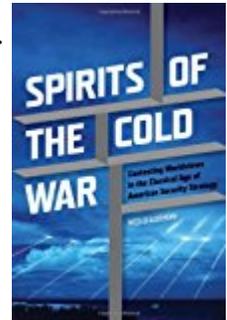


Ned O’Gorman. *Spirits of the Cold War: Contesting Worldviews in the Classical Age of American Security Strategy.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012. xxi + 321 pp. \$59.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-61186-020-7.



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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

President Dwight D. Eisenhower saw the stakes of his inaugural address as high. On January 12, 1953, he summoned his cabinet nominees to discuss the central importance of setting his administration’s theme that “peace rested squarely on productivity.”[1] Emmet Hughes, a key speech writer who worked on Eisenhower’s inaugural address, observed that Eisenhower displayed “restless anxiety” over the speech.[2] Hughes said the world-famous general seemed “humbled, awed, and a little troubled” over the awesome task of communicating what course his administration would take.[3] Rhetoric mattered to the president. In *Spirits of the Cold War: Contesting Worldviews in the Classical Age of American Security Strategy*, Ned O’Gorman attempts to make sense of this important subject. His analysis helps link Eisenhower and other Cold Warriors’ rhetoric to larger themes in American history. But it falters in substantive ways in its analysis of Eisenhower’s ideas. Overall, though, O’Gorman’s book is praiseworthy for highlighting the Eisenhower administration as an important subject in rhetorical stud-

ies. Historians will benefit from his discussion on secretary of state John Foster Dulles’s thinking, among other moments in the book.

To get at analysis of 1950s Cold War rhetoric, O’Gorman puts four thinkers and their rhetorical strategies in tension. He labels George Kennan, a key contributor to containment strategy, a stoic. O’Gorman uses Dulles as a way to discuss an evangelical rhetorical style. Less prominent Eisenhower adviser C. D. Jackson represents the adventurer bent. And Eisenhower is O’Gorman’s romantic. He dedicates each chapter that follows to one of these thinkers. As O’Gorman reveals in his conclusion, he suggests that history can be “character driven” (p. 244). The substance of the book supports this conclusion when he compares Kennan and Dulles, but falters in other places.

For sure, many biographers and historians before O’Gorman have turned to the life and times of George Kennan as a way to understand the Cold War.[4] O’Gorman’s contribution here is significant, however. O’Gorman labels Kennan a

stoic. Stoicism, as O’Gorman argues, emphasizes “constancy” or consistency in policy (p. 24). Stoics are driven by “rational self-care and outward action” (p. 26). Wars are waged for tangible interests, not to spread ideology. Those animated by the stoic spirit like Kennan are concerned with preserving the balance of power and believe that the best defense is good government at home. O’Gorman suggests that as such, Kennan was a statist who believed in the importance of a large, unified state authority. Overall, this analysis is helpful. Labeling Kennan as a stoic shows the ways that Kennan fits in the larger history of American foreign relations. O’Gorman utilizes quotes from George Washington, America’s most famous stoic, and others as a way to weave Kennan into the larger tapestry of American history. This widens Kennan’s importance as part of a much larger current of thought going back to the founding of America.

In chapter 2, he achieves a similar feat by linking Dulles to a Protestant religion-driven political philosophy. Quoting heavily from covenantal theory reaching back to the seventeenth century, O’Gorman shows how that theory and a belief in a Christian community enforced by clear boundaries informed Dulles’s enunciation of massive retaliation defense policy. This policy claimed that if the Communist powers attempted to push beyond the containment border the United States would use nuclear weapons and other forms of force when at an advantage to the United States. It tried to secure the offensive in the Cold War by keeping the Communist bloc guessing. O’Gorman convincingly argues that for Dulles nuclear weapons were policing weapons. While portraying Dulles in this way, O’Gorman illustrates the complexity of Dulles’s thinking. Towards the end of the chapter, he claims Dulles changed over time. O’Gorman concludes that of the four thinkers in the book Dulles was the “only one who seriously questioned the sanctity of the nation-state” (p. 118). He observes that in the final years of Dulles’s life, the secretary of state wished to avoid reliance on nu-

clear weapons because they soured relations with the allies and because, as he told German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, using them was “unchristian” (p. 119). To be sure, Dulles remains one of the most complicated thinkers in Eisenhower’s administration. O’Gorman’s discussion of the evolution of Dulles’s views provides encouragement for further exploration of them.

In the next chapter, O’Gorman makes a stout effort to show continuity between World War II ideas of liberation and the popularity of modernization in the 1960s. He uses C. D. Jackson as a way to understand what he called the “adventurer” spirit in the Cold War. In the 1950s, the “adventurers” were those who called for rollback of the Soviet Union. Later, O’Gorman claims they would become supporters of modernization. O’Gorman starts the chapter by claiming that the “adventurer” spirit is part of a “national style” that channeled the “essence of America as an experiment, an adventure, on behalf of liberty” (p. 125). The only weakness in this chapter concerns the level of risk involved in the “adventurer” ethos. The danger of a real attempt at roll back in Eastern Europe would be war with the Soviet Union. Eisenhower knew this and selected Andrew Goodpaster, a trusted adviser, to shape the exercise that led to the New Look. A wider acknowledgment of Eisenhower’s personal hostility toward rollback would have improved the chapter.

In the final chapter of the book, O’Gorman delineates what “spirit” of the Cold War animated Eisenhower. O’Gorman claims that Eisenhower was a romantic hero in line with nineteenth-century thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson. Coming from this ideology, the president saw the use of nuclear weapons as part of a “utilitarian calculus” that gave him control. Eisenhower’s use of nuclear weapons in his strategy “heeded the logic of a material order only loosely tied to moral order” (p. 168). O’Gorman claims Eisenhower accepted nuclear weapons as a component of U.S. strategy

but thought they were not something that Americans should aspire to. O’Gorman sees, correctly, that Eisenhower viewed the Cold War as a long struggle. O’Gorman descends from that point to try to show that Eisenhower was an optimist who followed a “limitless” policy (p. 180). O’Gorman’s analysis of Eisenhower posits that the president embraced nuclear stockpiling because of this ethos.

While O’Gorman’s book is helpful in emphasizing Eisenhower’s value for public rhetoric, his perspective on Eisenhower as a romantic hero and perpetual optimist is flawed. Eisenhower pursued nuclear weapons as a way to manage the defense budget. He feared a growing garrison state. From the end of World War II to 1952, Eisenhower witnessed a fantastic increase in the defense budget. The Korean War caused an enormous jump in spending. For Eisenhower, a garrison state was a real threat. He used nuclear weapons as a way to cut down on conventional weapons and lower the defense budget. For sure, the chapter would have benefited from an analysis of how Eisenhower’s titanic struggles with the army in the first term and then his fight over the missile gap in the second term can be understood in relation to O’Gorman’s thesis of Eisenhower as a romantic hero.

Those issues aside, O’Gorman has made an important contribution to measuring the rhetoric that drove the Cold War period. The chapters he offers throughout the book challenge readers to see how thinkers in the 1950s drew on long standing American traditions. O’Gorman’s claims about what drove Kennan, Dulles, Jackson, and Eisenhower will provoke debate and further the ongoing conversation on national security in the 1950s.

Notes

[1]. “Proceedings of Cabinet Meeting,” January 12-13, 1953, Cabinet Series, Ann Whitman File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President, Box 1,

1, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[2]. Emmet Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years* (New York: Anthem, 1972).

[3]. *Ibid.*, 53.

[4]. See John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin, 2012). See also Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986); and Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009).

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