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Reviewed by **Jonathan Reed Winkler, Wright State University**

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One of the more unusual career points for scholars of modern history must be the moment at which, for the very first time, they have occasion to lecture in a survey course on events personally remembered yet antedating the students' own lives. This contemporary history, constantly evolving and anchored upon a potent mix of memory and limited scholarly assessment, can present real problems for the teacher when personal experience vies with cold, detached review. Eventually the balanced overview begins to emerge, both in the minds of the scholars who lecture and the coverage in the field in general, as memories fade and the historical process yields more robust, methodologically sound works. Nowhere has this been more pronounced than in the area of the Cold War, that enormous geopolitical struggle that ended nearly twenty years ago. The last cohort of graduate students to remember it personally, this reviewer included, are now in a position to lecture to future high school history teachers about something that concluded just before these students were born.

As the Cold War becomes less recently-lived contemporary history and more yet-another historical event in the past, like the Reformation, the Black Death or the Age of Revolutions, a new question had risen to the fore. What is it that secondary school teachers who were born after the Cold War ended should know and understand about this defining event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? U.S. schools expect licensed social studies teachers to have a rudimentary knowledge of national and world history generally but do not require them to be field experts particularly. If these teachers did not take courses on foreign relations in college, their only exposure may have been from voluminous (and expensive) survey texts within which foreign relations as a topic competes with everything else for space. However useful state-of-the-field syntheses or survey works on foreign relations are for advanced scholars and collegiate professors, there has continued

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to exist a real need for usable, effective materials to update secondary school teachers on how foreign relations or international history has evolved since last they were in college.<sup>1</sup>

To this end, the editors of the *New England Journal of History* drew together sixteen contributors (both established and younger scholars) to a special issue of the journal devoted entirely to the Cold War, sixty years after the first use of the term in 1947. Scholarly and popular work on the subject abounds, of course, so the first question to mind is this: What do the contents of this volume have to offer? The answer is quite a great deal, actually, though the quality and utility of the essays varies.

The sixteen articles themselves proceed in a fairly straightforward manner through the chronology and major topics of the Cold War. H.W. Brands anchors the compilation with a fluid overview of the entire event, beginning with its 19<sup>th</sup> century antecedents (with Marx and Tocqueville appearing). Balanced, detached and direct, Brands' essay reminds us that what made the Cold War so significant was the combination of the geopolitical struggle over Europe between the two remaining great powers after World War Two with the ideological struggle over their competing political philosophies—democratic capitalism and authoritarian communism—a struggle that spread to the rest of the world. If one can complain about what is really a brief summary of an incredibly complex event, nuclear weapons are almost completely absent from the essay and the perspective is largely Amero-centric. Beside this essay, however, we are bereft of an editorial introduction to explain why certain particular topics, among so many others, appear.

The essays by and large examine elements of the Cold War both in the broader world and within the United States, but in nearly all instances the United States and its policymakers are the primary focus or the anchor for the examination. There is merit to such an approach, of course, if the intended audience is a social studies teacher incorporating this review into U.S. history courses. Without second-guessing both the editorial decisions and the authors' prerogatives, however, it seems to this reviewer that this method risks perpetuating the divisions between U.S. and world history at the secondary school level. There is presently a growing, fruitful discussion among scholars at the collegiate level about how and in what ways we can “internationalize” U.S. history. With the Cold War, foreign relations historians (or whatever term one might use) are well-positioned to assist in this task.<sup>2</sup> That said, a collection of essays for teachers on the

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<sup>1</sup> There are plenty of short introductions to the Cold War that are of use to secondary school teachers, of course, including Robert J. McMahon's *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). There are also teacher-training programs such as those offered through the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and the Gilder Lehrman Institute.

<sup>2</sup> On the discussions about “internationalizing” U.S. history at the collegiate level, see, among others, Carl J. Guarneri, ed., *America Compared: American History in International Perspective* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005); Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006); and Gary W. Reichard & Ted Dickson, eds., *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Cold War that pursues both the domestic and international approaches would easily be either twice the size of this one or half as good.

Much of what occurs in these articles will not be new to most scholars. What is useful for them, however, are either the recapitulations of major questions or the summative evaluations of issues at a level that will suit undergraduates, particularly those intending to be high school teachers. On the always delicate topic of Cold War historiography, Steven Hurst's able review eschews a defense of any one school and instead tries to explain what the whole soap opera has been about, with pithy criticisms of all. Because of its brevity and balance, much of this overview would be a sound introduction for advanced undergraduates or new graduate students before they tackle the weightier historiographic tomes.<sup>3</sup> Similarly useful from a pedagogical point of view is Michael Kort's summation of the historiography on the dropping of the atomic bombs. The piece guides the uninitiated through the by-now standard orthodox and revisionist variants, the latest literature, key arguments and enhanced evidentiary bases. Kort's preference for the anti-revisionist rebuttal of the last generation is obvious, but if we set aside the polite detachment and presumptions of equivalency that non-specialists tend to adopt on these things, a really interesting question emerges: How should social studies teachers deal with historiographic debates once they appear to have run their course? If, as Kort suggests, multiarchival evidence has eviscerated many (but not all) of the key arguments that the revisionists initially offered (casualty estimates, geostrategic concerns about Soviet entry, and so on), then at what point does the standard narrative emerge? All of us who teach history might well use this comparatively compact example of historical synthesis to indicate to our students the at-times Hegelian process that is history.

