eduard Bernstein's famous observations in 1893, in the run up to that other epoch, "This continued arming, compelling the others to keep up with Germany, is itself a kind of warfare. I don't know whether the expression has been used previously but one could say it is a cold war (*ein kalter Krieg*). There is no shooting but there is bleeding, in the sense of undermining the welfare of the people and swallowing up the resources needed for social reform."⁷ In any case, the military-industrial-research complex could not believe its good fortune when "the global war on terror" replaced the "war on communism" as the nation's leading organizational principle. So, the institutions comprising the national security state got a new lease on life, as well as another blank check. This is not reassuring.

Finally, we are beholden to Priscilla Roberts's essay review that places the book in the rich historiographical context of the American Realist tradition. A model of its kind, it should become a handy companion to the volume itself. Just two (gentle) corrections. First, co-author Joseph M. Siracusa is misidentified as a former student of Professor Graebner. Siracusa is, in fact, a student of the late Daniel M. Smith, a Wilsonian Realist, at the University of Colorado (Boulder). Second, and more important, *America and the Cold War* is not Professor Graebner's penultimate work; it is his antepenultimate work. Before his death, in May, we completed a third study with Graebner, *Foreign Affairs and the Founding Fathers: From the Constitution, 1776-1787*, to be published by Praeger, in early 2012. After writing two books on America as a superpower, we decided to turn our attention to the most precarious period in the history of the republic as a timely reminder of the wisdom of the Founding Fathers in dealing with the nation's external affairs in a hostile world. Americans forget – if they ever knew – that it was a near thing. A little knowledge about the difficulties faced by our forebearers, who thought and acted in terms of power, with their back against the wall, might serve as a modest roadmap for the times ahead.

Copyright © 2010 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

⁶ *Atomic Audit: The Cost and Consequences of U.S. Nuclear Weapons since 1940* (Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C. 1998).

⁷ Quoted in Joseph M. Siracusa, *Diplomacy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 31.