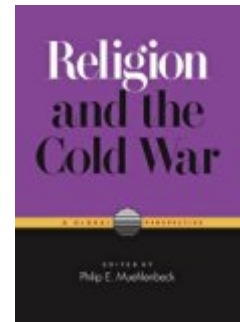


Philip Muehlenbeck. *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective.* Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012. 288 S. \$27.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8265-1853-8.



Reviewed by Henry Maar

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The role of religious beliefs on the outcome of the Cold War is a growing, but still overlooked, subfield in the historiography of American foreign relations. Indeed, in the three volumes of *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, religion was not the subject of even one essay. Philip Muehlenbeck's new edited collection, *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* provides cutting edge scholarship on the Cold War and the role of religion within it. This collection builds on a previous collection by Diane Kirby of the same name. But whereas Kirby's collection focused in on the early Cold War (1945-1960), with a mostly American-Eurocentric view, Muehlenbeck's collection ranges over a wider time period with a global perspective. Moreover, whereas Kirby's account was mostly about Catholicism, Muehlenbeck's collection offers scholars a more spiritually diverse set of religions, focusing not just on Christianity, but also Islam and Buddhism as well as atheism. *Religion and the Cold War* offers a straightforward thesis: "religion had an impact on the Cold War policies of countries all over the world," (vii).

Religion and the Cold War begins with an introductory essay ("The Religious Cold War") from the historian Andrew Preston, author of the recent groundbreaking work on religion and American foreign policy, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*. In this essay, Preston argues that there was indeed "a religious Cold War" since the United States and the Soviet Union "perceived each other through a religious lens," and "framed their rivalry in religious terms," (xiii). Preston's essay establishes links between religion and the Cold War across U.S. presidential administrations, international developments (such as the Islamic backlash against modernization in the Middle East), and shows the ways in which religion both shaped the Cold War, and, in turn, how the Cold War shaped "the evolution of religion in domestic societies," (xvii).

Preston's latter point is a theme which provides the glue to connect the thirteen diverse essays in this collection. As diverse as the essays are, so too are the authors, ranging from tenured professors, to associate and adjuncts, to Ph.D. candi-

dates. The thirteen essays in this collection are well-documented and thoroughly researched, many in multiple archives, and multiple languages. Muehlenbeck's subtitle—*A Global Perspective*—offers no false advertising. Religion and the Cold War truly is a global approach to the subject. The collection is organized chronologically, and readers will find fresh insights on a number of major Cold War hot spots: the role of Pomaks in the Greek civil war; German churches and the creation of the "good German" among the western allies in the emerging Cold War; Dwight Eisenhower's use of "Bible balloons" in a psychological operation that featured balloons bearing Bible extracts floating across the skies of Eastern Europe; Hewlett Johnson, the pro-communist Anglican clergyman; Christian missionaries and the influence of religion on the Korean War; U.S. propaganda efforts in the middle east during the 1950s to persuade Iraqi Muslims that Communism was the enemy of Islam; Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser's use of Islam to further his own political objectives, as seen in his regime's interference in negotiations between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Egypt; the Soviet Union's struggle with and response to Islam in an avowed atheist state; Bosnian Muslims and the importance of the Cold War in their national development; Religion and politics in Diem's Republic of Vietnam; the development of ideological and theological ideas in the Catholic Church under authoritarian rule in Brazil; the failure of institutionalized atheism by the Communist Party in Poland; the role of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the rise of political Islam in Pakistan, and Pakistan's role in the Afghan-Soviet conflict.

While the collection of essays does span the entire Cold War, the majority of these essays focus on the early pre-detente period (roughly 1945 - 1968). This leaves important topics, many of which are raised by Andrew Preston in his introduction, off the table. An essay that explored the Catholic Church and the Cold War in the post-Vati-

can II period or an essay that examined a variety of faiths and their relationship to nuclear weapons would have been a welcome addition to this collection. Readers of this collection unaware of the 1983 Pastoral Letter on War and Peace (which condemned the late-Cold War arms) or of the Church of Latter Day Saints' concerns over the basing of the MX missile in Utah, would gain no insights these matters. But while their absence is notable, it does not undermine the value of this collection.

Religion and the Cold War serves as a great jumping off point for future studies on the subject. The book would serve well in a graduate reading seminar on the Cold War, exposing younger and forthcoming scholars to the importance of religion in foreign policy making decisions. Essays such as Jonathan Herzog's ("From Sermon to Strategy: Religious Influence on the Formation and Implementation of US Foreign Policy in the Early Cold War") could even find their way into undergraduate curriculum. Religion and the Cold War is an ambitious project that sheds light on the power of ideas and beliefs, and shows us the interactions between religious beliefs and the way the Cold War transpired. The work offers a unique way of viewing many of the major hotspots within the Cold War and is sure to be of interest to scholars of the period.

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