For all the myriad ways we might explore the Cold War and its effects, a core understanding of how it evolved and where it did (or did not) take place will remain a necessity. In a clear essay tracing the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy years, Robert McMahon reminds us that what started over the fate of post-war Europe transformed under the presence of increasingly unusable nuclear weapons into a drawn-out, worldwide competition. Shane Maddock's essay outlines the evolution of the nuclear arms race and the subsequent development of arms control (only with the two powers), and reminds us that the histories of the Cold War and nuclear weapons are really separate but inextricably intertwined. Though nuclear weapons helped to keep the Cold War from going hot, what we often lose sight of, in retrospect, is the ever-present, constraining effect the fear of these weapons (and their power) must have had on the second generation of leaders in all capitals. Since the origins were complex, the solution to the

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<sup>3</sup> These include Michael J. Hogan, ed. *Paths to Power: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations to 1941* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); idem, *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations Since 1941* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jerald A. Combs, *American Diplomatic History: Two Centuries of Changing Interpretations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Gerald K. Haines and J. Samuel Walker, eds. *American Foreign Relations, A Historiographical Review* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981).

competition must necessarily be complex as well. For developing one path through the complexity, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger tend (generally) to come up for praise as wise realists who cleverly mitigated the apparent U.S. decline of the 1970s through détente. Carolyn Eisenberg will have none of that, however, and suggests that Nixon and Kissinger were highly irrational individuals whose decisions were not necessarily the best ones under the circumstances. Her essay serves, like Hurst and Kort's, to indicate how and in what ways the historiographic evolution of the Cold War can occur, and to remind us how much individuals mattered in the formulation of grand strategy. Jeremi Suri insists on this too in his contribution. He reminds us that the quick and peaceful end of the Cold War surprised many, and would have us acknowledge that two individuals, Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, played a very significant role in this through their willingness to work together and question the presumptions that had guided their predecessors. Individuals and personalities mattered, Suri rightly insists, and occasionally more than the deeper systemic forces that pushed international crises like the Cold War forward. The result was not the cataclysmic destruction of the world through nuclear war but the peaceable dissolution of regimes no longer acceptable to their subjects.

While the absence of nuclear Armageddon and the discrediting of communism was, for most people, a good thing, the concomitant exporting of the Cold War to other places had deep consequences that, then and now, generated considerable controversy. In Latin America, as Stephen Rabe smoothly explains, U.S. officials viewed the turn of events with the lens first of the struggle against fascism and then communism. The result was that while the Soviets largely left this area alone, the United States nonetheless looked for the Cold War here as in other places with myriad lingering effects. As the Europeans decolonized Africa, the emergence of new nations on the continent drew in the Cold War as well. James Meriwether traces a middle path for the United States, between continued colonialism (no longer acceptable) and rapid independence (problematic because of local inexperience and the danger of communist influence), with the resulting policies being influenced by unfamiliarity about the continent, condescension towards the locals, and anxiety about the domestic civil rights movement. The major element is, of course, Vietnam, which is the subject of two essays. Seth Jacobs' article, apparently about how the United States came to be in Vietnam, is one of the few in this collection that does not work. It seems to be an effort to draw parallels between the Eisenhower and George W. Bush administrations, and draws the major but forced connection on the basis of the religious motivations of the principals. Overwhelmingly presentist, it paints with a broad brush, and the intended audience will be, regardless of one's politics, confused and possibly even offended. Despite the imputation of the essay, faith is not a fault, not all evangelicals in government are Republicans, and religion has guided all administrations on matters foreign and domestic.<sup>4</sup> The irony in comparing the Eisenhower and Bush

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<sup>4</sup> See, inter alia, Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Andrew Preston, "Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 30:5 (November 2006):

administrations, of course, is that conventional wisdom of the 1950s and 1960s held that Eisenhower was a dunce. How can historians assess the present with such certitude? Far better on Vietnam is Derek Buckaloo's essay on the legacy of Vietnam. The understanding of the conflict's purpose, outcome, and effect on the country has remained a very malleable one, and different groups drew different conclusions about it. Buckaloo identifies three main trends. The Ford administration moved past it and set it aside, while the Carter and Reagan administrations recast the war as defensible, in a way to honor the efforts of the soldiers even if the outcome was unsuccessful. In more recent years, there has been a third way, a selective use of small engagements or conflicts to avoid remembering Vietnam while making military intervention 'doable' again. This highly balanced essay works well, and fits into the theme of the issue by informing social studies teachers that there is no 'right' view on Vietnam, now nearly two generations gone.

The Cold War also occurred within the larger biosphere of the Earth itself, and the intersection of science and geopolitics—beyond just nuclear weapons—is a key element of the Cold War story. One of the more refreshing articles is Kurk Dorsey's examination of the environment. By looking at fresh water, food production, and nuclear weapons, he forces us to think differently about the Cold War, to remember that shared issues among the participants sometimes led to solutions that transcended the rivalry—while at other times the rivalry impeded progress. Helpfully, Dorsey reminds us too of the enormous environmental damage wrought by communism, and posits a relationship between the level of democracy and the strength of environmentalism. Particularly impressive is David Jones' article on the human radiation experiments in the United States. Chilling to read, the piece is carefully nuanced and judicious, without needlessly castigating the scientists who carried out these tests. Jones explains that while some of the experiments were clearly undertaken without the knowledge of the participants, our historical evaluation of what was going on at the time has to be balanced not only with the contextual deep fear of possible atomic warfare but also evolving ideas of what constituted scientific research and the benefits to be gained from it. Indeed, as Jones reminds us, many people deliberately sought to be atomic test subjects, while the long term benefits included present-day treatment options for cancer. The point for teachers, then is that the relationship between science and geopolitics can be an important one, and that the domestic implications of the Cold War rivalry were unexpected and, at times, significant.

Finally, the Cold War was never just a Wagnerian clash of gods but a Tolstoyean epic affecting the lives of millions of ordinary individuals. Indeed, we can only understand the true impact of the Cold War by looking at things from the bottom up, at the cultural, economic, and scientific changes wrought by this competition. Frank Costigliola's essay

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783–812. If one is looking at Vietnam, Randall Woods in his biography of Lyndon Johnson draws links between Johnson's religiosity and intervention, a point explicitly noted by Michael B. Stoff in his review (*Journal of American History*, December 2007: 1004-1005).

on the cultural origins of the Cold War shows us how cultural clashes can be a necessary cause of subsequent crises, and reminds us that these can be particularly difficult for historians to evaluate since they are inherently subjective matters. The isolation of Westerners in Moscow in the pre-1945 period, the no-contact rule imposed on Soviet citizens, and the periodic seizure of friends, lovers, and spouses of Westerners all contributed to their individual alienation from the Soviet Union and, in the view of Costigliola, contributed to the breakdown of relations with the Soviets and the eventual Cold War. Reading this essay one begins to think of other cultural collisions, from the Peace Corps to North Korean defectors, all fruitful subjects for discussion. Andrew Rotter's essay develops this theme further, arguing that one can look at culture both as a commodity, products to be appropriated or rejected, and as a concept, a way of seeing things. By doing so, he suggests, one can make better sense of intangible elements and perceptions in international relations, and what shaped the course of the Cold War. As we talk more and more about globalization of culture in the present day, and cultural diffusion having geopolitical implications, these are important points to raise about the past. But the cultural approach itself cannot always stand alone as a sufficient explanatory model, and is only as good as the accuracy of the evidence upon which the large causative models are built.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Bruce Cumings's article, ostensibly on Korea but really concerned with the long term impact of the war and NSC-68/2, reminds teachers to think about how the military build up in conventional and nuclear weapons had a transformative effect on urban settlement and the domestic political economy over the subsequent decades. A valuable piece, because economics is something high school students frequently do not engage adequately, it might have been made much more powerful by the inclusion of either a comparison with the Soviet Union or a deeper explanation of the economics choices that limited strategic decision-making during the Cold War.

This issue of the *New England Journal of History* engages a major, but easily overlooked, issue for scholars of international history or foreign relations: what college-bound students should know of foreign affairs at a time when the United States is, and will remain for some time, a leading power in the world. Despite the recognition of the problem, carving out additional time in an already crowded secondary school schedule for greater international education is difficult at best. If there cannot be a quantitative increase in the knowledge stuffed into the heads of effervescent adolescents, then perhaps there can be a qualitative increase in the understanding of secondary school teachers about international history and the background to the events of the present. The essays

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<sup>5</sup> Rotter is incorrect when he suggests that the British and Americans supplied Berlin by parachute and bomber during the airlift and builds an argument upon that [p. 178]. Aside from a single example, this is not true: transport aircraft landed the supplies, though the Germans used the word bomber to describe the aircraft. Indeed, part of the cultural significance of the Berlin Airlift is that the Soviets, their perceptions of air power narrowed by Stalingrad, did not think resupply solely by air was possible and so permitted the air corridors to remain open. See Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) and Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour* (New York: Putnam, 2008).

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in this collection, though largely Amero-centric and varying in quality, are nonetheless the kind of material that is needed to help remedy this situation. As time dulls the emotions of the period and allows for a more dispassionate examination of even highly controversial topics, scholars will continue to come back to a core question: what is it that we want the public to know about the Cold War, and why?

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